

**UNIVERSITY of  
STIRLING**



Faculty of Health Sciences and Sport  
Sport Social Science Research Group

**Exploring European women's football from economic and  
management perspectives**

A thesis submitted to the University of Stirling for fulfilment of  
the Degree of PhD by Publication

By

Maurizio Valenti  
(2428574)

June 2019



## **Acknowledgements**

I wish to express my gratitude to my supervisors Nicolas Scelles and Stephen Morrow, for their exceptional support and mentorship throughout the full period of study. I have been always encouraged by Nicolas and Stephen to develop my own ideas and I really appreciated their perfect mix of trust, wisdom and rigour. To Nicolas and Stephen, I owe great thanks for their guidance, assistance and inspiration.

I am particularly grateful to the colleagues and friends at the University of Stirling for the encouragement and feedback that I have constantly received from them.

I would like to thank the Faculty of Health Sciences and Sport (former School of Sport) for funding.

I am grateful to the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA), the Federazione Italiana Giuoco Calcio (FIGC) and the Scottish Football Association (SFA) for having supported me along the way.

Maurizio Valenti

# Table of Contents

	<b>Abstract</b>	8
<b>Chapter 1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	10
<b>1.1</b>	<b><i>Summary of research aims and objectives</i></b>	13
<b>1.2</b>	<b><i>Structure of the thesis</i></b>	14
<b>1.3</b>	<b><i>Summary of research outputs and candidate’s contribution</i></b>	15
<b>1.4</b>	<b><i>References</i></b>	17
<b>Chapter 2</b>	<b>Women’s football studies: An integrative review (Study 1)</b>	20
<b>2.1</b>	<b><i>Abstract</i></b>	21
<b>2.2</b>	<b><i>Introduction</i></b>	22
<b>2.3</b>	<b><i>Method</i></b>	23
2.3.1	<i>Literature search</i>	24
2.3.2	<i>Data evaluation</i>	25
2.3.3	<i>Data analysis</i>	25
<b>2.4</b>	<b><i>Results</i></b>	27
2.4.1	<i>Research themes and their evolution over time</i>	28
2.4.2	<i>Journals</i>	35
2.4.3	<i>Authorship</i>	36
2.4.4	<i>Geographical location of research</i>	37
2.4.5	<i>Research methodology</i>	40
<b>2.5</b>	<b><i>Discussion and conclusions</i></b>	41
2.5.1	<i>Researched themes and their evolution over time: what’s next?</i>	41
2.5.2	<i>Geographical location of research: is there a need to explore different countries and cultures?</i>	47
2.5.3	<i>Research methodology: how should we investigate women’s football?</i>	48
2.5.4	<i>An integrative review on women’s football: final remarks</i>	49
<b>2.6</b>	<b><i>References</i></b>	51
<b>Chapter 3</b>	<b>Women’s football development: Key concepts and background information</b>	60
<b>3.1</b>	<b><i>The sport industry: An introduction</i></b>	61
<b>3.2</b>	<b><i>What is the development of sport?</i></b>	63
3.2.1	<i>Sport development research: The policy theme</i>	64
3.2.2	<i>Sport development research: The development of sport theme</i>	66
3.2.3	<i>Defining development in sport: Summary</i>	69
<b>3.3</b>	<b><i>What drives the development of women’s football?</i></b>	70
3.3.1	<i>The use of the integrated framework in this study</i>	74

3.4	<b>European women's football: The state of play</b>	76
3.5	<b>References</b>	78
Chapter 4	<b>Elite sport policies and international sporting success: A panel data analysis of European women's national football team performance (Study 2)</b>	84
4.1	<b>Abstract</b>	85
4.2	<b>Introduction</b>	86
4.3	<b>Theoretical background and related literature</b>	89
4.3.1	<i>The SPLISS framework</i>	89
4.3.2	<i>Determinants of international success in women's football</i>	92
4.3.2.1	<i>Sport programme-level factors</i>	92
4.3.2.2	<i>Country-level factors</i>	94
4.3.3	<i>Our study's contribution to the literature</i>	98
4.4	<b>Method</b>	102
4.4.1	<i>Dataset and variables</i>	102
4.4.2	<i>Estimation strategy</i>	110
4.5	<b>Results and discussion</b>	113
4.5.1	<i>Descriptive statistics</i>	113
4.5.2	<i>Regression analyses</i>	115
4.6	<b>Conclusions</b>	119
4.6.1	<i>Limitations and future research</i>	120
4.7	<b>References</b>	122
4.8	<b>Summary of this study's contribution to the overall research</b>	128
Chapter 5	<b>The determinants of stadium attendance in elite women's football: Evidence from the UEFA Women's Champions League (Study 3)</b>	130
5.1	<b>Abstract</b>	131
5.2	<b>Introduction</b>	132
5.3	<b>Literature review</b>	135
5.3.1	<i>Determinants of stadium attendance</i>	135
5.3.2	<i>Outcome uncertainty</i>	137
5.4	<b>Background</b>	139
5.4.1	<i>The landscape of the UEFA Women's Champions League</i>	139
5.4.2	<i>The emergence of integrated women's football clubs</i>	141
5.5	<b>Method</b>	143
5.5.1	<i>Dataset and variables</i>	143
5.5.2	<i>Estimation strategy</i>	150
5.6	<b>Results and discussion</b>	151
5.6.1	<i>Managerial implications</i>	159

5.6.2	<i>Conclusions and future research</i>	161
<b>5.7</b>	<b>References</b>	162
<b>5.8</b>	<b>Summary of this study's contribution to the overall research</b>	168
<b>Chapter 6</b>	<b>Additional research outputs (Studies 4, 5 and 6)</b>	170
<b>6.1</b>	<b>Competitive balance in European elite women's club football</b>	171
6.1.1	<i>Is European elite women's club football a male-dominated sport? (Study 4)</i>	172
6.1.2	<i>The impact of women's superclubs on competitive balance: An analysis of the UEFA Women's Champions League (Study 5)</i>	174
<b>6.2</b>	<b>Exploring club organisation structures in European women's football (Study 6)</b>	176
6.2.1	<i>Executive summary</i>	177
6.2.2	<i>Introduction</i>	186
6.2.3	<i>Aims, Research questions and Objectives</i>	187
6.2.4	<i>Literature Review</i>	189
6.2.5	<i>Methodology</i>	192
6.2.5.1	<i>Research design and strategy</i>	192
6.2.5.2	<i>Areas of analysis</i>	193
6.2.5.3	<i>Sample and contact with clubs</i>	194
6.2.5.4	<i>Quantitative part: surveying women's football clubs</i>	194
6.2.5.5	<i>Qualitative part: interviews with partially associated or fully integrated clubs</i>	195
6.2.6	<i>Findings</i>	197
6.2.7	<i>Limitations</i>	236
6.2.8	<i>Contributions and Recommendations</i>	237
<b>6.3</b>	<b>References</b>	239
<b>6.4</b>	<b>Summary of these studies' contribution to the overall research</b>	243
<b>Chapter 7</b>	<b>Summary and conclusions</b>	246
<b>7.1</b>	<b>Key findings</b>	248
<b>7.2</b>	<b>Contribution</b>	250
<b>7.3</b>	<b>Limitations and future studies</b>	252
	<b>Appendix 1: Journals standing</b>	253
	<b>Appendix 2: Non-significant panel regression tests for predictors of women's football performance</b>	255



## **Abstract**

Women's football is growing in popularity in Europe, with increasing participation rates across the continent. To support this, football governing bodies have set the development of the women's game as a key priority in their agenda. However, women's football is still in a period of transition in terms of professionalisation and interest from fans, media and sponsors. This thesis examines European women's football from economic and management perspectives, with the aim of providing key insights into the most appropriate approaches to continue the growth of the women's game. This submission brings together a body of work conducted by the candidate, which consists of six research outputs in total. Of these, three are published academic papers, two are academic conference papers and one is a research project in collaboration with UEFA and two national football associations. Starting with an integrative review of academic literature on the women's game, this study highlights the lack of scholarly attention towards women's football from managerial, policy and economic perspectives. The subsequent papers contribute to filling these research gaps and to gaining a better understanding of the positioning of women's football in the panorama of the sport industry. Some of the main challenges and opportunities currently facing women's football are examined and analysed in this PhD. These include elements related to elite policies, fan interest, competitive balance, and managerial and organisational practices of women's football clubs. The thesis discusses recommendations that are relevant to both scholars and practitioners in order to further the development of women's football in the future.



# Exploring European women's football from economic and management perspectives

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

Football is the most popular sport among men in many countries and regions of the world, but it remains the case that a minority of women play and follow the game in global terms (Bridgewater, 2018). In 2006, a FIFA (Fédération Internationale de Football Association) survey estimated that only 10% of football participants are female (FIFA, 2006). To explain this imbalance, historians (e.g. Williams & Hess, 2015) and sociologists (e.g. Pfister, 2015) often refer to socio-cultural constraints such as gender discrimination and prejudice as factors that limit opportunities for women to participate in the game worldwide. In addition, women were prevented from accessing all member club grounds due to a formal ban imposed by many national associations between the beginning of the 1920s and the early 1970s (Williams, 2006). Consequently, women in football have remained economically and politically marginalised for many years (Williams, 2011).

Stemming from complex interplay between gender perceptions and cultural norms, the history of women's football has never been stable and/or unproblematic (Williams, 2007). Women playing football have been subject to social interpretation and judgement (Devonport et al., 2018), and often been treated as the 'outsiders' (Caudwell, 2011). Likewise, the involvement of women in non-playing roles has

historically been difficult, with research indicating women have limited opportunities to occupy administrative, coaching and leadership positions in the sport industry (Burton, 2015; Hancock & Hums, 2016; Norman, Rankin-Wright, & Allison, 2018; Welford, 2011). Leaving little or no space for women to participate in the evolution of sport institutions and organisations for many years has contributed to shape and embed hegemonic masculinity within sports culture (Connell, 1987; Connell, 2009; Knoppers, 2011). This has favoured the emergence of gender dominance and paternalism by men in their interactions with women (Allison, 2017; Sibson, 2010; Washington & Patterson, 2011). Hence, advancements of women's sports are often considered as feminist manifestations to politically challenge gender roles and fight for gender equality.

Football is a typical example of strong gender bias, with women representing 28% of the total administrative workforce, 25% of the total management staff (e.g. presidents, general secretaries, heads of department) and 7% of the total coaches operating worldwide (FIFA, 2019). Nevertheless, the situation has gradually improved since women were officially accepted within football again. It was during the 1971 Extraordinary Congress of the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) in Monte Carlo that most members agreed to lift the ban and take women's football under their control. After years of isolation, this decision finally provided the women's game with a platform from which to develop in terms of organisational, managerial and technical aspects. Recent statistics showed increases in the number of female players, coaches, and referees (FIFA 2014, 2018; UEFA, 2017, 2019). In line with these advancements, there are many reasons to believe that women's football will further its growth in the future, potentially leading to the establishment of

this sport as the global game played by women (FIFA, 2016, 2018; UEFA, 2017, 2019).

However, the question of whether women's football can be viewed as a globally popular sport is still subject of much debate (Williams, 2007). The women's game has regularly been considered as the 'Next Big Thing' (Williams, 2006, p. 157) and yet continues to be in a period of transition in terms of its commercialisation and financial sustainability. For instance, while the increased attention from football governing bodies has triggered a process of development, women's football still struggles to build a solid platform in terms of interest from fans, media and sponsors (Pfister, 2015). Hence, as noted by FIFA (2016, p. 36), despite significant growth, "the women's game has not yet realised its full potential".

Focusing on the European context, this study examines opportunities and challenges facing women's football with the objective to offer managerial implications and suggest directions for future research. This thesis takes economic and management perspectives to explore some of the aspects relating to the rapid development of women's football in Europe. As such, this research seeks to contribute to the debate on European women's football, and to provide stakeholders with insights into the most appropriate approaches to support the development of the women's game.

## ***1.1 Summary of research aims and objectives***

This doctoral research has two main aims. First, the dissertation reviews, maps and organises available literature on women's football. As such, the thesis seeks to uncover and identify potential research avenues for future studies in women's football. Second, the thesis aims to contribute to filling some of the documented knowledge gaps. These include examining women's football from economic and managerial perspectives. Specifically, this research explores three areas of European women's football:

- 1) the policies implemented by national football associations to support women's football development;
- 2) the determinants of spectator demand in women's football competitions;
- 3) the managerial and organisational practices of women's football clubs.

Overall, this PhD answers different research enquiries through an exploratory approach, and has the objective to offer implications that are relevant to both scholars and practitioners. In particular, this PhD provides stakeholders operating at different levels of the game with an opportunity to reflect on the development of women's football. These include managers of national and international football governing bodies, organisers of leagues and tournaments, and executives of football clubs. The specific research questions are formulated and explicated in each of the studies, which are presented in the following chapters.

## ***1.2 Structure of the thesis***

In order to achieve the proposed aims, the structure of this thesis is built upon a set of research articles (i.e. PhD by publication). These allow exploration of various concepts that are related to the development of women's football in Europe. The thesis is organised as follows: chapter 2 reviews previous studies on women's football, acting as the starting point of this submission and paving the way for the presentation of subsequent research outputs. Chapter 3 situates the current research within the reviewed literature and provides an overview of this thesis. While doing so, it is important to note that women's football is analysed as a sport that is developing. Therefore, the notion of 'development' is reviewed within the context of sport management research. Also, chapter 3 provides background information on European women's football to illustrate in detail the rationale for identifying this as an appropriate field of study. Chapters 4 and 5 present two empirical studies that are central to this PhD by publication. These focus on issues that are related to the development of women's football. More precisely, chapter 4 analyses the relationship between countries' elite sport policies and international success in women's football, offering the opportunity to gain a better understanding of the organisation and management of women's football in European national football associations. Chapter 5 deals with stadium attendance in women's football, as this is recognised as one of the most prominent obstacles that the women's game currently faces for its development. In this chapter, determinants of stadium attendance are tested in the top European competition for elite women's football clubs, the UEFA Women's Champions League (UWCL). From this, suggestions for sport managers are offered to maximise fan interest in the women's game. Chapter 6 presents

additional research outputs dealing with key elements for the development of women's football such as the level of competitive balance in women's club tournaments, and the managerial and organisational practices of European women's football clubs. Finally, chapter 7 summarises key findings and outlines the main conclusions arising from the thesis. Moreover, it addresses the objectives of this PhD, highlights its principal limitations and suggests directions for future studies in this area.

### ***1.3 Summary of research outputs and candidate's contribution***

In total, six research outputs were produced during the period of PhD registration (2016-2019). Five of the six studies reported here were conducted and prepared under the supervision of Dr Nicolas Scelles (Manchester Metropolitan University) and Mr Stephen Morrow (University of Stirling). Within this team, the PhD candidate contributed most to these research studies and to the preparation of the related papers, acting as lead author. The sixth study was conducted and prepared individually by the PhD candidate.

Three articles (*Studies 1, 2 and 3*) were submitted for publication in peer-reviewed, high quality and international journals representing excellent outlets in the field of sport management.<sup>1</sup> In line with the requirements to obtain the PhD by publication at the University of Stirling, at the time of writing, one article has been published (*Study 1*) with the other two accepted for publication (i.e. in press) (*Studies 2 and 3*). The remaining three contributions are two academic conference papers (*Studies 4 and 5*) and a research project funded by the Union of European Football

---

<sup>1</sup> Details on journal standing, including impact factors, are provided in Appendix 1.

Associations (UEFA) for its Research Grant Programme 2018/19 (*Study 6*). All contributions are presented in the following chapters as they appear in their published version. Box 1 provides full references for the research outputs included in this PhD thesis.

### **Box 1: Full references of research outputs**

*Study 1:* Valenti, M., Scelles, N., and Morrow, S. (2018). Women's football studies: An integrative review. *Sport, Business and Management: An International Journal*, 8(5), 511-528.

*Study 2:* Valenti, M., Scelles, N., and Morrow, S. (in press). Elite sport policies and international sporting success: A panel data analysis of European women's national football team performance. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, available online <https://doi.org/10.1080/16184742.2019.1606264>.

*Study 3:* Valenti, M., Scelles, N., and Morrow, S. (in press). The determinants of stadium attendance in elite women's football: Evidence from the UEFA Women's Champions League. *Sport Management Review*, available online <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2019.04.005>

*Study 4:* Valenti, M., Scelles, N., and Morrow, S. (2018). Is European elite club women's football a male-dominated sport? Paper presented at *The Political Studies Association – Sport and Politics Annual Conference 2018*, March 21-22, University of Stirling, Stirling, Scotland.

*Study 5:* Valenti, M., Scelles, N. and Morrow, S. (2019). The impact of women's superclubs on competitive balance: An analysis of the UEFA Women's Champions League. Paper presented at the *12<sup>th</sup> International Conference Football & Research: Football by and for women – State of play and perspectives*, June 20-22, 2019, University of Lyon 1, Lyon, France.

*Study 6:* Valenti, M. (2019). *UEFA Research Grant Programme 2018/19 - Exploring club organisation structures in European women's football*. Final Report presented at the UEFA Research Grant Programme Meeting, June 17, 2019, UEFA HQ, Nyon, Switzerland.

## 1.4 References

- Allison, R. (2017). From oversight to autonomy: Gendered organizational change in women's soccer. *Social Currents*, 4(1), pp. 71-86.
- Bridgewater, S. (2018). Women and football, in Chadwick, S., Parnell, D., Widdop, P., & Anagnostopoulos, C. (ed.), *Routledge Handbook of Football Business and Management*. Abingdon: Routledge, pp. 351-365.
- Burton, L. J. (2015). Underrepresentation of Women in Sport Leadership: A Review of Research. *Sport Management Review*, 18 (2), pp. 155–165. doi:10.1016/j.smr.2014.02.004.
- Caudwell, J. (2011). Gender, Feminism and Football Studies. *Soccer & Society*, 12 (3), pp. 330–344. doi:10.1080/14660970.2011.568099.
- Connell, R. (1987). *Gender and Power*. Sydney, Australia: Allen and Unwin.
- Connell, R. (2009). *Short Introductions: Gender*. Malden, MA: Polity Press
- Devonport, T. J., K. Russell, K. Leflay, & Conway, J. (2018). Gendered Performances and Identity Construction among UK Female Soccer Players and Netballers: A Comparative Study. *Sport in Society*, 22, pp. 1–17. doi:10.1080/17430437.2018.1504773.
- FIFA (2006). FIFA Big Count 2006: 270 million people active in football, available at [https://www.fifa.com/mm/document/fifafacts/bcoffsurv/bigcount.statspackage\\_7024.pdf](https://www.fifa.com/mm/document/fifafacts/bcoffsurv/bigcount.statspackage_7024.pdf) (accessed 20 March 2016).
- FIFA (2014). *The women's survey*, available at: [http://www.fifa.com/mm/document/footballdevelopment/women/02/52/26/49/womensfootballsurvey2014\\_e\\_english.pdf](http://www.fifa.com/mm/document/footballdevelopment/women/02/52/26/49/womensfootballsurvey2014_e_english.pdf) (accessed 7 October 2016).
- FIFA (2016). FIFA 2.0: The Vision for the Future, available at: [https://www.sportanddev.org/sites/default/files/downloads/fifa\\_2.0\\_the\\_vision\\_for\\_the\\_future.pdf](https://www.sportanddev.org/sites/default/files/downloads/fifa_2.0_the_vision_for_the_future.pdf) (accessed 22 November 2016).
- FIFA (2018). *Women's football strategy*, available at <https://resources.fifa.com/image/upload/women-s-football-strategy.pdf?cloudid=z7w21ghir8jb9tguvbcq> (accessed 16 October 2018).
- FIFA (2019). *Women's Football: Member Associations Survey Report*, available at <https://img.fifa.com/image/upload/nq3ensohyxpuxovcovj0.pdf> (accessed 20 January 2020).
- Hancock, M. G., & Hums, M. A. (2016). A “Leaky Pipeline”? Factors Affecting the Career Development of Senior-Level Female Administrators in NCAA Division

- I Athletic Departments. *Sport Management Review*, 19(2), pp. 198–210. doi:10.1016/j.smr.2015.04.004.
- Knoppers, A. (2011). Giving Meaning to Sport Involvement in Managerial Work. *Gender, Work & Organization* 18:e1–e22.
- Norman, L., Rankin-Wright, A. J., & Allison, W. (2018). It's a Concrete Ceiling; It's Not Even Glass: Understanding Tenets of Organizational Culture That Supports the Progression of Women as Coaches and Coach Developers. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 42 (5): 393–414. doi:10.1177/0193723518790086
- Pfister, G. (2015a). Assessing the Sociology of Sport: On Women and Football. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 50(4-5), pp. 563-569.
- Sibson, R. (2010). "I Was Banging my Head against a Brick Wall": Exclusionary Power and the Gendering of Sport Organizations. *Journal of Sport Management* 24 (4), pp. 379–399. doi:10.1123/jsm.24.4.379.
- UEFA (2017). *Women's Football across the National Associations 2017*, available at: [https://www.uefa.com/MultimediaFiles/Download/OfficialDocument/uefaorg/Women'sfootball/02/51/60/57/2516057\\_DOWNLOAD.pdf](https://www.uefa.com/MultimediaFiles/Download/OfficialDocument/uefaorg/Women'sfootball/02/51/60/57/2516057_DOWNLOAD.pdf) (accessed 20 December 2017).
- UEFA (2019). *#TimeForAction - Women's football strategy 2019-24*. Available at: [https://www.uefa.com/MultimediaFiles/Download/uefaorg/Womensfootball/02/60/51/38/2605138\\_DOWNLOAD.pdf](https://www.uefa.com/MultimediaFiles/Download/uefaorg/Womensfootball/02/60/51/38/2605138_DOWNLOAD.pdf) (accessed 18 May 2019).
- Washington, M., & Patterson, K. D. W. (2011). Hostile Takeover or Joint Venture: Connections between Institutional Theory and Sport Management Research. *Sport Management Review*, 14(1), pp. 1–12. doi:10.1016/j.smr.2010.06.003.
- Welford, J. (2011). Tokenism, Ties and Talking Too Quietly: Women's Experiences in Non-playing Football Roles. *Soccer & Society*, 12(3), pp. 365-381.
- Williams, J. (2006). An equality too far? Historical and contemporary perspectives of gender inequality in British and International football. *Historical Social Research*, 31(1), pp. 151-69.
- Williams, J. (2007). *A Beautiful Game: International Perspectives on Women's Football*. New York: Berg.
- Williams, J. (2011). *Women's football, Europe and professionalization 1971-2011*. Project funded by the UEFA Research Grant Programme, available at: <https://www.dora.dmu.ac.uk/bitstream/handle/2086/5806/Woman%27s%20football,%20Europe%20%26%20professionalization%201971-2011.pdf?sequence=1> (accessed 17 June 2016)

Williams, J., & Hess, R. (2015). Women, football and history: International perspectives. *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 32(18), pp. 2115-2122.

# Chapter 2

## Women's football studies: An integrative review (Study 1)

This chapter is dedicated to the presentation of the first research article. This article represents the initial step of this PhD by Publication, as it permits the development of an understanding of how women's football has been studied across disciplines to date. In line with the first purpose of the PhD, this article maps and organises previous studies on women's football, with the aim to suggest directions for future investigations within this sport. Accordingly, relevant literature is analysed, reviewed and summarised in this chapter. The findings of this integrative literature review are discussed in the next sections in terms of existing knowledge and research gaps in this field.

Full reference to research publication: Valenti, M., Scelles, N., and Morrow, S. (2018). Women's football studies: An integrative review. *Sport, Business and Management: An International Journal*, 8(5), 511-528.

## **2.1 Abstract**

**Purpose of this paper:** Women's football has received increasing attention in the academic literature, partly due to its growing popularity worldwide. However, women's football research remains scattered across numerous academic domains. Focusing on the social sciences, humanities and management disciplines, this integrative literature review aims to map and organise contributions, and to identify research directions for future studies within these disciplines.

**Design/methodology/approach:** Using the keywords "women", "girls", "female" and "football" or "soccer" to initially identify articles, an integrative approach was followed to evaluate and analyse relevant literature. 117 academic journals were classified and subsequently divided into 26 themes according to the subject area, topic and level examined.

**Findings:** Results of this integrative review show an increasing trend of journal publications since 1998, with a large representation of studies related to historical and sociological research, where qualitative methods are dominant. Articles investigating economic, managerial and marketing areas appeared in more recent times. Women's football has been researched from different perspectives (players, fans, sport organisations) and across various countries.

**Research limitations/implications:** The restricted scope of this review (i.e. its focus on social sciences) and the manual classification of articles represent two limitations of this study. However, the synthesis of academic literature provided may assist scholars who are interested in women's football and women's sports research to fill identified research gaps and contribute to further advance academic investigations in this area.

**What is originality/value of paper:** This paper provides an overview of salient research avenues and represents the first attempt to critically appraise the direction of academic contributions in women's football for the purpose of advancing scholarly inquiry in this sport.

**Keywords:** Women's football; women's soccer; sport management; integrative review

## **2.2 Introduction**

Concomitant with the substantial rise in participation and the increased recognition from international governing bodies (FIFA, 2014, 2016; UEFA, 2016, 2017), women's football has received significant attention from sport academics around the world (Pfister, 2015a). The number of scientific publications has been constantly increasing in the last two decades as researchers have given attention to the development of women's football and its stakeholders. In particular, scholarly inquiry on the women's game has bridged different academic domains (e.g. sport sciences, social sciences, humanities and management) and created interactions between various actors (e.g. players, coaches, fans, the media, policy-makers, football governing bodies) thus contributing to a broader understanding of the directions that this sport has taken over time.

Despite this recent increase in the number of academic publications, only one article (Martinez-Lagunas, Niessen and Hartmann, 2014) has reviewed women's football literature to date. However, this paper focussed exclusively on studies within sport sciences (e.g. physiological demands and player physical characteristics) while neglecting publications coming from other disciplines. Yet we argue that there is a demonstrable need to extend the review beyond the sport sciences domain as publications in social sciences, humanities and management fields are critical to explain the intricate dynamics surrounding the experiences of women in the game and to describe the multifaceted and arguably challenging context in which women's football operates.

Therefore, the purpose of the present study is to rigorously review and systematically synthesise research approaches, findings, frameworks and implications of women's football literature in order to:

- 1) organise women's football literature by categorising published articles;
- 2) portray a comprehensive panorama of academic research on women's football to date, by highlighting year of publication, publishing outlet, authorship, geographical context and methodological approach; and
- 3) summarise key findings and suggest research directions for future studies within women's football literature.

### **2.3 Method**

Women's football literature addresses numerous topics and research questions drawing on various academic disciplines, and using different methodologies. Therefore, the approach adopted for this review is based on an integrative methodology which thus permits the combination of different types of research designs, as well as the extraction and synthesis of both qualitative and quantitative data (Whittemore and Knafl, 2005). While integrative reviews are considered inherently complex (Tavares de Souza, Dias da Silva and de Carvalho, 2010) and difficult to implement without a stringent research framework (O'Mathúna, 2000), at the same time they allow for the evaluation of a broad and comprehensive panorama of literature from different disciplines and help shape guidelines for future research (Schulenkorf, Sherry and Rowe, 2016; Torraco, 2005; Whittemore and

Knafli, 2005). As suggested by Cooper (1989) and in line with Whittermore and Knafli (2005), a five-step approach was followed in this research: problem identification (already presented in the introduction section), literature search, data evaluation, data analysis, and presentation of findings.

### *2.3.1 Literature search*

Existing articles represent the data of an integrative review (Torraco, 2005). These were identified following the recommendations outlined by Cooper (1989) who suggested utilising informal, primary and secondary information channels. As search terms, *women OR girls OR female, AND football OR soccer* were utilised to clearly delineate the starting point of this literature review. No boundaries were defined for publication dates while only full-text English articles were included in the review.

Primary channels of information were accessed through online databases *SPORTDiscus* and *Scopus*. The former is a reliable source for sport-specific published articles and was used in previous literature reviews (e.g. Schulenkorf *et al.*, 2016); the latter was chosen due to its broad coverage of social science literature which ensures the capture of relevant material that goes beyond the sport domain such as gender constructions and sexual identities. In addition to the two electronic databases, an “ancestry approach” (Cooper, 1989, p. 43) was employed in an attempt to uncover supplementary sources that meet the inclusion criteria. Secondary information channels such as *Google Scholar*, *Researchgate* and *Academia* were consulted and additional literature was obtained through manual searches of relevant academic journals. Other informal information channels such as conference discussions, grey literature, digital dissertations, conference papers and working papers were also identified.

### *2.3.2 Data evaluation*

The first part of the evaluation process was accomplished by carefully reading information contained in the article title, abstract and by acknowledging the publication outlet. Published and unpublished studies written in English were included in the review while references were excluded when they fitted in the following categories: book publications, opinion pieces, editorials and newspaper articles. It is important to underline at this stage that papers dealing with women's football from social sciences and management perspectives (e.g. economics, history, management, marketing, sociology) were considered for this review, while articles examining women's football with a sport science approach (e.g. physiology, sport medicine, sport psychology) were omitted (see Martinez-Lagunas, Niessen and Hartmann, 2014 for a review of sport sciences literature). It is acknowledged that this represents one of the limitations of this literature review. However, as noted by Torraco (2005) and consistent with Schulenkorf *et al.* (2016, p. 24), "an integrative review does not presuppose to be exhaustive on any given topic or topics, but rather exhaustive within its predetermined and declared boundaries". The process of literature screening was performed in triangulation (Rothbauer, 2008) between the three authors who eventually agreed to include 117 out of the 138 articles initially examined.

### *2.3.3 Data analysis*

The process of data analysis was conducted through the review of the full text of each article. These were ordered by: a) year of publication; b) publishing outlet; c)

authors' names; d) geographical location where the study was conducted and e) methodological approach and process adopted to analyse data. The data analysis process for the 117 articles continued following Miles and Huberman's (1994) recommendations which suggest dividing data into intellectual bins that ultimately reflect common themes between articles. This categorisation process was conducted by the first author and then discussed with the other authors. It involved identifying the overarching subject area, the specific topics and the principal actors or levels, by examining the articles' publishing outlet, title, keywords and reading the full text with a particular focus on the abstract and main conclusions. When it came to build the final catalogue comprising the relevant literature, information was sorted on a logical sequence of macro- to micro-level around the identified subject areas, topics, actors or levels. An illustration of how this process was performed is presented in Table 2.1.

**Table 2.1** – Explanation of how themes emerged

<b>Category</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Example</b>
Subject area	The broad discipline in which the article can be allocated. It reflects the question that scholars tried to answer in their paper.	Economics Sociology
Topics	The problem within the subject area that authors attempted to direct.	Economics → <b>Success</b> Sociology → <b>Gender</b>
Actors/levels	The physical or abstract main focus of the article which is expected to either directly answer the question or inform the author about their research enquiry.	Economics → Success → <b>Country</b> Sociology → Gender → <b>Players</b>

At this stage, it is important to clarify that while every attempt was made to reach an appropriate categorisation, we acknowledge that the manual classification process remains imperfect and therefore represents a limitation of this study. This is because some topics are easily associable to a particular academic domain, while inevitably others present multi-disciplinary characteristics. For example, research about *branding* was straightforwardly attributed to a subject area, i.e. marketing, while *success*, i.e. the study of the socio-economic determinants that lead to international sporting success, has been assigned to economics, although some studies (e.g. Jacobs, 2014) in this category could have also fitted the category of *sport management and policy*. Thus, we appreciate that research in some areas may overlap. However, we argue that article classification remains part of a fundamental process that helps achieve the first two aims of this integrative literature review.

Once the data analysis was completed, in line with Whitemore and Knalf's (2005) integrative review process, the fifth and final step (i.e. presentation of findings) is described and discussed in the next sections.

## **2.4 Results**

To help reach the first of the proposed objectives for this integrative review, we identified 5 subject areas, 12 topics and 9 actors or levels, which, combined, resulted in 26 unique themes (presented in Table 2.2). In the next sections, a description of the characteristics that appeared to be relevant to comprehensively paint the current state of the women's football literature will be presented in order to achieve the second aim of this study.

#### 2.4.1 Researched themes and their evolution over time

Table 2.3 provides an illustration of articles' distribution over time. Early studies on women's football (from 1998 to 2003) focussed exclusively on historical and sociological topics. The historical evolution of the game and players' gender issues are the first two themes to be explored and the first by number of publications (*history-evolution-country* = 22.2% of the full sample; *sociology-gender-players* = 16.2%). In 2000, Fasting and Pfister looked at gender issues as experienced by coaches while two years later Christopherson, Janning and McConnel (2002) considered how gender is framed and represented by the media in women's football. In 2003, Knoppers and Anthonissen studied two countries' levels of gender inequality and cultural barriers to understand how these affect participation in the sport.

Over the next six years, from 2004 to 2009, five new themes started to trigger researchers' interest: the determinants of sporting success in international women's football (e.g. Klein, 2004), the study of female football fandom from a sociological perspective (Kim, 2004) and with an historical approach (Lewis, 2009), the marketing strategic challenges that women's leagues face to sustain their business (Southall, Nagel and LeGrande, 2005) and consumers' attitudes towards attending domestic women's football matches (Klein, 2009).

Articles in the final eight years (2010-2017) almost doubled ( $n = 76$ ) when compared to the output produced between 1998 and 2009 ( $n = 41$ ). During this last time period, sociological studies remained central with the inclusion of new topics such as migration (e.g. Botelho and Agergaard, 2011) and role models (e.g. Dunn, 2016); and consideration of new actors such as administrators (e.g. Welford, 2011), referees (e.g. Perreau-Niel and Erard, 2015) and female fans (e.g. Pope, 2012). At

the same time, experts in sport management started to examine the positions of clubs (Aoki *et al.*, 2010) and the impact of national governing bodies' policies and actions on women's football development (e.g. Kjær and Agergaard, 2013) in order to identify challenges that practitioners were facing in the women's game; studies from sport marketing disciplines analysed branding (e.g. Melkersson, 2013) in women's football; while other articles explored aspects related to the attractiveness and competitiveness of women's football (e.g. Hjelm, 2011) as well as the determinants to attend or watch women's football games (e.g. Meier, Konjer and Leinwather, 2016).

Overall, research on women's football can be regarded as a recent area of interest with the first two articles being published as recently as 1998. Discernible peaks in academic publications are noticed in 2003, 2011 and 2013 when the academic journal *Soccer & Society* released special issues about the women's game. Notwithstanding the recent drop in 2017, it becomes clear that the attention given to women's football across different academic domains has seen an increase in the last eight years (even when articles in the special issues are excluded).

In sum, women's football literature has seen contributions coming from five areas: economics, history, management, marketing and sociology. Studies related to sociological (48.7%) and historical (24.8%) aspects have been published more consistently over time while evidence from marketing (11.1%), economic (11.1%) and management (4.3%) areas emerged more recently. It is also interesting to underline that researchers examined the position of some actors (e.g. players, 22.2%) and levels (e.g. country-level, 29.9%) more frequently while other stakeholders (e.g. fans, clubs, federations) started to trigger scholars' curiosity only in recent times.

**Table 2.2** – Organisation, definition and examples of articles according to subject, topic and level

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Reference</b>
<i>Economics</i>	Attractiveness	Players	1	The evaluation of factors (e.g. game quality) related to the ability of women's football to attract spectators, media coverage and sponsors	Hjelm (2011)
	Competitiveness	Federation	1	The analysis of factors (e.g. home advantage effect, competitive balance) related to competition fairness in women's football	Pollard and Gomez-Ruano (2014)
		League	1		
	Consumption	Fandom	3	The study of the economic determinants associated with the consumption of women's football games	LeFeuvre, Stephenson and Walcott (2013)
Success	Country	7	The study of socio-economic determinants associated with sporting success in women's football	Torgler (2008)	
<i>Historical</i>	Evolution	Country	26	The analysis of socio-political and historical events that have influenced the development of women's football and its stakeholders	Bourke (2003)
		Fandom	2		
		Players	1		
<i>Management</i>	Organisation	Club	2	The study of organisations' actions and strategies operating within women's	Aoki <i>et al.</i> (2010)

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>n</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Reference</b>
				football	
	Policy	Federation	3	The evaluation of plans, initiatives and opportunities intended to influence and improve women's football	Kjær and Agergaard (2013)
<i>Marketing</i>	Branding	Club	1	The study of brand management in women's football	Melkersson (2013)
		League	1		
	Consumption	Fandom	5	The identification of drivers and demographics associated with consumption of women's football games	Hallmann (2012)
	Strategy	Federation	1	The analysis and evaluation of the marketing strategies used to promote women's football	Southall, Nagel and LeGrande (2005)
		League	3		
<i>Sociology</i>	Gender	Administrators	2	The study of gender representations, gender identity and discrimination, as experienced by stakeholders in women's football	Hjelseth and Hovden (2014); Pope (2012); Schlesinger and Weigelt-Schlesinger (2012); Welford (2011)
		Coaches	7		
		Country	2		
		Fandom	14		
		Media	6		
		Players	19		

Subject	Topic	Level	n	Definition	Reference
		Players / Administrators <sup>2</sup>	1		
		Referees	2		
	Migration	Players	4	The analysis of players' mobility and migration in women's football	Tiesler (2016)
	Role models	Players	1	The study of inspirational figures for participation in women's football	Dunn (2016)
		Federation	1		

<sup>2</sup> It is challenging to extract the fundamental actor/level in Scraton, Caudwell and Holland (2005) as they clearly state that interviews were conducted with seven players and seven administrators.

**Table 2.3 – Publications’ distribution over time**

			1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Total
<i>Economics</i>	Attractiveness	Players														1							1
	Competitiveness	Federation																				1	1
		League																	1				1
	Consumption	Fandom															1	1			1		3
	Success	Country							1	1		1			1		1	1		1			7
<i>History</i>	Evolution	Country	1	1		1	1	15		1					1		2		1	1		1	26
		Fandom												1					1				2
		Players														1							1
<i>Management</i>	Organisation	Club													1			1					2
	Policy	Federation															1	2					3
<i>Marketing</i>	Branding	Club																1					1
		League																			1		1
	Consumption	Fandom												1			1	1			1	1	5
	Strategy	Federation													1								1
		League								1								1			1		3
<i>Sociology</i>	Gender	Administrators														1						1	2

		1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Total
	Coaches			1								1				1	1	1	1		1	7
	Country						1										1					2
	Fandom							1					1	1	1	1	2	2	2	1	2	14
	Media					1							1						2	1	1	6
	Players		2				1		2	1		1			6		1	1	2	1	1	19
	Players / Administrators								1													1
	Referees																		1	1		2
Migration	Players														1		2				1	4
Role models	Federation																				1	1
	Players																				1	1
Total		1	3	1	1	2	17	2	4	3	0	3	4	4	12	7	15	8	9	12	9	

Table 2.4 outlines the themes (8 out of 26) with more than three publications, representing 75.2% of the 117 articles selected for this integrative review. This closer inspection of existing articles helps gain a comprehensive understanding of the current state of women’s football literature and starts to expose a number of research gaps across different academic domains.

**Table 2.4** – Themes with more than three publications

			Total
<i>Economics</i>	Success	Country	7
<i>History</i>	Evolution	Country	26
<i>Marketing</i>	Consumption	Fandom	5
<i>Sociology</i>	Gender	Coaches	7
		Fandom	14
		Media	6
		Players	19
	Migration	Players	4
Total			88

### 2.4.2 Journals

Table 2.5 presents an overview of the first five outlets by number of published articles. The academic journal *Soccer & Society* is largely ahead of the other outlets<sup>3</sup>, having published 41.9% of research articles reviewed here.

<sup>3</sup> This is to be expected, given to its specific focus on football (soccer).

**Table 2.5** – The first five outlets by number of published articles

<b>Publication outlet</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
<i>Soccer &amp; Society</i>	49
<i>International Review for the Sociology of Sport</i>	6
<i>Sport in Society</i>	6
<i>Journal of Sport and Social Issues</i>	5
<i>The International Journal of the History of Sport</i>	5

### 2.4.3 Authorship

There are researchers that contributed to the expansion of women's football literature across different disciplines with five or more articles (as authors or co-authors). Focussing on these authors, it is noticeable that Gertrud Pfister mainly discussed the position of women in society and how they contributed to develop European (German and Danish, in particular) women's football. Also, she helped shape the discussion around gender issues and female fan groups' creation. Overall, her publications account for 9.5% of research articles included in this review. Kari Fasting (5.5%) dedicated her studies to the exploration of historical and sociological elements with particular attention given to the experiences of coaches while Stacey Pope (5.2%) concentrated her works on the examination of female fans' experiences of attending men's and women's football events.

#### 2.4.4 Geographical location of research

Findings of this integrative review highlight that women's football has been researched worldwide. Specific countries have been studied several times, including European nations (e.g. Denmark, n = 4; England, n = 16; Germany, n = 8; Ireland, n = 2; Norway, n = 7; Scotland, n = 3; Sweden, n = 3), South Korea (n = 3), South Africa (n = 2) and the United States (US) (n = 12). Also, aspects of women's football have been studied once in other 13 countries (e.g. Australia, Austria, Brazil, Canada, China, France, India, Israel, Italy, Netherlands, New Zealand, Spain and Switzerland). Researchers employed a cross-national approach for precise macro areas (e.g. Africa = 1; Europe, n = 6; Scandinavia, n = 3; United Kingdom<sup>4</sup>, n = 11), with a comparative purpose between two or more nations (e.g. Fasting and Pfister, 2000; Knoppers and Anthonissen, 2003) or with a global focus (e.g. Klein, 2004; Torgler, 2008).

In total, there are 11 countries or macro areas where three or more studies were conducted, meaning that 76.7% of publications are concentrated in these territories. Table 2.6 shows the distribution of the most researched themes in areas where at least three studies took place.

Sociological investigations of players' gender issues (n = 16) is the leading theme in these countries, followed by historical evolution of the women's game (n = 13) and women's football fandom (n = 13). Also, women's football was examined from four of the five identified disciplines in England, Europe, Germany and the US while some specific themes were exclusively researched in certain geographical areas (e.g. *economic-attractiveness-players* was investigated only in Sweden).

---

<sup>4</sup> Despite being one political country, United Kingdom presents separate football identities. However, here it was considered as a macro-area due to some studies either including different British nations or not explicitly stating in which part of the United Kingdom the research was conducted.

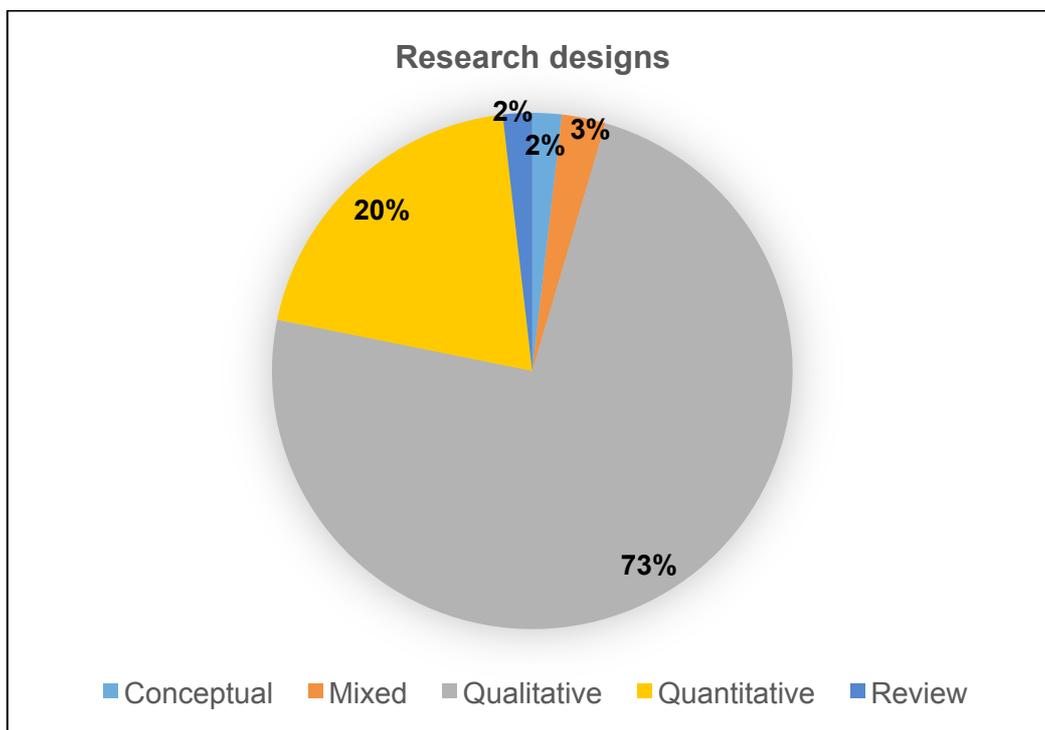
**Table 2.6** – Publications’ distribution over geographical contexts where three or more studies were conducted

			Denmark	England	Europe	Germany	International	Korea S.	Norway	Scandinavia	Scotland	Sweden	UK	US	Total
<i>Economics</i>	Attractiveness	Players										1			1
	Competitiveness	Federation					1								1
		Leagues			1										1
	Consumption	Fandom				2								1	3
	Success	Country					7								7
<i>History</i>	Evolution	Country	1	2	1	2	1	1	1		1	1		2	13
		Fandom	1	1											2
		Players			1										1
<i>Management</i>	Organisation	Club		1	1										2
	Policy	Federation		1											1
<i>Marketing</i>	Branding	Club										1			1
		League	1												1
	Consumption	Fandom				2								1	3
	Strategy	Federation		1											1
		League												3	3
<i>Sociology</i>	Gender	Administrators											1		1

		Denmark	England	Europe	Germany	International	Korea S.	Norway	Scandinavia	Scotland	Sweden	UK	US	Total
	Coaches		2		1			2				1		6
	Country					1								1
	Fandom	1	4	3			1	1				2	1	13
	Media				1			1				1	2	5
	Players		3	2		2				2		5	2	16
	Players / Administrators		1											1
	Referees						1							1
Migration	Players								3					3
Role models	Federation				1									1
	Players											1		1
Total		4	16	9	9	12	3	5	3	3	3	11	12	

### 2.4.5 Research methodology

A large majority of studies was conducted using qualitative approaches (Figure 2.1). Most of the studies dealing with the historical evolution of women's football and articles published in the area of sociology employed document analysis, interviews or mixed methods. All articles in the economics domain used quantitative data and statistical tests such as regression analysis and analysis of variance (ANOVA). Management research combined multiple methods (e.g. combination of observation or questionnaires and interviews) while studies in marketing collected data predominantly via questionnaires and surveys. Studies were labelled as 'conceptual' where no participants were specifically identified but rather a theoretical approach was described.



**Figure 2.1** – Research designs utilised to study women's football

## ***2.5 Discussion and conclusions***

The presentation of findings facilitated the fulfilment of the first two aims of this integrative review as it provided a detailed account of women's football literature to date. Building on this newly gained information, the next sections will summarise key findings and suggest future research directions in order to accomplish the third and last objective of this research.

### ***2.5.1 Researched themes and their evolution over time: what's next?***

The presence of some more 'mature' themes (i.e. themes that have been researched more frequently and consistently over time), the emergence of 'recent' research avenues and the overall intensification in the number of publications on women's football indicate that research on this sport is blossoming. In particular, the last two decades have seen studies conducted around 26 different themes. However, the number of themes with less than three publications is 15, which suggests a need to strengthen and expand the understanding of particular areas, topics and perspectives in women's football research.

As observed in this integrative review, there is an abundance of studies that reported on the stereotypes and continued prejudices present in football (see e.g. Caudwell, 1999, 2003, 2011; Fielding-Loyd and Meân, 2008; Hjelseth and Hovden, 2014). Gender constraints remain a major issue for women to emerge and gain credibility across all levels of the football world, including: coaching (Fasting and Pfister, 2000; Fasting, Sand and Nordstrand, 2017; Fielding-Lloyd and Meân, 2008; Lewis, Roberts and Andrews, 2015; Norman, 2014; Schlesinger and Weigelt-Schlesinger, 2012; Skogvang and Fasting, 2013), media (Christopherson, Janning

and McConnell, 2002; Coche, 2016; Peeters and Elling, 2015; Peeters and van Sterkenburg, 2017; Pfister, 2015b; Skogvang, 2009), fandom (Ben-Porat, 2009; Dunn, 2017; Hjelseth and Hovden, 2014; Kim, 2004; Mintert and Pfister, 2015; Pfister, 2013; Pfister, Lennein, Mintert, 2013; Pope, 2012, 2014, 2015, 2016; Pope and Williams, 2011; Selmer and Sülzle, 2010) and refereeing (Kim and Hong, 2016; Perreau-Niel and Erard, 2015), as well as positions of power such as national federations' organisational boards (Strittmatter and Skirstad, 2017; Welford, 2011). The steady number of publications on historical and sociological domains demonstrated that researchers frequently shine a light on the socio-cultural, political, economic and legislative context in which women's football has evolved over time (see e.g. Bourke, 2003; Fasting, 2003; Macbeth, 2002; Pfister *et al.*, 1999). Specifically, the majority of these articles strongly emphasised hegemonic gender relations as part of a dominant logic that still exists across various areas of football. While being predominantly descriptive, these contributions help underline how the history of women's sports (and of women in sport) is deeply characterised by the degree of gender (in)equality and the evolving role of women in society. In line with this, we argue that it remains difficult to discern clearly between football historical accounts and sociological investigations about gender without considering that the game itself represents a platform for the social construction and presentation of hegemonic masculinities (Pfister, 2015a). Thus, we agree with Williams and Hess' (2015) point that any research agenda concerning the relationship between women and football will necessarily contribute to wider understanding of associations between politics, gender and sport. With regards to future studies in these areas, we call for new contributions that specifically look at the experiences of women occupying non-playing roles (e.g. referees) and leadership positions (e.g.

administrators, see Burton, 2015 for a review) in (women's) football as comparatively less attention has been paid to the perspective of these actors to date.

Literature considering gender issues further strengthened the conceptualisation that football is male-dominated and that women's football still faces challenges that impede or prevent progress. However, there are some contributions that account for the increasing number of female players and the improvements in women's football competitions (e.g. Hjelm and Olofsson, 2003; Hjelm, 2011), suggesting that as more women participate in football, matches become gradually more contested, balanced and exciting to watch (Araujo and Mießen, 2017; Pollard and Gómez, 2014). Importantly, attractiveness and competitiveness of the game are two characteristics that can drive demand for women's football (e.g. LeFeuvre, Stephenson and Walcott, 2013; Klein, 2009; Hallmann, 2012; Hallmann *et al.*, 2016; Meier and Leinwather, 2012, Schallhorn, Knoll and Schramm, 2017), help stimulate interest from fans (see Andreff and Scelles, 2015; Scelles *et al.*, 2013 for a review) and potentially lead to higher levels of media coverage and appeal to sponsors (Pfister, 2010). However, while these represent some of the principal issues that women's football stakeholders struggle to overcome, to date few publications in sport economics have empirically investigated the causality between factors that determined such developments in the women's game. Future studies in this area should critically evaluate the rather simplistic assumption that the low level of demand observed in women's football is due to the 'poor quality' of female players' technical performances. These debates should be reversed by referring to cases, such as Sweden and the US, where women's teams and female players have become popular and accepted (Hjelm, 2011; Hjelm and Olofsson, 2003). In addition, these examples should be utilised as baseline

information to systematically answer questions about the improved levels of competitiveness in women's sports. As noted by Frick (2011), changes in women's sports competitiveness are not due to females' biological and psychological predispositions but to increasing prize money and improved socio-cultural conditions. Related to these aspects, articles (e.g. Brendtmann, Carsten and Otten, 2016; Jacobs, 2014) that tested for the importance of socio-economic factors in determining a country's international sporting success in women's football consistently found that gender equality is associated with better sporting performances. This would suggest that these countries are also more likely to invest in women's sports. However, available studies in women's football do not provide clear evidence to support this assumption.

Also, some articles (e.g. Bell and Blakey, 2010; Hellborg, 2013; Southall, Nagel and LeGrande, 2005) discussed where and how women's football is positioned and understood in the complex institutional environment of contemporary sports. In doing so, they have given attention to some of the issues that women's football stakeholders should recognise when it comes to selling women's football, a product that is influenced by a dual logic of 'business' and 'cause' (Allison, 2016). These publications described aspects of the game - including its contradictions - and proposed a number of critical questions on reasons that led to the failure of the first two attempts by women's football to break into the American professional sports market, specifically: Should these failures be interpreted as a backlash for equality? Is women's football not big enough to generate profitable business? What does the sport market stand for?

Understanding the positioning of women's football requires careful evaluations of how the sport may come to the fore across different sport cultures. In European

countries, the percentage of girls that play football at grassroots levels has certainly increased in the last three decades (UEFA, 2017). However, only in a few countries such as France, Sweden, Germany and England have leagues and matches started to gain considerable media attention and audiences. Thus, it is critical to consider that women's football is in a period of transition which inevitably presents divergent interests and contrasting forces. For instance, on the one hand, some national federations are trying to overhaul their leagues and turn them into full-time professional leagues (e.g. FA Women's Super League) in an attempt to cope with external pressures coming from social and political institutions. On the other hand, women's football clubs' owners and executives need to face challenges such as lack of financial profitability (European Clubs Association (ECA), 2014) and organisational difficulties (e.g. Aoki *et al.*, 2010; Welford, 2013).

Along with these, women's football researchers will need to engage in a number of critical issues that have emerged in women's football over the last 15 years. These include: the need for higher investment into the game (including shares of prize money at national and international tournaments), the necessity to modernise governance structures and uncertainty about players' career development, their working conditions (including policies for parental and childcare provisions) and their professional status (FIFPro, 2017a, 2017b, 2017c).

Based on this discussion, it is important that future research in women's football adopt cross-disciplinary approaches so as to:

- Increase the number of investigations regarding the positions of women in non-playing roles. These might provide additional insights on the challenges that women need to face in a men-dominated world;

- Focus research initiatives on cultures and countries that successfully challenged imbalanced gendered practices in (women's) football. These may offer explanations and insights about participant involvement and 'cultural appropriation' of the game;
- Identify, model and test the context- and sport-related factors that drive women's football development in terms of game attractiveness and competitiveness. This will enable researchers to develop theories on the evolution of the game from a sport economics perspective (see Berri, 2004; Szymanski, 2008, 2010 for a discussion) and help stakeholders evaluate key elements affecting the overall development of the game (e.g. participation rate, media coverage, financial investment), prioritise their actions and measure their outcomes in practice;
- Help understand the positioning of women's football in the professional sports market and evaluate the strategies undertaken by football leagues and clubs to sell the product and at the same time develop long-term sustainability;
- Organise a unified framework that takes into account the existing divergent institutional logics and conflicting interests currently existing in the context of women's football in order to provide effective solutions to the abovementioned concerns; and
- Explore experiences of women (semi-)professional footballers with regards to their employment work-life issues as well the impact that welfare policies can have on their careers.

### *2.5.2 Geographical location of research: is there a need to explore different countries and cultures?*

Research on women's football has been conducted around the globe considering more than 25 countries/areas. However, our results show that over three-quarters of women's football literature focussed on the same territories (e.g. Western Europe and the US). Importantly, those nations studied have never been ranked lower than 31<sup>st</sup> (out of 177) in the FIFA/Coca-Cola World Women's ranking, meaning that research has concentrated on areas where women's football is already recognised and is to some extent developed.

Given the ambitions of international football authorities to develop the game worldwide and the important roles that cultural and socio-political context play in the development of women's football, we suggest that scholars consider broadening their research focus to include cultures and countries where less research has been conducted to date. For example, African, Asian and Latin American countries have been given comparatively less attention in the literature. In addition, nations where predominant cultures present lower levels of democracy and gender equality should be investigated more closely in order to enhance understanding of the societal attitudes that potentially lead to lower levels of women participation in football. This will help advance awareness about the impact that both culture and football policies have on women's football development and enable researchers and practitioners to ascertain factors that should be considered in designing initiatives to foster the growth of the game in different countries.

### *2.5.3 Research methodology: how should we investigate women's football?*

This integrative review shows that women's football has been investigated primarily through qualitative research. This is to be expected given the prominence of sociological and historical studies which tend to adopt qualitative approaches such as interviews and document analysis. However, it is also important to underline that, in contrast to men's football where a plethora of statistics and quantitative measures is often publicly available, women's football research still relies on a relatively limited amount of quantitative data. A similar concern was expressed by Martinez-Lagunas, Niessen and Hartmann (2014) when reviewing contributions from sport science domains, a field where quantitative methods are commonly used.

Nevertheless, the emergence of new themes in economic and management disciplines contribute to the need to employ quantitative or mixed methods in women's football research. This is in line with the gradual process of expansion of women's football and the position it starts to occupy in the sports environment which might have led stakeholders to collect more measurable data in order to monitor and benchmark women's football. Therefore, based on this review, we argue that women's football literature will potentially shift its trend towards a more balanced distribution of qualitative and quantitative research outputs in the future. This interpretation is further reinforced by the release of official reports by FIFA in 2014 (e.g. The FIFA Women's Football Survey) and UEFA since 2011 (e.g. Women's Football across National Associations) which include quantitative information about technical and managerial aspects of women's football in national member associations.

#### *2.5.4 An integrative review on women's football: final remarks*

This integrative review reveals that research on women's football has been increasing in the last two decades. However, it is worth noting that scholars from various academic disciplines have put considerable attention on this sport only in the last seven to ten years. Therefore, a number of research avenues still need to be explored, which in turn, will help interested parties understand how the sport can develop in the coming years.

We argue that historical and sociological research represents the foundations of women's football literature with social and cultural constraints such as gender discrimination and prejudices being identified as two of the principal problems when considering the experiences of women in football, both in playing and non-playing roles. This highlighting of broader societal concerns emphasises the need to consider issues such as power, ethics or institutional behaviour and governance when discussing – for instance – the allocation of resources to women's football by national governing bodies. Unquestionably, gender stereotypes still remain an issue within the football world. However, attitudes are gradually changing as women increasingly occupy more important positions in society and sport (Burton, 2015; Strittmatter and Skirstad, 2017; Welford, 2011). Importantly, Gammelsæter and Senaux (2011) put forward two critical questions related to this issue: 1) is the recent development of women's football a result of the general shift towards a more 'gender neutral' society? or, 2) is it an attempt by national governing bodies to extend their influence beyond men's football, presenting themselves as promoters of sport-for-all?

Higher gender equality in society, coupled with higher levels of democratisation, have been associated to greater levels of women's participation in sport (e.g. Balish, 2017). However, while international governing bodies have allocated larger amounts of resources to foster development of the sport in recent years, women's football still struggles to build a solid platform in terms of participation, professionalization and interest from fans, media and sponsors. Thus, additional questions arise: Do governing bodies provide equal opportunities to access and participate in the sport to both boys and girls? In more practical terms, does this increased allocation of resources to women's football reflect gender parity? Or should it be tailored differently to encourage higher levels of participation and enhance the overall development of the sport? In line with this, we believe that future research should discuss the interest in and support of women's football in different countries as well as identify, highlight and compare the situation of women's football with the development of other women's sports.

Furthermore, we suggest that future studies take into account the evolution of women's football from managerial and business perspectives. Along with other lines of inquiry, it will be critical to pose a question as to whether women's football should seek to follow the path taken by men's football, that is to say, a path that has led to commercialisation (with the related issues that this can generate) (Kennedy and Kennedy, 2012; Morrow, 2017), or, instead, identify and follow a different path and business model reflective of the specifics of women's football.

## 2.6 References

- Allison, R. (2016), "Business or Cause? Gendered Institutional Logics in Women's Professional Soccer", *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, Vol. 40 No. 3, pp. 237-262.
- Andreff, W. and Scelles, N. (2015), "Walter C. Neale 50 Years After: Beyond Competitive Balance, the League Standing Effect Tested With French Football Data", *Journal of Sports Economics*, Vol. 16 No. 8, pp. 819-834.
- Aoki, K., Crumbach, S., Naicker, C., Schmitter, S. and Smith, N. (2010), "Identifying Best Practice in Women's Football: Case Study in the European Context". FIFA Master 10<sup>th</sup> Edition, unpublished thesis, available at: [http://www.cies-uni.org/sites/default/files/identifying\\_best\\_practices\\_in\\_women\\_football.pdf](http://www.cies-uni.org/sites/default/files/identifying_best_practices_in_women_football.pdf) (accessed 18 August 2016).
- Araujo, M. C. and Mießen, K. A. M. (2017), "Twenty Years of the FIFA Women's World Cup: An Outstanding Evolution of Competitiveness", *Women in Sport and Physical Activity Journal*, Vol. 25 No. 1, pp. 60-64.
- Balish, S. M. (2017), "Democracy predicts sport and recreation membership: Insights from 52 countries", *Journal of Epidemiology and Global Health*, Vol. 7 No. 1, pp. 21-28.
- Bell, B. and Blakey P. (2010), "Do Boys and Girls Go Out To Play? Women's Football and Social Marketing at EURO 2005", *International Journal of Sport Management and Marketing*, Vol. 7 No. 3-4, pp. 156-172.
- Ben-Porat, A. (2009), "Not Just for Men: Israeli Women Who Fancy Football", *Soccer & Society*, Vol. 10 No. 6, pp. 883-896.
- Berri, D. J. (2004), "Is There a Short Supply of Tall People in the College Game?", In Fizel, J. and Fort R. (Ed.), *Economics of College Sports*, Praeger Publishers, Westport, CT, pp. 211-223.
- Botelho, V. L. and Agergaard, S. (2011), "Moving for the Love of the Game? International Migration of Female Footballers into Scandinavian countries", *Soccer & Society*, Vol. 12 No. 6, pp. 806-819.
- Bourke, A. (2003), "Women's Football in the Republic of Ireland: Past Events and Future Prospects". *Soccer & Society*, Vol. 4 No. 2-3, pp. 162-181.
- Burton, L. J. (2015), "Underrepresentation of Women in Sport Leadership: A Review of Research", *Sport Management Review*, Vol. 18 No. 2, pp. 155-165.
- Brendtmann, J., Carsten, J. C. and Otten, S. (2016), "The Effect of Gender Equality on International Soccer Performance", *International Journal of Sport Finance*, Vol. 11 No. 4, pp. 288-309.

- Caudwell, J. (1999), "Women's Football in the United Kingdom Theorizing Gender and Unpacking the Butch Lesbian Image", *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, Vol. 23 No. 4, pp. 390-402.
- Caudwell, J. (2003), "Sporting Gender: Women's Footballing Bodies as Sites/Sights for the (Re) Articulation of Sex, Gender, and Desire", *Sociology of Sport Journal*, Vol. 20 No. 4, pp. 371-386.
- Caudwell, J. (2011), "Gender, Feminism and Football Studies", *Soccer & Society*, Vol. 12 No. 3, pp. 330-344.
- Christopherson, N., Janning M. and McConnell, E. D. (2002), "Two Kicks Forward, One Kick Back: A Content Analysis of Media Discourses on the 1999 Women's World Cup Soccer Championship", *Sociology of Sport Journal*, Vol. 19 No. 2, pp. 170-188.
- Coche, R. (2016), "Promoting Women's Soccer through Social Media: How the US Federation used Twitter for the 2011 World Cup", *Soccer & Society*, Vol. 17 No. 1, pp. 90-108.
- Cooper, H. M. (1989), *Integrating research: A guide for literature reviews*, Sage Publications: Newbury Park.
- Dunn, C. (2016), "Elite Footballers as Role Models: Promoting Young Women's Football Participation", *Soccer & Society*, Vol. 17 No. 6, pp. 843-855.
- Dunn, C. (2017), "The Impact of the Supporters Trust Movement on Women's Feelings and Practices of their Football Fandom", *Soccer & Society*, Vol. 4 No. 4, pp. 462-475.
- ECA (2014), "European Clubs Association - Women's Football Committee – Women's Club Football Analysis" (Report), available at [http://www.ecaeurope.com/PageFiles/7585/ECA\\_Womens%20Club%20Football%20Analysis\\_double%20pages.pdf](http://www.ecaeurope.com/PageFiles/7585/ECA_Womens%20Club%20Football%20Analysis_double%20pages.pdf) (accessed 22 November 2016).
- Fasting, K. and Pfister, G. (2000), "Female and Male Coaches in the Eyes of Female Elite Soccer players", *European Physical Education Review*, Vol. 6 No. 1, pp. 91-110.
- Fasting, K. (2003), "Small Country–Big Results: Women's football in Norway", *Soccer & Society*, Vol. 4 No. 2-3, pp. 149-161.
- Fasting, K, Sand, T. S. and Nordstrand, H. R. (2017), "One of the Few: The Experiences of Female Elite-level Coaches in Norwegian Football", *Soccer & Society*. Published online DOI: 10.1080/14660970.2017.1331163

- Fielding-Lloyd, B. and Meân L. J. (2008), "Standards and Separatism: The Discursive Construction of Gender in English Soccer Coach Education", *Sex Roles*, Vol. 58 No. 1-2, pp. 24-39.
- FIFA (2014), "The Women's Survey", available at: [http://www.fifa.com/mm/document/footballdevelopment/women/02/52/26/49/womensfootballsurvey2014\\_e\\_english.pdf](http://www.fifa.com/mm/document/footballdevelopment/women/02/52/26/49/womensfootballsurvey2014_e_english.pdf) (accessed 7 October 2016).
- FIFA (2016), "FIFA 2.0: The Vision for the Future", available at: [https://www.sportanddev.org/sites/default/files/downloads/fifa\\_2.0\\_the\\_vision\\_for\\_the\\_future.pdf](https://www.sportanddev.org/sites/default/files/downloads/fifa_2.0_the_vision_for_the_future.pdf) (accessed 22 November 2016).
- FIFPro (2017a), "2017 FIFPro Global Employment Report: Working Conditions in Professional Women's Football", available at: <https://www.fifpro.org/attachments/article/6986/2017%20FIFPro%20Women%20Football%20Global%20Employment%20Report-Final.pdf> (accessed 15 December 2017).
- FIFPro (2017b), "Norway's Equal Pay Deal Explained", available at: <https://www.fifpro.org/news/who-s-next-explaining-the-norwegian-football-pay-deal/en/> (accessed 11 October 2017).
- FIFPro (2017c), "Danish Women's World Cup Conflict Explained", available at: <https://www.fifpro.org/news/danish-women-s-world-cup-conflict-explained/en/> (accessed 19 September 2017).
- Frick, B. (2011), "Gender Differences in Competitiveness: Empirical Evidence from Professional Distance Running", *Labour Economics*, Vol. 18 No.3, pp. 389-398.
- Gammelsæter, H. and Senaux, B. (2011), "Understanding the Governance of Football Across Europe", in Gammelsæter, H. and Senaux, B., *The Organisation and Governance of Top Football Across Europe. An Institutional Perspective*, Routledge: New York, pp. 268-291.
- Hallmann, K. (2012). "Women's 2011 Football World Cup: The Impact of Perceived Images of Women's Soccer and the World Cup 2011 on Interest in Attending Matches", *Sport Management Review*, Vol. 15 No. 1, pp. 33-42.
- Hallmann, K., Oshimi, D., Harada, M., Matsuoka, H. and Breuer, C. (2016), "Spectators' Point of Attachment and Their Influence on Behavioural Intentions of Women's National Football Games", *Soccer & Society*, p. 1-21. doi: 10.1080/14660970.2016.1267634
- Hellborg, A. M. (2013), "The Challenges of Sustaining a Professional Soccer League for Women", paper presented at Football Research in an Enlarged Europe (FREE) conference, June, University of Copenhagen (Denmark), available at: <http://www.free-project.eu/documents-free/Working%20Papers/Hellborg%20The%20challenges%20of%20sustainin>

[g%20a%20professional%20soccer%20league%20for%20women.pdf](#)  
(accessed 14 September 2016).

Hjelm, J. and Olofsson E. (2003), "A Breakthrough: Women's Football in Sweden", *Soccer & Society*, Vol. 4 No. 2-3, pp. 182-204.

Hjelm, J. (2011), "The Bad Female Football Player: Women's Football in Sweden", *Soccer & Society*, Vol. 12 No. 2, pp. 143-158.

Hjelseth, A. and Hovden, J. (2014), "Negotiating the Status of Women's Football in Norway. An Analysis of Online Supporter Discourse", *European Journal for Sport and Society*, Vol. 11 No. 3, pp. 253-277.

Jacobs, J. C. (2014), "Programme-level Determinants of Women's International Football Performance", *European Sport Management Quarterly*, Vol. 14 No. 5, pp. 521-537.

Kennedy, P. and Kennedy, D. (2012), "Football Supporters and the Commercialisation of Football: Comparative Responses across Europe", *Soccer & Society*, Vol. 13 No. 3, pp. 327-340.

Kim, H-M. (2004), "Feminization of the 2002 World Cup and Women's Fandom", *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, Vol. 5 No. 1, pp. 42-51.

Kim, M-C. and Hong, E. (2016), "A Red Card for Women: Female Officials ostracized in South Korean Football", *Asian Journal of Women's Studies*, Vol. 22 No. 2, pp. 114-130.

Kjær, J. B. and Agergaard, S. (2013), "Understanding Women's Professional Soccer: the Case of Denmark and Sweden", *Soccer & Society*, Vol. 14 No. 6, pp. 816-833.

Klein, M. W. (2004), "Work and Play: International Evidence of Gender Equality in Employment and Sports", *Journal of Sports Economics*, Vol. 5 No. 3, pp. 227-242.

Klein, M-L. (2009), "Spectator Demand for Women's Football in Germany", paper presented at 17<sup>th</sup> European Association for Sport Management (EASM) Conference, September 16-19, Amsterdam, Netherlands, available at <http://www.easm.net/download/2009/f548e401f887b14281f25dcc1843e781.pdf> (accessed 30 November 2016).

Knoppers, A. and Anthonissen, A. (2003), "Women's Soccer in the United States and the Netherlands: Differences and Similarities in Regimes of Inequalities", *Sociology of Sport Journal*, Vol. 20 No. 4, pp. 351-370.

LeFeuvre, A. D., Stephenson, F. E. and Walcott, S. M. (2013), "Football Frenzy: The Effect of the 2011 World Cup on Women's Professional Soccer League Attendance", *Journal of Sports Economics*, Vol. 14 No. 4, pp. 440-448.

- Lewis, R. (2009), “ ‘Our Lady Specialists at Pikes Lane’: Female Spectators in Early English Professional Football”, *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, Vol. 26 No. 15, pp. 2161-2181.
- Lewis, C. J., Roberts, S. J and Andrews, H. (2015), “ ‘Why am I putting myself through this?’ Women Football Coaches’ Experiences of the Football Association's Coach Education Process”, *Sport, Education and Society*, pp. 1-12.
- Macbeth, J. (2002), “The Development of Women’s Football in Scotland”, *Sports Historian*, Vol. 22 No. 2, pp. 149-163.
- Martinez-Lagunas, V., Niessen, M. and Hartmann, U. (2014), “Women’s Football: Player Characteristics and Demands of the Game”, *Journal of Sport and Health Sciences*, Vol. 3 No. 4, pp. 258-272.
- Meier, H. E., Konjer, M. and Leinwather, M. (2016), “The Demand for Women’s League Soccer in Germany”, *European Sport Management Quarterly*, Vol. 16 No. 1, pp. 1-19.
- Meier, H. E. and Leinwather, M. (2012), “Women as ‘Armchair Audience’? Evidence from German National Team Football”, *Sociology of Sport Journal*, Vol. 29 No. 3, pp. 365-384.
- Melkersson, M. (2013), “Brand Management as a Vantage Point for Revisiting Developmental Opportunities and Challenges within Contemporary Women’s Soccer in Sweden: the Case of LdB FC Malmö”, *Soccer & Society*, Vol. 14 No. 6, pp. 834-849.
- Miles, M. B. and Huberman, A. M. (1994), *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
- Mintert, S-M. and Pfister, G. (2015), “The FREE project and the Feminization of Football: The Role of Women in the European Fan Community”, *Soccer and Society*, Vol. 16 No. 2-3, pp. 405-421.
- Morrow, S. (2017), “Football, Economics and Finance”, in Hughson, J., Moore, K., Spaaij, R., Maguire, J., *Routledge Handbook of Football Studies*, Routledge, New York, pp. 163-176.
- Norman, L. (2014), “A Crisis of Confidence: Women Coaches’ Responses to Their Engagement in Resistance”, *Sport, Education and Society*, Vol. 19 No. 5, pp. 532-551.
- O’Mathúna, D. P., (2000), “Evidence-based Practice and Reviews of Therapeutic Touch”, *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*, Vol. 32 No. 3, pp. 279–285.

- Peeters, R. and Elling, A. (2015), "The Coming of Age of Women's Football in the Dutch Sports Media, 1995–2013", *Soccer & Society*, Vol. 16 No. 5-6, pp. 620-638.
- Peeters, R. and van Sterkenburg, J. (2017), "Making Sense of Race/Ethnicity and Gender in Televised Football: Reception Research among British Students", *Sport in Society*, Vol. 20 No. 5-6, pp. 1-15.
- Perreau-Niel, A. and Erard, C. (2015), "French Football Referees: An Exploratory Study of the Conditions of Access and Employment for Referees in Terms of Level and Gender", *Soccer & Society*, Vol. 16 No. 1, pp. 1-16.
- Pfister, G., Fasting, K., Scraton, S. and Vazquez, B. (1999), "Women and Football - A Contradiction? The Beginnings of Women's Football in Four European Countries", *The European Sports History Review*, Vol. 1, pp. 1-26.
- Pfister, G., Lenneis, V. and Mintert, S. (2013), "Female Fans of Men's Football - A Case Study in Denmark", *Soccer & Society*, Vol. 14 No. 6, pp. 850-871.
- Pfister, G. (2010), "Women in Sport: Gender Relations and Future Perspectives", *Sport in Society: Culture, Commerce, Media, Politics*, Vol. 13 No. 2, pp. 234-248.
- Pfister, G. (2013), "Women, Football and European Integration: Aims and Questions, Methodological and Theoretical Approaches", *Annales Kinesiologiae*, Vol. 4 No. 1, pp. 29-43.
- Pfister, G. (2015a), "Assessing the Sociology of Sport: On Women and Football", *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, Vol. 50 No. 4-5, pp. 563-569.
- Pfister, G. (2015b), "Sportswomen in the German Popular Press: A Study Carried Out in the Context of the 2011 Women's Football World Cup", *Soccer & Society*, Vol. 16 No. 5-6, pp. 639-656.
- Pollard, R. and Gómez, M. A. (2014), "Comparison of Home Advantage in Men's and Women's Football Leagues in Europe", *European Journal of Sport Science*, Vol. 14 No. 1, pp. S77-S83.
- Pope, S. (2012), " 'The Love of My Life': The Meaning and Importance of Sport for Female Fans", *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, Vol. 12 No. 6, pp. 176-195.
- Pope, S. (2014), " 'There are Some Daft People Out There!': Exploring Female Sport and Media Fandoms", *Sport in Society*, Vol. 17 No. 2, pp. 254-269.
- Pope, S. (2015), " 'It's Just Such a Class Thing': Rivalry and Class Distinction Between Female Fans of Men's Football and Rugby Union", *Sociological Research Online*, Vol. 20 No. 1, pp. 1-14.

- Pope, S. (2016), "Female Fan Experiences and Interpretations of the 1958 Munich Air Disaster, the 1966 World Cup Finals and the Rise of Footballers as Sexualised National Celebrities", *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, Vol. 51 No. 7, pp. 848-866.
- Pope, S. and Williams, J. (2011), " 'White Shoes to a Football Match!': Female Experiences of Football's Golden Age in England", *Transformative Works and Cultures*, No. 6. Published online DOI: 10.3983/twc.2011.0230.
- Rothbauer, P. M. (2008), "Triangulation", in Given, L. M. (Ed.), *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods*, SAGE Publications: Thousands Oaks, pp. 893-894.
- Scelles, N., Durand, C., Bonnal, L., Goyeau, D. and Andreff, W. (2013), "Competitive Balance versus Competitive Intensity Before a Match: Is One of These Two Concepts More Relevant in Explaining Attendance? The Case of the French football Ligue 1 Over the Period 2008-2011", *Applied Economics*, Vol. 45 No. 29, pp. 4184-4192.
- Schallhorn, C., Knoll, J. and Schramm, H. (2017), "'Girls Just Want to Have Fun?' Sex Differences in Motives of Watching the FIFA World Cup and the UEFA European Championship", *Sport in Society*, Vol. 20 No. 9, pp. 1118-1133.
- Schlesinger, T. and Weigelt-Schlesinger, Y. (2012), " 'Poor thing' or 'Wow, She Knows How to Do It'—Gender Stereotypes as Barriers to Women's Qualification in the Education of Soccer Coaches", *Soccer & Society*, Vol. 13 No. 1, pp. 56-72.
- Schulenkorf, N., Sherry, E. and Rowe, K. (2016), "Sport for Development: An Integrated Literature Review", *Journal of Sport Management*, Vol. 30 No. 1, pp. 22-39.
- Scraton, S., Caudwell, J. and Holland, S. (2005), " 'Bend It Like Patel: Centring 'Race', Ethnicity and Gender in Feminist Analysis of Women's Football in England", *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, Vol. 40 No. 1, pp. 71-88.
- Selmer, N. and Sülzle, A. (2010), "(En-)Gendering the European Football Family: The Changing Discourse on Women and Gender at EURO 2008", *Soccer & Society*, Vol. 11 No. 6, pp. 803-814.
- Skogvang, B. O and Fasting, K. (2013), "Football and Sexualities in Norway", *Soccer & Society*, Vol. 14 No. 6, pp. 872-886.
- Skogvang, B. O. (2009), "The Sport/Media Complex in Norwegian Football", *Soccer & Society*, Vol. 10 No. 3-4, pp. 438-458.
- Southall, R. M., Nagel, M. S. and LeGrande, D. J. (2005), "Build It and They Will Come? The Women's United Soccer Association: A Collision of Exchange

- Theory and Strategic Philanthropy”, *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, Vol. 14 No. 3, pp. 158-167.
- Strittmatter, A-M. and Skirstad, B. (2017), “Managing Football Organizations: A Man’s World? Comparing Women in Decision-making Positions in Germany and Norway and Their International Influence: A Contextual Approach”, *Soccer & Society*, Vol. 18 No. 1, pp. 81-101.
- Szymanski, S. (2008), “A Theory of the Evolution of Modern Sport”, *Journal of Sport History*, Vol. 35 No. 1, pp. 1-32.
- Szymanski, S. (2010), “Income Inequality, Competitive Balance and the Attractiveness of Team Sports: Some Evidence and a Natural Experiment from English Soccer”, in Szymanski, S., *Football Economics and Policy*, Palgrave Macmillann, London, pp. 182-201.
- Tavares de Souza, M., Dias da Silva, M. and de Carvalho, R. (2010), “Integrative review: What is it? How to do it?”, *Einstein (Sao Paulo)*, Vol. 8 No. 1, pp. 102–106.
- Tiesler, N. C. (2016), “Three Types of Transnational Players: Differing Women's Football Mobility Projects in Core and Developing Countries”, *Revista Brasileira de Ciências do Esporte*, Vol. 38 No. 2, pp. 201-210.
- Torgler, B. (2008), “The Determinants of Women's International Soccer Performances”, *International Journal of Sport Management and Marketing*, Vol. 3 No. 4, pp. 305-318.
- Torraco, R. J. (2005), “Writing Integrative Literature Reviews: Guidelines and Examples”, *Human Resource Development Review*, Vol. 4 No. 3, pp. 356–367.
- UEFA (2016), “Women`s Football across the National Associations 2015-2016”, available at: [http://www.uefa.org/MultimediaFiles/Download/OfficialDocument/uefaorg/Women'sfootball/02/30/93/30/2309330\\_DOWNLOAD.pdf](http://www.uefa.org/MultimediaFiles/Download/OfficialDocument/uefaorg/Women'sfootball/02/30/93/30/2309330_DOWNLOAD.pdf) (accessed 7 October 2016).
- UEFA (2017), “Women`s Football across the National Associations 2016-2017”, available at: [https://www.uefa.com/MultimediaFiles/Download/OfficialDocument/uefaorg/Women'sfootball/02/43/13/56/2431356\\_DOWNLOAD.pdf](https://www.uefa.com/MultimediaFiles/Download/OfficialDocument/uefaorg/Women'sfootball/02/43/13/56/2431356_DOWNLOAD.pdf) (accessed 15 November 2017).
- Welford, J. (2011), “Tokenism, Ties and Talking Too Quietly: Women`s Experiences in Non-playing Football Roles”, *Soccer & Society*, Vol. 12 No. 3, pp. 365-381.

- Welford, J. (2013), "Outsiders on the Inside: Integrating Female and Male Football Clubs in the UK", paper presented at Football Research in an Enlarged Europe (FREE) conference, June, University of Copenhagen (Denmark).
- Whittemore, R. and Knafl, K. (2005), "The Integrative Review: Updated Methodology", *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, Vol. 52 No. 5, pp. 546-553.
- Williams, J. and Hess, R. (2015), "Women, Football and History: International Perspectives", *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, Vol. 32 No. 18, pp. 2115-2122.

# Chapter 3

## **Women's football development: Key concepts and background information**

One of the overall conclusions from the literature review article presented in chapter 2 is that the topic of women's football has been studied predominantly from historical and sociological perspectives, while limited evidence on the women's game stems from sport management and sport economics disciplines. As already outlined in chapter 1, this helps set the aim of this PhD, which is to contribute to filling some of these gaps by analysing the development of women's football from both management and economic perspectives. This is of particular interest for scholars researching women's football and, more generally, for those working within the areas of sport management and sport development. Also, in line with expectations of international governing bodies for the development of the women's game (FIFA, 2018; UEFA, 2019), football stakeholders can draw upon findings of this study when it comes to plan their strategies.

As discussed in previous sections, women's football is a sport that is going through a phase of significant changes in terms of economic, managerial and organisational aspects. International governing bodies have shared encouraging evidence for the future of women's football, showing the highly impressive structural and organisational improvements and the overall worldwide growth of this sport during the last two decades (FIFA, 2014; UEFA, 2019). According to the latest FIFA strategy on women's football (2018), the target is to double the number of female

players to 60 million by 2026. Furthermore, FIFA has an objective to advance the professionalisation of women players and secure recognition for their profession at member association and confederation levels. Therefore, it appears clear that the ambition is for women's football to continue its development and ultimately to become part of the professional sports market before the end of the next decade.

The subsequent section introduces characteristics of the professional sports industry. Next, a debate is presented on the various interpretations that are attributed to the term 'development' within the sport setting. Following this, a theoretical framework is proposed to synthesise the factors that are thought to underpin development in sport. Based on key concepts from the sport management and sport economics literature, in this framework it is argued that eleven inter-related factors contribute to the process of development. Finally, this chapter provides information about women's football in the European context, illustrating the current state of play and thus providing the rationale for it being an appropriate focus for research.

### ***3.1 The sport industry: An introduction***

With the perception of sport as a public good (Geeraert, Alm & Groll, 2013; Groothuis, Johnson & Whitehead, 2004), the sport industry has traditionally been allowed autonomy and a degree of self-governance under international and EU law (Chappelet, 2016). This permitted the creation of deep-rooted links with government spending (Groeneveld 2009; Masters, 2015), in support of the seemingly virtuous cycle of sport (Grix & Carmichael, 2012).

A varied list of stakeholders surrounds the management and administration of the sport industry, which consists of a broad range of individuals, practices, and

organisations. The sport industry tends to follow a hierarchical structure, with international governing bodies at the top of the global governance and affiliated sports organisations and services providers operating underneath at regional and national levels (Garcia, 2017). For example, in football, governing bodies are defined at local, country, regional and international levels.

Despite most of these being voluntary and non-profit organisations, some researchers argue that national and international governing bodies should be treated as corporations (Barker, 2013; Szymanski & Kuypers, 2000). Since the beginning of the 1990s, the growth of broadcast rights and sponsorship agreements have made the market for global sport and sport-related goods and services flourish (Barker, 2013; Beech, 2013; Gorse & Chadwick, 2010). This increased professionalisation of elite level athletes, eventually leading to mass commercialisation, affected the sport's standing as a non-corporatised industry (Collins, 2017; Kohe, 2017; Rayner, 2018). In addition, globalisation has helped sports extend their reach and further increase revenues for the whole industry (Hughson, 2017; Ziewacz, 2005). Precisely, global sport revenues were calculated at \$121 billion in 2010 (PWC, 2010), with the European men's football market alone worth €25.5 billion in 2016/17 (Deloitte, 2018). Overall, the rapid growth and large revenues generated by sport leagues and organisations have not only benefitted stakeholders within the industry such as athletes, coaches and administrators but also influenced other actors beyond the original boundaries of the sporting environment such as television networks and sports equipment suppliers.

For a sport to generate substantial revenues – as in the case of men's football – it is necessary that various components and stakeholders interact with each other, contributing to such development. Yet, the word 'development' remains subject to

various interpretations in the sport context. In the next section, a discussion is put forward to explain how 'development' is understood both in research and practice. This helps clarify critical elements that are related to this term in sport, as well as assists identification and synthesis of various inter-related factors and stakeholders both benefitting from and contributing to the expansion of a sport. Based on this discussion, European women's football is then taken into account and critical aspects of its development are analysed.

### ***3.2 What is the development of sport?***

Providing an exact definition of 'development' within the context of sport is challenging. According to Houlihan and White (2002), the differentiation of activities that has taken place in sport led to several competing, rather than complementary, interpretations of this term. For instance, in sport management disciplines, 'sport development' is often used as an umbrella term that is concerned with the complex nature of participation and the various benefits that are associated with it (Shilbury, Sotiriadou & Green, 2008). Furthermore, sport development has been referred as 'development *of* sport' but also 'community development *through* sport'. The ambiguity surrounding the concept of 'sport development' has intensified as the related policy area has matured. Such ambiguity reinforced the identity of distinct clusters of interests within the sport policy area, with the result that sports organisations often view each other as rivals for scarce resources rather than partners in a common enterprise (Houlihan & White, 2002).

However, the role of sport development researchers and practitioners includes dealing with the wholesomeness of the sport experience, taking into account the cycle of participation (e.g. from junior to elite), the institution of sport (e.g. rules and regulations) and the processes of sport policy and promotion (Shilbury et al., 2008). Within this large and multifaceted purview of sport development, Shilbury et al. (2008) identified five distinct research themes: (1) policy; (2) development *through* sport; (3) development *of* sport; (4) patterns of sport delivery; and (5) marketing in terms of the relationship between professional sport and participation. Although overlaps are evident amongst the five themes, the foundations of this PhD thesis are laid primarily on discourses that are related to the first and third themes (i.e. policy and development *of* sport). In the next two sections, the focus is narrowed down on to explain the ‘policy’ and ‘development *of* sport’ themes and how these are described in academic research.

### *3.2.1 Sport development research: The policy theme*

The study of policy and politics in sport has been described as a sub-field of political science. Yet, only a few scholars working in the area of sport policy and politics reside in the traditional disciplinary departments of policy studies, public administration and international relations (Grix, Lindsey, De Bosscher & Bloyce, 2018). As suggested by Houlihan (2005), the analysis of sport policy lacks the utilisation of major models and frameworks adopted in other policy areas. This was echoed by Grix (2016, p. 22) who lamented a shortage of academic research conducted “by the very people one would assume would be at the forefront of sport politics analyses: political scientists and international relations scholars”. In fact, the

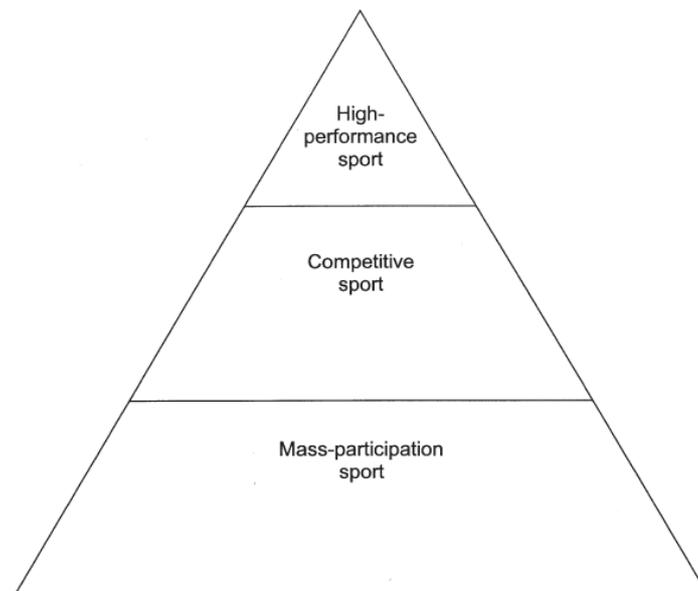
majority of work published in sport policy areas is undertaken by sociologists, historians, management and 'sport studies' experts (Grix et al., 2018).

However, the theme of policy is perhaps one of the most prolific in terms of scholarly contributions in the sport field. This has traditionally followed three main strands: (a) policy formation and the comparative analysis of sport policies (Sam & Jackson, 2006); (b) the influence of political ideologies on sport policy (Green, 2007); and (c) elite sport policy and the relationship with international sporting success (De Bosscher, De Knop, van Bottenburg & Shibli, 2006; Green & Houlihan, 2005; Green & Oakley, 2001; Houlihan & Green, 2008). In addition, more recently, a growing number of theoretically informed papers utilised the sport policy process as a platform to examine broader concepts such as power (Bergsgard, 2018), soft power (Grix & Brannagan, 2016), and legitimacy (Strittmatter, Stenling, Fahlén & Skille, 2018).

The present work aims to extend the domain of literature which has dealt with elite sport policy and the relationship with international sporting success. More precisely, in chapter 4 evidence is offered on how and which policies contribute to the international success of European countries in elite women's football. This helps examine and compare governing bodies' actions in fostering women's football, as well as empirically testing the association between policy-factors and international sporting success. In this regard, this research not only provides stakeholders with practical insights into the factors that influence international sporting success but also discusses methodological and practical challenges of comparing sporting nations. This adds to the body of literature that is concerned with the philosophical positions through which (elite) sport systems can be studied and compared (Dowling, Brown, & Grix, 2018; Henry, Amara, Al-Tauqi, & Lee, 2005).

### 3.2.2 Sport development research: The development of sport theme

With regard to the 'development of sport' theme, Shilbury et al. (2008) indicate that this area has traditionally attracted less attention and that the number of studies with an organisational perspective on this topic is rather limited. The 'development of sport' approach has been dominated by the pyramid metaphor (Bloomfield, 1973; Bramham, Hylton, Jackson & Nesti, 2001; Eady, 1993; Houlihan, 2000), which illustrates the connection between a wide base of sport participants at the lowest level and elite athletes at the top (Figure 3.1).



**Figure 3.1.** Pyramid model of sport development (Green, 2005)

The pyramid model can be used in two ways to explain the development of sport: (a) bottom-up, where resources are allocated for mass sports with an expectation that a wide base will produce many excellent elite athletes (i.e. trickle-up

effect); and (b) top-down, where injecting more resources to elite sports is expected to produce successful elite athletes who act as role models to inspire and encourage mass participation in sport (i.e. trickle-down or demonstration effect) (Sotiriadou, Shilbury & Quick, 2008). Nevertheless, some authors (e.g. Shilbury et al., 2008; Sotiriadou et al., 2008) have disputed the link between the top (i.e. elite) and the bottom (i.e. grassroots) of the pyramid, stating that it does not capture the increasingly sophisticated nature of the sports system.

For example, Shilbury et al. (2008, p. 218) extended the view on the development of sport, arguing that it refers to “the need for sport organisations to ensure a sustainable future by attracting and nurturing participants likely to progress through the system and represents a sport at the elite level”. Importantly, they also add that “clearly, not all participants are likely to be semi-elite or elite athletes” and further indicate consumption of a sport (e.g. attendance at or TV audience of sporting events, purchase of memberships, merchandise and other related products) as a fundamental part of its development. Therefore, the development of a sport is related to and includes actions and initiatives of various stakeholders that go beyond participants.

Similarly, when describing the recent improvements observed in women’s football in their member associations, international football governing bodies often make reference to the importance of having a number of stakeholders involved in the process of development. For instance, they mention the work of national associations in allocating larger financial resources and how these have helped cultivate youth participation, improve infrastructures, expand competitions, intensify grassroots activities and provide appropriate playing environments for players, officials and spectators (FIFA, 2018; UEFA, 2017). Hence, both in research and

practice there is this idea that the process of development in sport is not a linear one. Instead, sports may follow various paths and objectives in order to foster development. These include, but are not limited to, allocation of larger financial resources, accessibility to better sport infrastructures and training facilities, enhanced and more uncertain competitions, improvement in players' sporting performance, higher participation rates at grassroots level, and increased attention from spectators and sponsors as a trigger of revenues and sustainability.

Other scholars (e.g. Andrews, 2004; Collins, 2013; Donnelly, 1996; Guttmann, 1978; Slack, 2003) have focused their attention on the evolution of sports and suggested that the industry has become subject to increasing professionalisation and commercialisation over the last few decades with the advent of broadcasting. In particular, commercial companies quickly started to sponsor competitions, teams and individual athletes following the logic of profit maximisation and consumer capitalism values (Andrews, 2004). On this, Ford and Kerr (2011) offer an interesting perspective to improve understanding about the process of development in sport, utilising the concept of 'business ecosystem'. Analogous to biological ecosystems, the 'business ecosystem' view was initially introduced within socioeconomic sciences to explain industrial dynamics in technology-based sectors (Langlois, 1992; Moore, 1996; Shapiro & Varian, 1999). In essence, researchers draw from the biological domain and take an evolutionary perspective to interpret socioeconomic changes, suggesting that industries are systems of innovation and production in which firms co-operate to develop their ecosystem to their mutual benefit in the attempt to generate financial returns (Moore, 1993). Ford and Kerr (2011) applied this view to the evolution of a sport event such as the Ultimate Fighting Championships (UFC) and argued that its recent successes are due to the development of an effective

'business ecosystem' and its co-evolutionary dynamics. In other words, Ford and Kerr (2011) indicate that successful evolution and development in sports rely on various stakeholders such as athletes, administrators, television networks and sponsors, and on their ability to create collaborative inter-relationships to expand the whole 'business ecosystem' through entrepreneurial opportunism.

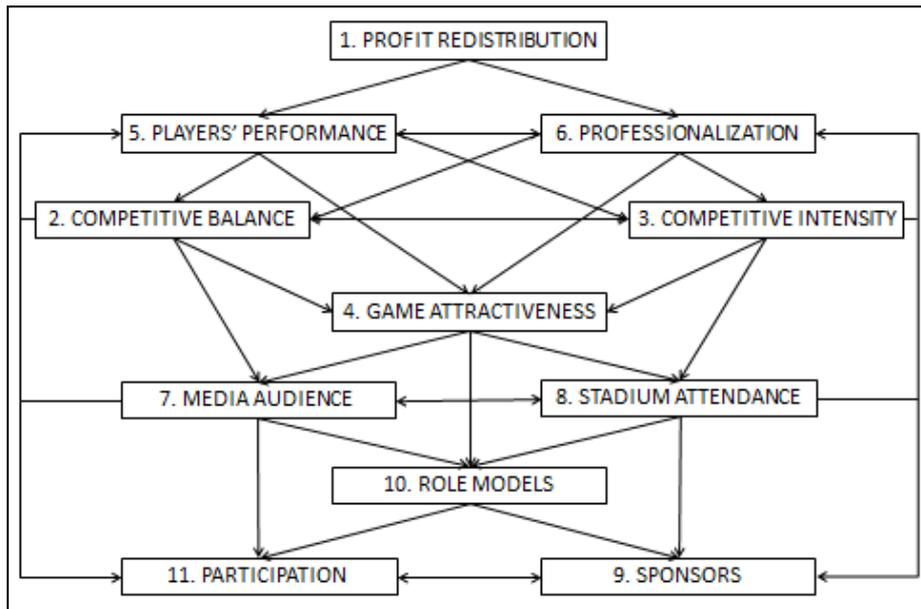
### *3.2.3 Defining development in sport: Summary*

In summary, defining 'development' within the context of sport is difficult. This is mainly due to the various interpretations that can be attributed to the term 'development' both in research and practice. However, a broad debate has emerged around the notion of development in sport. This highlighted that sport stakeholders must combine simultaneous efforts at both ends of the pyramid (i.e. elite and grassroots levels) in order to facilitate development. On the one hand, sports necessitate a large pool of participants in order to ensure that the system has a strong foundation. On the other hand, the product at the elite level must be attractive for spectators and sponsors in order for the sport to generate incomes and sustain its own 'ecosystem'. This ecosystem consists of interactions between stakeholders and is influenced by inter-related factors such as levels of participation, availability of financial resources, implementation of effective policies and attractiveness to media, fans and sponsors. However, mechanisms underpinning the process of development are multifaceted and not easily assessable. Therefore, when examining the development of a sport, both researchers and practitioners need careful evaluations which intersect different areas of sport management, sport economics and sport policy.

### **3.3 What drives the development of women's football?**

As illustrated in the previous section, the development of sport consists of inter-related factors and of collaborations between actors that are difficult to isolate and be analysed *per se*. The strategies of international football governing bodies (e.g. FIFA, 2018; UEFA, 2019) exemplify precisely such complexity in the women's game when they describe how they work with an intricate number of stakeholders such as member associations, clubs, players and the media to foster this sport. Also, different paths and objectives are followed by governing bodies in order to foster development. For instance, UEFA identifies participation, expansion of competitions, enhancement of governance structure and increased visibility and commercial value as priorities for women's football (UEFA, 2019). As such, football governing bodies' plans reflect in practice what the existing research has indicated in relation to the complexity and interdependencies of the process of development in sport. In this regard, women's football represents a stimulating yet largely neglected research example.

In accordance with the train of thought concerning the inherent challenges of studying the development of sport, both researchers and practitioners share the view that such process do not follow a linear path. In other words, when it comes to gaining an understanding on how sports develop, it is unlikely that, given certain inputs, one can expect to obtain consequent outputs. Instead, explaining the mechanisms that lead to development in sport necessitates of a broad multi-directional framework involving different inter-related elements. An attempt to elucidate such a multi-directional process is made in this PhD (Figure 3.2) through the formulation of an integrated framework for the development of women's football.



**Figure 3.2.** An integrated model for the development of women’s football, extension of Pfister (2010)’s interpretation (Scelles, 2016)

The foundations of this framework are based on Pfister’s (2010) interpretation on the positioning and development of women’s football. The eminent sport sociologist argues that “without sponsors or a redistribution of the overall profits generated by football, the professionalisation of women’s football is impossible. And if the players’ performance is inadequate and the games are not sufficiently attractive, the prejudice is reinforced that women cannot play football and that it is not worthwhile reporting on their matches” (Pfister, 2010, p. 241). Accordingly, the lack of media coverage is identified as a factor that contributes to the marginalisation of the sport as it impedes the women’s game from attracting sponsors which, in turn, would have an effect on the game and its development.

The work of Pfister highlights the necessity to invest in women’s football as a way to improve its exposure and attractiveness. However, how can a virtuous circle

of investment be promoted for the benefit of women's football? While involving sponsors is crucial to enhancing the economic positioning of the game, it remains challenging for commercial entities to risk financing a sport that currently does not present a solid platform in terms of media audience and stadium attendance. Therefore, in line with the view that sport be perceived as a public good (Geeraert, Alm & Groll, 2013; Groothuis, Johnson & Whitehead, 2004), governing bodies such as national football associations play an essential role in helping boost the potential of this sport.

In accordance with Pfister's analysis, Figure 3.2 places profit redistribution at the top of the framework. This is based on a key assertion: greater provision of funding (via profit redistribution) represents the initial step necessary to trigger and sustain the process of development in sport. This is also what is discussed in terms of theory and practice. On the one hand, from a theoretical viewpoint, the SPLISS (Sport Policies Leading to International Sporting Success)<sup>5</sup> (De Bosscher et al., 2006) framework conceptualises financial support as a necessary condition to build the overall sport policy process. On the other hand, from a practical viewpoint, international football institutions such as FIFA and UEFA enthusiastically publicised the increased allocation of financial resources for women's football as a stepping stone for the future of the game (FIFA, 2018; UEFA, 2019).

Thus, in terms of Figure 3.2, development of women's football can occur through a more equitable redistribution (Figure 3.2, Box 1) of the resources that are generated within the so-called 'football family'. This can imply sharing of resources between the women's game and the men's counterpart that generates more

---

<sup>5</sup> The SPLISS model is a theoretical approach to understanding the factors which lead countries to international sporting success. More details on SPLISS are provided in Section 4.3.1 of the thesis.

revenues. Recent examples coming from the Dutch, Norwegian and Swedish Football Associations are illustrations of good practice, as they have agreed to give both men's and women's national team players equal pay (FIFPro, 2017). In addition, football governing bodies have the potential to influence redistribution of resources at club-level. For example, a number of professional men's football clubs have started a women's football section under the input of their respective associations, thus providing women players with greater opportunity to dedicate full-time to their football activity (Figure 3.2, Box 6) and improve their sporting performance (Figure 3.2, Box 5).

This argument follows the work of Frick (2011), who demonstrates that performance improvements in women's sports are mainly due to increasing returns to success (i.e. higher prize money levels and distribution). In fact, both increasing returns and better distribution of prize money have the potential to stimulate two important processes. First, if paid adequately, elite players are more incentivised to commit full-time to improving their abilities (e.g. more time to training) and therefore produce more entertaining games (Figure 3.2, Box 4). The framework presented in Figure 3.2 follows this assumption and predicts that, as a result of increased funding, women's football players will produce more balanced (Figure 3.2, Box 2) and intense (Figure 3.2, Box 3) competitions over time, i.e. competitions with more teams having more or less a similar sporting level (competitive balance) and a sporting prize to compete for (competitive intensity). Notably, a substantial amount of literature has identified competition quality-related factors such as uncertainty of outcome as large contributors of game attractiveness (Figure 3.2, Box 4) (e.g. stadium attendance, Box 8; and media audience, Box 7) (see for example, Andreff & Scelles, 2015;

Pawlowski & Anders, 2012; Scelles, Durand, Bonnal, Goyeau, & Andreff, 2013).<sup>6</sup> Second, if girls see football as a potential career path, it is likely that participation rates at grassroots levels will also be affected positively. As a consequence, with higher availability of playing talent (at grassroots levels), the level of competitive balance (Figure 3.2, Box 2) at the elite level would be expected to improve naturally. This is based on an argument that a number of sport economists (see Berri, 2004; Berri, Brook, Frick, Fenn & Vicente-Mayoral, 2005; Flores, Forrest & Tena, 2010; Frick, 2011; Schmidt & Berri, 2003; Treber, Levy & Matheson, 2013) have confirmed empirically: widening the pool of players has a positive impact on competitive balance. Higher game attractiveness would expose the sport to a wider audience and, in turn, draw interest from brands (Figure 3.2, Box 9) to sponsor the game. In the same way, players would become more recognisable and more likely to be identified as role models (Figure 3.2, Box 10) by the younger generation, thus potentially contributing to enhanced participation rates (Figure 3.2, Box 11) (Wicker & Frick, 2016).

### *3.3.1 The use of the integrated framework in this study*

The integrated framework is based on both the ‘business ecosystem’ view (i.e. the inclusion of stakeholders likely to contribute to the development of women’s football, with sponsors and spectators as key stakeholders) and the pyramid perspective (through the inclusion of potential trickle-down and trickle-up effects, e.g. creation of role models). As mentioned in previous sections, the successful evolution of a sport is dependent both on the number of participants and the value that the

---

<sup>6</sup> To date no specific articles have investigated extensively the relationship between competitive balance and fan interest in women’s football.

sport is able to generate by and for its stakeholders. The proposed framework encompasses many of these variables and seeks to capture much of the complexity of this phenomenon. In the words of Porter (1991, p. 98): “frameworks identify the relevant variables and the questions which the user must answer in order to develop conclusions tailored to a particular industry and company. In this sense they can be seen as almost expert systems”. However, it must be acknowledged that “no one model embodies or even approaches embodying all the variables of interest” (Porter, 1991, p. 97). Moreover, the development of sport occurs within interconnected political, economic, cultural and social patterns which necessarily contain enabling and/or constraining elements on stakeholders’ actions (Smith & Westerbeek, 2004). As outlined in chapters 1 and 2, this is particularly relevant to football due to gender discrimination representing a persistent obstacle for the development of the women’s game across many countries over the past hundred years (Pfister, 2010, 2015; Williams, 2006).

In this PhD submission, the framework presented is utilised as the guiding platform to address a series of studies (see chapters 4, 5 and 6). For instance, in chapter 4, the availability of higher financial support for women’s football is tested as one of the determinants of countries’ sporting performance (profit redistribution → better players’ performance). Similarly, chapter 6 explores how profit redistribution (or cross-subsidy) at club-level can enhance professionalisation of women players (profit redistribution → increased professionalisation). Also, the levels of competitive balance and competitive intensity are treated as two of the factors that influence game attractiveness in women’s football (competitive balance → game attractiveness ← competitive intensity). However, pursuing rigid and empirical applicability of this theoretical framework is not the objective of this PhD. In short,

while the approach used here helps synthesise factors underpinning the process of development in sport, it remains beyond the scope of this study to predict specific outcomes through empirical investigation of the modelled relationships. Nonetheless, both the research articles and the framework will contribute to the discourse about the development of European women's football and, as such, broaden understanding about the relationships presented in Figure 3.2. The reasons for assessing this through the study of European women's football are explained in the next section.

### ***3.4 European women's football: The state of play***

As highlighted in the title of this PhD, the European context is central to this research. This particular choice is due to multiple reasons. First of all, there is evidence for the strong improvements of European women's football in recent years. For instance, European associations' overall budget for women's football has increased by over 200% since 2012 (UEFA, 2019). This is complemented with overall increases in the popularity of the women's game, which are represented by the higher number of professional players since 2017 (+50%), the rise in stadium attendance (+36%) for the UEFA Women's Champions League (i.e. the top European club competition) quarter-finals, the first pan-European dedicated women's football sponsor and the inception of the first fully professional women's league in a UEFA member association (the Women's Super League in England) (UEFA, 2019). Hence, studying women's football in Europe offers a unique opportunity to examine the development of a sport that is gaining momentum and is part of a burgeoning 'ecosystem'.

Second, European countries occupy a particularly relevant position in the global scene as they provide 44% of total registered women's footballers worldwide (FIFA, 2014). In addition, UEFA members invest by far the most in women's football, with 64% of the total annual investment (FIFA, 2014). Moreover, the number of dedicated staff working in national associations and the concentration of registered female coaches in UEFA countries outweighs that of football associations of other confederations (FIFA, 2014).

Third, the focus on European women's football is not only due to the work conducted by national associations but also to the progressive growth, professionalisation and 'universalisation' of club football in Europe. For instance, a recent analysis conducted by the European Clubs Association (ECA, 2019) revealed that over half of the players who took part in the 2019 FIFA Women's World Cup are released by European clubs. In addition, according to UEFA (2019), 42% of amateur and 28% of professional clubs offer football for women and girls in Europe. As the number of integrated clubs (i.e. where both men's and women's football sections are represented within the same football club) is increasing in Europe, an occasion is offered to study whether and how investments from professional men's clubs can act as a catalyst for the women's game and, subsequently, for the whole football industry by attracting new audiences and commercial opportunities.

In summary, UEFA and its member associations occupy a leading position in the worldwide growth of women's football. Starting in 2010 with the introduction of the Women's Football Development Programme, UEFA has supported the development of the women's game via assistance programmes contributing to the evolution of the game at all levels (UEFA, 2016) and has indicated in its latest report that "European women's football is in a position of health and strength" (UEFA, 2019,

p. 12). Therefore, the European context is particularly pertinent to expanding the debate on the development of this sport and, at the same time, providing stakeholders with insights to help sustain this process.

### **3.5 References**

- Andreff, W., & Scelles, N. (2015). Walter C. Neale 50 years after: Beyond competitive balance, the league standing effect tested with French football data. *Journal of Sports Economics*, 16(8), 819-834.
- Andrews, D.L. (2004). Sport in the late capitalist moment. In T. Slack, *The commercialisation of sport* (pp. 3-28). London: Frank Cass.
- Barker, M. (2013). Sports finance. In *The business of sport management*, ed. J. Beech and S. Chadwick. London: Pearson Education Limited.
- Beech, J.G. (2013). The internationalisation of sport. In *The business of sport management*, 2nd ed, ed. J.G. Beech and S. Chadwick. Harlow: Financial Times/Prentice Hall.
- Bergsgard, N. A. (2018). Power and domination in sport policy and politics—three intertwined levels of exercising power. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 10(4), pp. 653-667.
- Berri, D. J. (2004). Is there a short supply of tall people in the college game? In Fizek, J. and Fort R. (Ed.), *Economics of College Sports*, Praeger Publishers, Westport, CT, pp. 211-223.
- Berri, D. J., Brook, S. L., Frick, B., Fenn, A. J., & Vicente-Mayoral, R. (2005). The short supply of tall people: Competitive imbalance and the National Basketball Association. *Journal of Economic Issues*, 39(4), pp. 1029-1041.
- Bloomfield, J. (1973). *Review of activities: The role, scope and development of recreation in Australia*. Canberra: Department of Tourism and Recreation.
- Bramham, P., Hylton, K., Jackson, D., & Nesti, M. (2001). *Sports development: Policy, process and practice*. London: Routledge.
- Chappelet, J.L. (2016). Autonomy and governance: Necessary bad fellows in the fight against corruption in sport. In *Global corruption report: Sport*, ed. Transparency International. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Collins, T. (2013). *Sport in capitalist society: A short history*. New York: Routledge.

- Collins, T. (2017). Association and rugby football: Two codes, one historiography. In *Routledge handbook of football studies*, ed. J. Hughson, K. Moore, R.F.J. Spaaij, and J.A. Maguire. London: Routledge.
- De Bosscher, V., De Knop, P., van Bottenburg, M., & Shibli, S. (2006). A conceptual framework for analysing sports policy factors leading to international sporting success. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 6(2), 185-215.
- Deloitte (2018). Annual review of football nance 2018. Deloitte LLP, London, available at: <https://www2.deloitte.com/uk/en/pages/sports-business-group/articles/annual-review-of-football-nance.html> (accessed 20 March 2019).
- Donnelly, P. (1996). Prolympism: Sport monoculture as crisis and opportunity. *Quest*, 48(1), pp. 25-42.
- Dowling, M., Brown, P., & Grix, J. (2018). Deconstructing comparative sport policy analysis: assumptions, challenges, and new directions. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 10(4), 687-704.
- Eady, J. (1993). *Practical sports development*. London: Pitman.
- ECA (2019). Player release analysis: FIFA Women's World Cup 2019, available at [https://www.ecaeurope.com/media/4565/eca-player-release-analysis\\_fifa-womens-world-cup-2019.pdf](https://www.ecaeurope.com/media/4565/eca-player-release-analysis_fifa-womens-world-cup-2019.pdf) (accessed 2 June 2019).
- FIFA (2014). *The Women's Survey*. Retrieved from: [http://www.fifa.com/mm/document/footballdevelopment/women/02/52/26/49/womensfootballsurvey2014\\_e\\_english.pdf](http://www.fifa.com/mm/document/footballdevelopment/women/02/52/26/49/womensfootballsurvey2014_e_english.pdf) (accessed 7 October 2016).
- FIFA (2018). *Women's football strategy*, available at <https://resources.fifa.com/image/upload/women-s-football-strategy.pdf?cloudid=z7w21ghir8jb9tguvbcq> (accessed 16 October 2018).
- FIFPro (2017). *FIFPro global employment report: Working conditions in professional women's football*, available at: <https://www.fifpro.org/attachments/article/6986/2017%20FIFPro%20Women%20Football%20Global%20Employment%20Report-Final.pdf> (accessed 15 December 2017).
- Flores, R., Forrest, D., & Tena, D. (2010). Impact on competitive balance: From allowing foreign players in a sports league: Evidence from European soccer. *Kyklos*, 63(4), pp. 546-557.
- Ford, S., & Kerr, C. (2011). Business ecosystem co-evolution: The ultimate fighting championships, in *Sport as a Business*, (ed.) Dolles, H., & Söderman, S. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

- Frick, B. (2011). Gender differences in competitiveness: Empirical evidence from professional distance running. *Labour Economics*, 18(3), pp. 389-398.
- Garcia, B. (2017). Football and governance. In *Routledge handbook of football studies*, ed. J. Hughson, K. Moore, R.F.J. Spaaij, and J.A. Maguire. London: Routledge.
- Geeraert, A., Alm, J., & Groll, M. (2013). Good governance in International non-governmental sport organisations: An empirical study on accountability, participation and executive body members in sport governing bodies. Paper presented at the *8th Annual conference of the association for the study of sport and the European Union*, Istanbul.
- Gorse, S., & Chadwick, S. (2010). Conceptualising corruption in sport: Implications for sponsorship programmes. *The European Business Review*.
- Green, M. (2005). Building sport programs to optimize athlete recruitment, retention, and transition: Toward a normative theory of sport development. *Journal of Sport Management*, 19, pp. 233-253.
- Green, M. (2007). Olympic glory or grassroots development? Sport policy priorities in Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom, 1960-2006. *International Journal of the History of Sport*, 24, pp. 921-953.
- Green, M., & Houlihan, B. (2005). *Elite sport development policy learning and political priorities*. London: Routledge.
- Green, M., & Oakley, B. (2001). Elite sport development systems and playing to win: Uniformity and diversity in international approaches. *Leisure Studies*, 20, pp. 247-267.
- Grix, J., & Brannagan, P. M. (2016). Of mechanisms and myths: conceptualising states' "soft power" strategies through sports mega-events. *Diplomacy & statecraft*, 27(2), pp. 251-272.
- Grix, J., & Carmichael, F. (2012). Why do governments invest in elite sport? A polemic. *International journal of sport policy and politics*, 4(1), pp. 73-90.
- Grix, J., Lindsey, I., De Bosscher, V., & Bloyce, D. (2018). Theory and methods in sport policy and politics research. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 10(4), pp. 615-620.
- Grix, J. (2016). *Sport politics. An introduction*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Groeneveld, M. (2009). European sport governance, citizens, and the state. *Public Management Review*, 11, pp. 421-440.

- Groothuis, P.A., Johnson, B.K., & Whitehead, J.C. (2004). Public funding of professional sports stadiums: Public choice or civic pride? *Eastern Economic Journal*, 30, pp. 515–526.
- Guttman, A. (1978). *From ritual to record: The nature of modern sports*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Henry, I., Amara, M., Al-Tauqi, M., & Lee, P.C. (2005). A typology of approaches to comparative analysis of sports policy. *Journal of Sport Management*, 19, pp. 480-496.
- Houlihan, B. (2000). Sporting excellence, schools and sports development: The politics of crowded policy spaces. *European Physical Education Review*, 6(2), pp. 171-193.
- Houlihan, B., & Green, M. (2008). *Comparative elite sport development: Systems, structures and public policy*. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Houlihan, B., & White, A. (2002). *The politics of sports development*. London: Routledge.
- Houlihan, B., (2005). Public sector sport policy: developing a framework for analysis. *International review for the sociology of sport*, 40(2), pp. 163–185.
- Hughson, J. (2017). FIFA and the World Cup. In *Routledge handbook of football studies*, ed. J. Hughson, K. Moore, R.F.J. Spaaij, and J.A. Maguire. London: Routledge.
- Kohe, G.Z. (2017). The Football trust as a mechanism of industry change. In *Routledge handbook of football studies*, ed. J. Hughson, K. Moore, R.F.J. Spaaij, and J.A. Maguire. London: Routledge.
- Langlois, R. (1992). External economies and economic progress: The case of the microcomputer industry. *Business History Review*, 66(1), pp. 1–50.
- Masters, A. (2015). Corruption in sport: From the playing field to the field of policy. *Policy and Society*, 34, pp. 111–123.
- Moore, J. (1993). Predators and prey: A new ecology of competition. *Harvard Business Review*, 71(3), pp. 75-86.
- Moore, J. (1996). *The death of competition: Leadership and strategy in the age of business ecosystems*. Chichester: John Wiley.
- Pawlowski, T., & Anders, C. (2012). Stadium attendance in German professional football: The (un)importance of uncertainty of outcome reconsidered. *Applied Economics Letters*, 19(16), 1553-1556.

- Pfister, G. (2010). Women in sport: Gender relations and future perspectives. *Sport in Society: Culture, Commerce, Media, Politics*, 13(2), pp. 234-248.
- Pfister, G. (2015). Assessing the sociology of sport: On women and football. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 50(4-5), pp. 563-569.
- Porter, M.E. (1991). Towards a dynamic theory of strategy. *Strategic Management Journal*, 12 (Special Issue), pp. 95-117.
- PWC (2010). *Changing the game: Outlook for the global sports market to 2015*, available at: <https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/hospitality-leisure/pdf/changing-the-game-outlook-for-the-global-sports-market-to-2015.pdf> (accessed 20 March 2019).
- Rayner, M. (2018). *Rugby union and professionalisation: Elite player perspectives*. London: Routledge.
- Sam, M.P., & Jackson, S.J. (2006). Developing national sport policy through consultation: The rules of engagement. *Journal of Sport Management*, 20, pp. 366-386.
- Scelles, N. (2016). *Towards an integrated model for the development of women's football in Europe*. Proposal of a PhD programme, University of Stirling, UK.
- Scelles, N., Durand, C., Bonnal, L., Goyeau, D., & Andreff, W. (2013). Competitive balance versus competitive intensity before a match: Is one of these two concepts more relevant in explaining attendance? The case of the French football Ligue 1 over the period 2008-2011. *Applied Economics*, 45(29), 4184-4192.
- Schmidt, M. B., & Berri, D. J. (2003). On the Evolution of Competitive Balance: The Impact of an Increasing Global Search. *Economic Inquiry*, 41(4), pp. 692-704.
- Shapiro, C., & Varian, H. (1999). *Information rules: A strategic guide to the network economy*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.
- Shilbury, D., Sotiriadou, K., & Green, B. C. (2008). Sport Development. Systems, Policies and Pathways: An Introduction to the Special Issue. *Sport Management Review*, 11, pp. 217-223.
- Slack, T. (2003). Sport in the global society: Shaping the domain of sport studies. *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 20(4), pp. 118-129.
- Smith, A., & Westerbeek, H. (2004). *The sports business future*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

- Sotiriadou, K., Shilbury, D., & Quick, S. (2008). The attraction, retention/transition, and nurturing process of sport development: Some Australian evidence. *Journal of Sport Management*, 22, pp. 247-272.
- Strittmatter, A. M., Kilvinger, B., Bodemar, A., Skille, E. Å., & Kurscheidt, M. (2018). Dual governance structures in action sports: institutionalization processes of professional snowboarding revisited. *Sport in Society*, pp. 1-19.
- Szymanski, S., & T. Kuypers. (2000). *Winners and losers*. London: Penguin.
- Treber, J., Levy, R., & Matheson, V. A. (2013). Gender differences in competitive balance in intercollegiate basketball. In E. Marikova Leeds and M. A. Leeds (Ed.), *Handbook on the Economics of Women in Sports* (p. 251-268). Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.
- UEFA (2017). *Women's football across the National Associations 2017*, available at: [https://www.uefa.com/MultimediaFiles/Download/OfficialDocument/uefaorg/Women'sfootball/02/51/60/57/2516057\\_DOWNLOAD.pdf](https://www.uefa.com/MultimediaFiles/Download/OfficialDocument/uefaorg/Women'sfootball/02/51/60/57/2516057_DOWNLOAD.pdf) (accessed 20 December 2017).
- UEFA (2019). *#TimeForAction - Women's football strategy 2019-24*. Available at: [https://www.uefa.com/MultimediaFiles/Download/uefaorg/Womensfootball/02/60/51/38/2605138\\_DOWNLOAD.pdf](https://www.uefa.com/MultimediaFiles/Download/uefaorg/Womensfootball/02/60/51/38/2605138_DOWNLOAD.pdf) (accessed 18 May 2019).
- Wicker, P., & Frick, B. (2016). The inspirational effect of sporting achievements and potential role models in football: a gender-specific analysis. *Managing Sport and Leisure*, 21(5), 265-282.
- Williams, J. (2006). An equality too far? Historical and contemporary perspectives of gender inequality in British and International football. *Historical Social Research*, 31(1), pp. 151-69.
- Ziewacz, L.E. (2005). Dr. J, Bird, Magic, Jordan, and the Detroit bad boys: The NBA in the 1980s. In *Basketball in America: From the playgrounds to Jordan's game and beyond*, ed. B. Batchelor. Binghamton, NY: Haworth.

## Chapter 4

### **Elite sport policies and international sporting success: A panel data analysis of European women's national football team performance (Study 2)**

This chapter is dedicated to the presentation of the second research article. This article examines how women's football is organised and managed across UEFA member associations. Following the second main purpose of the PhD, this article discusses the development of women's football in Europe and provides UEFA national football associations with insights into the factors influencing international success within this sport. In addition, findings of this research offer theoretical implications contributing to the debate on comparative analysis of elite sport systems.

Full reference to research publication: Valenti, M., Scelles, N., and Morrow, S. (in press). Elite sport policies and international sporting success: A panel data analysis of European women's national football team performance. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, available online <https://doi.org/10.1080/16184742.2019.1606264>

## **4.1 Abstract**

**Research question:** While national sporting governing bodies are encouraged to implement programmes which seek to enhance their international sporting success, comparative studies on elite sport policies have provided limited empirical evidence in support of the relationship between such programmes and the achievement of sporting outcomes. Following the SPLISS framework, this study examines the longitudinal impact of four programme-level factors - financial support, human resources, coaching provision and foundation phase activity - on the international success of women's national football teams.

**Research methods:** Data from 55 Union of European Football Associations' (UEFA) members were collected over a seven-year-period (2011-2017). The associations between programme-level factors and FIFA ranking points are verified through panel regression analyses. Controls for economic, talent pool, political, socio-cultural, climate and men's football legacy variables are included.

**Results and Findings:** The results reveal that highly specialised coaching provision has a significant and positive impact on international success in women's football, while our proxies for financial support, human resources and foundation phase activity have no notable explanatory power for the success of women's national teams. A country's economic development, talent pool, climate and men's football legacy are significant predictors of its women's football performance level.

**Implications:** This paper offers practical insights into the organisation and management of women's football in UEFA nations and contributes to the theoretical debate on comparative analysis of the sporting performance of countries. This article confirms that an exclusively quantitative approach does not permit definitive conclusions to be drawn on the complex relationship between elite sport policies and international sporting outcomes.

**Keywords:** women's football; national development; international sport success; elite sport performance; sport policy

## **4.2 Introduction**

International sporting success at the elite level can provide an indication of the general conditions of a sport in a particular country and is often used by national governments, the media and the public to judge the work of sporting governing bodies' managers and executives (De Bosscher, Shilbury, Theeboom, Van Hoecke & De Knop, 2011; Sotiriadou & De Bosscher, 2018). Therefore, understanding the determinants of international success is of interest to many stakeholders, including public bodies and sport supporters. Yet, identifying factors that predict international sporting success is complicated because managing sport at the elite level is affected by a combination of variables located on the macro (country), meso (sport programme) and micro (athletes) levels (De Bosscher, De Knop, van Bottenburg & Shibli, 2006).

Given this complexity, scholarly debate on comparative analysis of sport policy has reflected on the approaches used to study elite sport systems and on different underlying philosophical positions adopted for comparing the sporting success of nations (Dowling, Brown & Grix, 2018; Henry, Amara, Al-Tauqi & Lee, 2005). Some scholars (e.g. Andersen & Ronglan, 2012; Green & Houlihan, 2005) have taken an interpretivist perspective, explaining that elite sport is part of a broader system embedded within a nation's culture and values. In contrast, other authors (e.g. De Bosscher et al., 2006; De Bosscher, Bingham, Shibli, van Bottenburg & De Knop, 2008; De Bosscher, Shibli, Westerbeek & van Bottenburg, 2015) have pursued what Henry et al. (2005, p. 481) described as "nomothetic, law-like generalisations", employing a more rationalist and positivist method in attempt to

identify empirically the structural similarities and differences between sporting nations.

De Bosscher and colleagues' nine-pillar SPLISS (Sport Policies Leading to International Sporting Success) framework is a good example of the rational-economic approach, where the researchers are interested in recognising and testing the factors that influence a country's success in elite sport. This model favours the large-scale application of empirical data to classify nations in an attempt to benchmark sport policy factors. However, comparative empirical analysis of high performance sport also comes with a number of methodological challenges that impede implementation of a universal and perfect method to conduct cross-national studies (De Bosscher, 2018; Dowling et al., 2018; Henry et al., 2005). For example, operationalisation of sport policy concepts in simple, quantifiable and comparable units is often problematic (Dowling et al., 2018; Henry et al., 2005). Similarly, a series of issues relating to the accessibility, reliability and validity of data (e.g. data standardisation, limitations of using single point data and issues with time-lag) are identified as fundamental problems for comparative sport policy researchers (De Bosscher, 2018; Dowling et al., 2018). As a consequence, such methodological problems, coupled with often insufficient or unreliable information on sport governing bodies' policies, programmes and investments have resulted in the paucity of empirical studies testing the (non) relationship between elite sport policies and success (Brouwers, Sotiriadou & De Bosscher, 2014; De Bosscher, 2018; De Bosscher et al., 2006; Dowling et al., 2018; Henry et al., 2005).

The aim of this article is to examine the empirical association between elite sport policies and international sporting success. This paper follows the SPLISS framework, seeking to model elite sport policies and test their significance as

predictors of success in international women's football. Drawing on data collected in member countries of the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA), this paper verifies the longitudinal impact of sport programme-level factors on sporting success. There are two reasons for the focus on UEFA members and women's football. First, according to Barreira, Mazzei and Galatti (2018), UEFA's strategic plans for the development of women's football are in line with the nine pillars identified in the SPLISS framework. Therefore, it is relevant to study elite sport systems that ostensibly are based around a near uniform model of policy development. Second, despite its potential implications for women's football stakeholders in terms of prioritisation of their actions, there is still a lack of evidence about the empirical association between elite sport policies and international sporting success in this sport (Valenti, Scelles & Morrow, 2018). However, as international football governing bodies have progressively put more emphasis on the development of women's football, more data on the sport have become available. Specifically, since 2011 UEFA has compiled an annual report on managerial and technical aspects of women's football in its member associations. Thus, in contrast to some of the methodological issues for comparative analysis presented above, access to these reports allow us to rely on primary data that are already standardised across countries and to build a panel dataset for longitudinal research. Overall, the purpose of this paper is two-fold:

- (1) to contribute to the debate on the role of elite sport policies as predictors of success, dealing with some of the methodological shortcomings and clarifying the significance and direction of this relationship;

(2) to discuss practical implications that are relevant for women's football stakeholders, gaining empirical insights on the development of this sport.

The article is structured as follows. Following the introduction, the next section highlights theoretical explanations of factors that contribute to a country's international elite sporting success and reviews related literature in women's football. The third part provides details on how measures for the different programme-level factors are selected, describes the data used for this research, and explains the empirical estimation strategy employed for the analysis. In the fourth section, findings based on panel regression models are presented and discussed. The fifth section concludes by considering major findings and their implications.

### ***4.3 Theoretical background and related literature***

#### ***4.3.1 The SPLISS framework***

As a result of a comprehensive review of the literature focussing on the determinants of international sporting success, De Bosscher et al. (2006) systematically evaluated and organised factors linked with international sporting success. This led to the conceptualisation of a theoretical framework which clusters over 100 key success factors into nine sport policy areas (or pillars), i.e. Sport Policies Leading to International Sporting Success (SPLISS). These include: financial support for athletes and personnel; an integrated approach to policy development; foundation phase; talent identification and development system; athletic and post-career support; training facilities; coaching provision and

development of coaching expertise; participation in (inter-) national competitions; and support from scientific research and sports medicine.

According to De Bosscher et al. (2006), initiatives and programmes related to these targeted areas (i.e. nine pillars) sustain the foundations of a country's international success. For example, countries that invest more financially in their elite sport system would be expected to create more opportunities for athletes to train under ideal circumstances. In the same way, high-quality facilities, the existence of clear athlete pathways, a strong organisational structure, an established national competition, opportunities for players to train with specialised and qualified coaches and participate in international competitions are all examples of what constitutes a sport system that supports the development of young talents into elite athletes. Similarly, sport systems that encourage a continuous and proactive exchange of information with sport medicine professionals and incentivise the creation of talent identification and development structures contribute to maximising athletes' potential, thus increasing a country's chances of achieving international sporting success. The associations between programmes within these nine targeted areas and sporting success are expected to be positive.

Unlike macro variables (e.g. Gross Domestic Product per capita, population size, socio-cultural conditions), programme-level factors are of particular interest for national governing bodies (e.g. national football associations) as they are in charge of activities including the establishment of rules and regulations, the design and implementation of strategic plans and programmes, the promotion of participation at grassroots level, and the general supervision and management of elite sporting

performances (De Bosscher et al., 2006; Hoehn, 2006)<sup>7</sup>. In this regard, the SPLISS model identifies pivotal issues in benchmarking sport systems and provides a tentative theoretical assumption that sport governing bodies that work to improve these sport policy areas are more likely to obtain international success.

The nine pillars of the SPLISS model essentially represent strategic policies that underpin the development of successful national elite sport development systems. Each pillar can be operationalised and measured through a number of critical factors, thus allowing for evaluation and comparison across countries (De Bosscher et al., 2006). In a recent study, De Bosscher (2018) notes that most pillars correlate positively and significantly with sporting success. Yet, these correlations do not indicate any causality. Moreover, it is important to consider that some initiatives might take longer than others to demonstrate their impact due to potential learning effects. For instance, grassroots initiatives (e.g. including the sport in school curricula or promoting links between schools and clubs) would be expected to influence elite sport performance over a longer period. On the contrary, programmes concerned directly with the management of the national team (e.g. hiring an experienced and qualified coach) would be expected to have a more immediate effect. In line with this, national football associations (NFAs) often design their strategic plans to reflect both short- and long-term goals, seeking to support and grow the grassroots game while continuing to strive for success at the elite level (see e.g. Irish Football Association, 2014; The Football Association, 2016).

---

<sup>7</sup> In this study, we do not test for the effect of micro-level factors. For this reason, we do not introduce these variables at this stage. This is also to avoid creating confusion about the overall purpose of the paper.

### *4.3.2 Determinants of international success in women's football*

The Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) has stressed the importance of developing the women's game as a key objective for the future of football (FIFA, 2014, 2016). Accordingly, continental football federations have started to implement a number of strategic plans and investments with the aim of developing women's football worldwide (FIFA, 2014). As a result, NFAs were urged to deliver sport programmes to foster the women's game in their respective countries. These included initiatives to increase youth participation, improve infrastructures, expand competitions, strengthen grassroots activities and, more generally, provide appropriate playing environments for players, officials and spectators (UEFA, 2017).

With such development efforts ongoing, it becomes relevant to study the impact that NFAs' programmes have on the performance of their women's national teams. In addition, international success at the elite level has been associated with increased amateur participation (e.g. Mutter & Pawlowski, 2014; Frick & Wicker, 2016)<sup>8</sup>. However, empirical evidence testing the role of programme-level factors in predicting women's football success is limited to one contribution (Jacobs, 2014).

#### *4.3.2.1 Sport programme-level factors*

Jacobs's (2014) study is the first attempt to look at the effect of sport programme-level variables in women's football, computing dummy variables for four policy areas: human resources, training availability, talent development and foundation phase. Adapting information from FIFA surveys, investment in human resources is controlled based on whether an NFA has a minimum of three full-time

---

<sup>8</sup> Although other studies have failed to identify the existence of a clear "trickle-down effect" (see e.g. De Bosscher et al., 2013; Storm, Nielsen & Jakobsen, 2018; Weed et al., 2015).

staff working in its women's football department; training availability is represented by the possibility for senior national players to train at least four times a week; talent development is dependent on whether youth national teams train at least four times a week; and finally, the presence of women's football in school curricula indicates an NFA's efforts to promote the sport at the foundation phase. In this study, Jacobs estimates a linear equation to check associations between programme-factors and a country's international sporting success (measured via its FIFA Women's World Ranking points). The equation to predict each country's sporting success in women's football is expressed as a function of the selected sport programme-level indicators and macro-level factors. However, due to the availability of data on programme-level factors being limited to one year, the effects of sport programmes on success were only measured through lagged variables at specific points in time (i.e. short-term: after one year; and long-term: after six years).

Results of this research support the importance of sport programme-factors in predicting international sporting success in women's football (Jacobs, 2014). Specifically, Jacobs's study indicates that these account for about 5 per cent of the variance at the net of macro-level variables. Moreover, in this study, Jacobs provides evidence in support of the hypothesis that sport programmes may take some time to display their effects. For instance, investment in human resources and training availability for the senior national team are associated with improved international performance in the short-term (i.e. after one year). Whereas NFAs that invest in human resources, and at the same time have a talent identification and development system in place, can expect to produce better international performances in the long-term (i.e. after six years). Finally, positive but non-significant association is found

between programmes at the foundation phase and long-term success (i.e. after six years).

Notwithstanding the contribution Jacobs (2014) makes by providing the first examination of the effect of programme-level factors on international sporting success in women's football, the approach used in the research has some limitations. First, given that information on programme-level factors are only available for one year, the concrete and causal effect of programmes on sporting success cannot be identified. Instead, only the existence of an association can be argued. As acknowledged by the author, "longitudinal data [...] would have been optimal for this analysis" (Jacobs, 2014, p. 535). Second, although macro variables are included to control for a country's characteristics, cross-sectional information does not allow unobserved country-level heterogeneity to be taken into account. In an attempt to overcome these limitations, our study will analyse the impact of programme-level factors longitudinally. In fact, through UEFA reports we have access to repeated measurement of programme-level factors within the same set of countries over a period of seven years. Furthermore, due to the nature of panel analysis, our study will control for country and year effects and distinguish within-country variation from between-country variation, therefore extending understanding of whether and how NFAs' programmes impact a country's international sporting success.

#### *4.3.2.2 Country-level factors*

As found by Jacobs (2014), sport programme-level factors can be associated with a marginal percentage of a country's international elite sporting success, while macro-level factors are consistently found as predictors of over 50 per cent of the variance (see e.g. Bernard & Busse, 2004; De Bosscher, De Knop & van Bottenburg,

2007; De Bosscher, De Knop & Heyndels, 2003; Johnson & Ali, 2004). Previous studies on the determinants of international success in women's football have investigated extensively the role of these factors and this literature is reviewed in the following sections.

*Economic development and talent pool.* A country's wealth (i.e. Gross Domestic Product or Gross Domestic Product per Capita) has a positive effect on a country's international sporting success, suggesting that in economically developed countries women have either more leisure time or availability of better sport infrastructures (Brendtmann, Carsten & Otten, 2016; Cho, 2013; Congdon-Hohman & Matheson, 2011; Hoffmann, Ging & Ramsay, 2006; Jacobs, 2014; Klein, 2002; Torgler, 2008). Similarly, talent pool, estimated either via total population (Congdon-Hohman and Matheson, 2011; Hoffmann et al., 2006, Klein, 2002; Torgler, 2008) or female population (total and age-specific) (Cho, 2013), is positively associated with international success, indicating that countries with a larger population have a greater likelihood to succeed due to the larger talent pool from which NFAs can select players.

*Climate.* It has been observed that countries with temperate climates are advantaged in sports that are mainly played outdoors, extremely hot or cold conditions making it more difficult for players to practice frequently (Hoffmann, Ging & Ramasamy, 2002). For example, countries with an annual average temperature approximating 14°C perform significantly better in men's football (Gelade & Dobson, 2007; Hoffmann et al., 2002; Macmillan & Smith, 2007). Nevertheless, existing articles on women's football find inconsistent results. Three studies (Congdon-Hohman & Matheson,

2011; Jacobs, 2014; Torgler, 2008) associate colder temperature with international women's football success, while two other articles (Brendtmann et al., 2016; Hoffmann et al., 2006) display non-significant results.

*Socio-cultural.* The influence of socio-cultural variables such as religion, gender equality and cultural heritage was also explored in relation to international women's football outcomes. For example, Klein (2002) finds non-significant effects of religion as a determinant of women's football success. However, Congdon-Hohman and Matheson (2011) note that countries where the majority of population is of Islamic faith perform significantly worse, arguing that women have limited opportunities to play sport in Muslim countries. Furthermore, previous literature positively associates a country's level of gender equality (e.g. female-to-male labour force, Gender Inequality Index) with its international performance in women's football (Brendtmann et al., 2016; Cho, 2013; Congdon-Hohman & Matheson, 2011; Hoffmann et al., 2006; Jacobs, 2014; Klein, 2002), suggesting that countries where women are provided with equal opportunities in society are more likely to invest in women's sports. Hence, women have more opportunities to participate in sport and potentially improve their skills. In addition, it has been found that countries with Latin cultural heritage perform significantly better in men's football than those with non-Latin heritage due to the historical popularity of the sport among Luso-Hispanic countries (Hoffman et al., 2002; Leeds & Leeds, 2009; Macmillan & Smith, 2007; Torgler, 2004). Yet having a Latin cultural heritage is not identified as a factor for success in international women's football (Congdon-Hohman & Matheson, 2011; Hoffmann et al., 2006; Jacobs, 2014).

*Political system.* The focus of earlier research was on the effects that the (past or current) presence of a Communist regime has on a country's international performance in women's football. Two articles associate Communism with higher levels of performance in women's football (Congdon-Homan & Matheson, 2011; Hoffmann et al., 2006), while Jacobs (2014) cannot find support for this relationship. In men's football, two studies (Papanikos, 2017; Scelles & Andreff, 2017) utilised Democracy Index<sup>9</sup> (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2016) to control for political system. Papanikos (2017) argues that more democratic countries field stronger national teams, while Scelles and Andreff (2017) report opposite results. It is worth noting that democracy level moderates gender differences in sport participation and is positively associated with increased participation rates, especially for women (Balish, 2017). However, previous articles have not examined democracy as a determinant of success in women's football.

*Sport tradition.* Digel, Burk and Fahrner (2006) pointed out that, in addition to economic development, population, climate and socio-cultural factors, there are other variables which explain a country's success, such as its specialisation or tradition in a specific sport. For instance, five of the reviewed articles (Congdon-Hohman & Matheson, 2011; Hoffmann et al., 2006; Jacobs, 2014; Klein, 2002; Torgler, 2008) consistently associate the strength of the women's national football team with the success of its men's counterpart (e.g. measured via Men's FIFA Ranking points and qualification for the FIFA World Cup final stages). This would suggest that women's football is more likely to flourish in countries where traditionally

---

<sup>9</sup> Democracy Index is a weighted average indicator based on sixty indicators grouped in five categories measuring pluralism, civil liberties and political culture. The index ranges from 0 (Authoritarian regimes) to 10 (Full democracies). See The Economist Intelligence Unit (2016) for further information on the technical methodology.

men's football is a successful sport. Consistent with this, Wicker and Frick (2016) evaluated the inspirational effects that the sporting achievements of men's and women's football have on participation rates for boys and girls in a country such as Germany, a country that is traditionally successful both in men's and women's football. Their findings indicate that only the achievements in men's football can lead to positive changes in participation rates for both boys and girls, implying that women's football participation is one legacy of success in the men's game. This, in turn, might lead to improved women's football international outcomes as a result of an increased talent pool. However, in an alternate analysis, Cho (2013) tested the direct association between men's and women's football international success through instrumental variable techniques and country-specific fixed-effects, suggesting that the success of men cannot be considered as a significant determinant of women's football performance. Based on these findings, it remains challenging to understand fully the direct and indirect expected relationship between men's and women's football success.

Table 4.1 provides a summary of previous literature on determinants of international sporting success in women's football.

#### *4.3.3 Our study's contribution to the literature*

Building on the existing literature, the present research aims to contribute to the discussion of factors influencing a country's international success. More precisely, we will examine the significance and direction of the association between programme-level factors and international success. Taking into account longitudinal data for both macro and meso variables at the same time, this study will explore the effect of elite sport policies on sporting success. This article will investigate the

impact of two previously unexplored policy areas in women's football: financial support and coaching provision. In addition, this study will provide supplementary evidence in relation to macro-level factors. For example, a more fine-grained measure will be employed to account for the effect of talent pool (i.e. exact number of active players within each country), while the Democracy Index will be used for the first time in women's football as an indicator of a country's political conditions.

**Table 4.1.** Summary of literature review about determinants of women’s football international performance.

Factor	Proxy	Klein (2002)	Hoffman et al. (2006)	Torgler (2008)	Congdon-Hohman & Matheson (2011)	Cho (2013)	Jacobs (2014)	Brendtmann et al. (2016)
<i>Programme-level</i>							Short-term	Long-term
Human resources	Dummy: $\geq 3$ FT Staff						+	+
Training availability	$\geq 4$ Senior weekly training sessions						+	
Grassroots participation and foundation	Dummy: $\geq 7$ Years of girls’ soccer in school							n.s.
Talent ID and development	Dummy: National youth team							n.s.
Talent ID and development	Dummy: $\geq 4$ youth weekly training sessions							+
<i>Country-level</i>								
Economic development	GDP/Capita	+	+	+	+ / n.s.	+	+	+
Population	Total population	+	+	+	+			+
	Female population					+		
	Female population (15-64)						+	
Climate	Average		n.s.	-	-		-	

Factor	Proxy	Klein (2002)	Hoffman et al. (2006)	Torgler (2008)	Congdon-Hohman & Matheson (2011)	Cho (2013)	Jacobs (2014)	Brendtman et al. (2016)
	temperature							
	Dummy: Tropics							n.s.
Latin heritage	Dummy: Latin origin		n.s.		n.s.		n.s.	
Gender equality	Female-to-male labour force	+			+		+	
	% women in government	+			+			
	Fertility rate	n.s.						
	Female-to-male income		+					
	Gender Inequality Index				+			
	Female-to-male secondary enrolment				+			
	Female labour force participation					+		+
	Life expectancy							+
Religion	Dummy: Muslim	n.s.			-			
Political system	Dummy: Communism		+		+		n.s.	

Factor	Proxy	Klein (2002)	Hoffman et al. (2006)	Torgler (2008)	Congdon-Hohman & Matheson (2011)	Cho (2013)	Jacobs (2014)	Brendtmann et al. (2016)
Men's football legacy	Dummy: qualified for World Cup	+				n.s.	+	
	Dummy: ever hosted World Cup		+	+				
	FIFA Ranking		+	+				
	FIFA Points				+	+		
	Dummy: ever won World Cup			+				

*Note:* dependent variable: women's performance; (+) indicates a significant positive association; (-) indicates a negative significant negative association; (n.s.) indicates a non-significant association.

## **4.4 Method**

### **4.4.1 Dataset and variables**

The UEFA reports on women's football (UEFA, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017) were drawn on to provide the foundation for the empirical analysis in this study. The reports, published annually since 2011, rely on a survey that comprises over 50 questions specific to women's football. Importantly, responses come directly from either performance directors or the head of women's football in each of the 55 UEFA members. This also helps us to anticipate a potential limitation related to the consistency of indicators selected for programme-level factors given that measures are already standardised across countries. Nonetheless, from the information available, we could control for programmes implemented in 48 of the 55 UEFA NFAs<sup>10</sup>. The period examined for this study is from 2011 to 2017. Data on programme-level factors refer to the year(s) preceding the sporting outcome (measured via the FIFA Women's World Ranking), as there will often be a lag between the implementation of a programme and any impact on sporting success. This means that information on sporting success is collected from 2012 to 2017, while measures for programme-level factors refer to the period from 2011 to 2016. This facilitates the identification of the effect of programmes on sporting performance (i.e. one- to five-year time-lag predictors were chosen), which will be affected in the following year(s), thus alleviating the causality problem. The final sample consists of  $n = 258$  observations.

---

<sup>10</sup> Some countries present missing data for the entire period for some variables. These include Gibraltar, where data was missing for six years, and Kosovo, where it was missing for one year. This is also due to their official recognition as UEFA members only taking place in 2013 and 2016.

Table 5.2 gives an overview of all measures employed for this study. The dependent variable is the FIFA Women's World Ranking (WWR). Used in previous studies, the FIFA WWR reflects the comparative strength and success of a country in women's football. Points are accumulated in relation to the historical performance of the senior national team in international matches. Countries can gain or lose points based on criteria such as final results, goal difference and goals scored. The FIFA WWR controls for the importance of the match and the expected value (based on current strength) of each competing team before a match<sup>11</sup>. Hence, this measure helps provide an overall impression of how women's football is run in each country. Accordingly, a higher number of points would indicate a more successful country in women's football and vice versa.

To guide the selection and formulation of relevant indicators for sport programme factors, we followed the nine pillars and key success factors identified in the SPLISS model (De Bosscher et al., 2006; De Bosscher et al., 2015). However, adapting information that is available from UEFA reports, we could only consider programmes within four policy areas, specifically: financial support, human resources, coaching provision and foundation phase. The exclusion of the remaining five pillars is due to the impracticality of matching critical success factors for each of these pillars with information available from the reports.

---

<sup>11</sup> The FIFA Women's World Ranking (WWR) adopts a modified Elo ranking system and takes into account a team's previous performances as "the rating points which a team earns for a win is dependent on the strength of the opponent" (FIFA, 2018). To illustrate, "a win over an extremely weak team scarcely improves their standing in the WWR, while a win over a stronger team is awarded with a clear increase of the WWR value" (FIFA, 2018). The FIFA Men's ranking has adopted the same system since August 2018, having previously been frequently criticised.

**Table 4.2.** Description and data sources of variables.

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Proxy</b>	<b>Source</b>
Women's performance	FIFA Women's World Ranking points	FIFA.com
<i>Programme-level</i>		
Financial support	Budget for women's football (Log)	
Human resources	Number of full-time staff	
Coaching provision	Senior national team coach license UEFA Pro (dummy: 1- yes)	UEFA (2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017)
Foundation phase	Link clubs-school (dummy: 1 – yes)	
<i>Country-level</i>		
Economic development	GDP per capita (Log)	The World Bank (2017)
Talent pool	Total registered players (Log)	UEFA (2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017)
Climate	(Yearly average temperature – 14°C) <sup>2</sup>	Weatherbase.com (2017)
Democracy	Democracy Index	The Economist Intelligence Unit (2016)
Gender equality	Female-to-male labour force participation rate	The World Bank (2017)
Men's football legacy	FIFA Men's World Ranking points	FIFA.com

The first independent variable refers to financial support for women's football. From the UEFA reports, we can access the exact budget that each NFA has allocated solely to sustain women's football between 2011 and 2017. As pointed out by De Bosscher et al. (2006), financial support is considered a necessary condition to build the overall sport policy process. Consequently, we would expect a positive association with sporting success, although it should be noted that De Bosscher, Shibli and Weber (2018) have recently found ambiguous conclusions as to whether prioritisation as a deliberate strategic choice is an efficient way to invest funding. With regards to the time horizon(s) within which financial investment is expected to display its impact on sporting success, we could not find relevant literature that helps us to formulate an exact prediction. For this reason, we explored the impact of financial support on sporting success over different years (from  $t-1$  to  $t-5$ ).

The second independent variable considers the level of human resources that is available for the administration of women's football within each NFA. Jacobs (2014) proxies this through a dummy variable indicating whether at least three full-time staff worked in an NFA's women's football department. However, we acknowledge that there is no strong consensus regarding what constitutes an effective use of human resources within national sport governing bodies, as this can vary according to the context. For instance, terms such as organisational 'efficiency' and 'structure' can be relative to the size of a country and/or of the NFA. The same applies to the notion of 'good governance', which is based on principles that might be interpreted differently depending on the context. For example, these include accountability and transparency, stakeholder representation, democratic processes, control mechanisms, sport integrity and ethical responsibility (Chappelet & Mrkonjic, 2013). Moreover, it is challenging to find evidence that helps quantitatively account

for the optimal functioning of sport governing bodies. Nevertheless, De Bosscher et al. (2006) suggest that one of the critical success factors in the achievement of an integrated approach to policy development relates to the presence of full-time staff responsible for the development and support of various stakeholders (e.g. coaches, athletes) and activities to promote elite sports (e.g. marketing, communication). As such, we chose to proxy human resources through the number of full-time staff dedicated solely to women's football. This information is available via UEFA reports. Following Jacobs (2014), we would expect a positive impact on sporting success in the short-term ( $t-1$ ).

The third independent variable is related to the quality of coaching provided to the senior national team. To control for the coaching specialism and expertise of the senior national team's coach, we use the UEFA coaching qualification pyramid<sup>12</sup> and create a dummy variable indicating whether or not the coach holds the highest qualification, the UEFA Pro Licence. Holding a UEFA Pro Licence implies that a coach is highly specialised. This would be expected to provide the team with an opportunity to increase the quality and level of training and thus positively affect performance. Yet, in terms of how coaching can influence team success, it has been observed that managers' contribution to team performance is not precisely measurable (Pieper, Nüesch & Franck, 2014). However, a number of studies (e.g. Frick & Simmons, 2008; Tan, Zheng & Dickson, 2019; Wicker, Orłowski & Breuer, 2018) indicate that coach quality and expertise can positively influence team success. In particular, Castagna et al. (2009) argue that specialism of coaches can help enhance players' training standards which, in turn, positively impact players'

---

<sup>12</sup> UEFA introduced a mandatory coaching qualification system for those occupying professional management and coaching positions in football. This includes five levels ranging from National qualification to UEFA Pro Licence.

performance within months. Thus, coaching provision would be expected to produce a positive effect in the short-term ( $t-1$ ).

The fourth independent variable represents initiatives implemented at the foundation phase (or grassroots level). These include NFAs' efforts to support programmes for the promotion of the game amongst young girls. Specifically, a dummy variable was created indicating whether formal links are established between clubs and schools. In theory, this should help an NFA encourage participation at grassroots level and, at the same time, allow the creation of pathways for young athletes towards elite sport (De Bosscher et al., 2006). Accordingly, sustaining grassroots activities would be expected to be fruitful for the senior national team's success in the long-term ( $t-5$ ).

As in previous research, this study controls for contextual effects. These include: economic development, talent pool, climate, political system, gender equality and sport tradition. The logged GDP per capita is used as an indicator of the quality of infrastructure or leisure time available to potential athletes (Hoffmann et al., 2006). The logged measure of total registered players is included as a proxy for a country's talent pool. Contrary to the estimated values used in previous studies, this measure permits identification of the exact number of players who actively take part in women's football. Climate conditions are controlled through the squared term of a country's annual average temperature minus 14°C. This is due to past studies reporting 14°C as the optimal temperature to practice sports outdoor. For political system, this research relies on the Democracy Index. A country's gender equality is controlled through the ratio female-to-male labour force participation rate. The remaining independent variable, a country's football tradition, is measured via the FIFA points attained by the men's national team.

Before moving to the estimation strategy, inter-relationships between independent variables and their correlation with the dependent variable were tested. This was to have an initial understanding of the associations between the different variables. Correlations are summarised in Table 5.3.

**Table 4.3.** Correlation matrix of selected variables.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1 Women's performance										
<i>Programme-level</i>										
2 Financial support	.77*									
3 Human resources	.48*	.51*								
4 Coaching provision	.34*	.33*	.11							
5 Foundation phase	.21*	.27*	.21*	.24*						
<i>Country-level</i>										
6 Economic development	.48*	.40*	.15*	.18*	.06					
7 Talent pool	.83*	.82*	.46*	.31*	.16	.39*				
8 Climate	.21*	.19*	.09	.00	.04	.20*	.24*			
9 Democracy	.43*	.37*	.10	.29*	.22*	.78*	.49*	.03		
10 Gender equality	.38*	.27*	.13*	.21*	.09	.36*	.20*	.40*	.36*	
11 Men's football legacy	.68*	.59*	.32*	.35*	.11	.15*	.66*	-.07	.30*	.04

*Note:* 1-year lag is used for Financial support, Human resources and Coaching provision; 5-year lag is used for Foundation phase.

\*  $p < 0.05$

All independent variables displayed significant correlations with the dependent variable, ranging from 0.21 to 0.83. A strong correlation between talent pool and sporting success (0.83) was expected, as explained in the literature review section. Also, the strong association between democracy and economic development (0.78) was predictable (see Robinson, 2006, for a discussion). All programme-level factors displayed low to moderate levels of correlation with each other, ranging from 0.11 to 0.51.

#### 4.4.2 Estimation strategy

Next, we estimate panel data models using Stata 14.2 with country as panel variable and year as time variable to measure the effect of programme-level factors and macro-level variables on international women’s football performance. When it comes to testing the impact of a programme or a policy, unobserved heterogeneity between cross-sections needs to be controlled. Therefore, it is necessary to introduce a fixed or random effect estimator which allows clustering of data based on each specific country. Moreover, this helps distinguish within-country variation from between-country variation (see Table 5.4).

**Table 4.4.** Descriptive statistics of selected variables.

<b>Variable</b>	<b>N</b>		<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
Women’s performance	258	Overall	1563.88	278.43
		Between		289.45
		Within		26.56
<i>Programme-level</i>				
Financial support	243	Overall	13.62	1.29
		Between		1.23

<b>Variable</b>	<b>N</b>		<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>
		Within		0.47
Human resources	249	Overall	5.40	6.63
		Between		4.99
		Within		4.20
Coaching provision	258	Overall	0.50	0.50
		Between		0.34
		Within		0.36
Foundation phase	93	Overall	0.53	0.51
		Between		0.52
		Within		0.27
<i>Country-level</i>				
Economic development	258	Overall	9.88	0.91
		Between		0.97
		Within		0.09
Talent pool	258	Overall	8.70	1.83
		Between		1.84
		Within		0.45
Climate	258	Overall	39.08	40.24
		Between		39.53
		Within		0
Democracy	258	Overall	7.36	1.61
		Between		1.65
		Within		0.15
Gender equality	258	Overall	77.87	8.98
		Between		8.66
		Within		1.71
Men's football legacy	258	Overall	721.76	330.56
		Between		314.64
		Within		129.01

We ran the fixed- and random-effects estimators, verifying the significance of the following model with  $i$  and  $t$  denoting respectively the country and the season:

$$\text{Women's performance}_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{ Programme-level factors}_{it} + \beta_2 \text{ Country-level factors}_{it} + \mu_{it}$$

To decide which estimator should be given preference, we formally tested the difference between fixed- and random-effects through the Hausman test. Results of the Hausman test rejected the null hypothesis for all models, indicating that fixed-effects estimators should be used. We then ran the modified Wald test for group-wise heteroscedasticity on each configuration with fixed-effect. This unveiled heteroscedasticity in our data (Prob >  $\chi^2 = 0.000$ ). Therefore, fixed-effect estimators were ran again with robust standard errors. Panel regressions with fixed-effects and robust standard errors revealed non-significant results for our baseline models (i.e. Prob > F is higher than .05). For this reason, we gradually removed the least significant variable from each configuration and tested fixed- and random-effects estimators a second time. Based on the new configurations, the results of the Hausman test rejected the null hypothesis with the exception of that with one-year lag, indicating that preference should be given to the random-effects estimator in this case. Heteroscedasticity was present in all models with fixed-effects. Robust standard errors were therefore applied for these models. Results of these regression models were non-significant (Prob > F is higher than .05). For the only model estimated through random-effects (i.e. one-year lag without variables controlling for financial support and human resources), the Breusch and Pagan Lagrangian multiplier test for random effects confirmed the presence of significant differences

across units (i.e. panel effect). However, Woolridge test for autocorrelation in panel data indicated the presence of autocorrelation. In view of that, we bootstrapped the results of the random-effects estimator via 1,000 replications.

Overall, five sets of models were estimated to verify the effect of programme-level factors on sporting success while controlling for macro-level variables. Each set followed lagged predictors from one to five. Significant regressions (i.e. Prob > F lower than .05) were limited to one set of models. This was calculated via the random-effect estimator (with and without bootstrap) while controlling for coaching provision ( $t-1$ ) and macro-level variables. In addition to these, a third model including only macro-level variables is displayed in order to identify the amount of variance that is explained by coaching provision (i.e. the only programme-level indicator that shows significant effect on success).

## ***4.5 Results and discussion***

### ***4.5.1 Descriptive statistics***

While most regression models are non-significant<sup>13</sup>, looking at between- and within-variations of the observed variables helps to paint a picture of the current situation of women's football in the UEFA nations. For instance, financial support data shows that England, France, Norway and Sweden consistently provide high levels of resources to women's football, while Eastern European countries such as Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro invest less. Also, financial support varies more across than within countries. The country with the highest within-country variation for financial support is Israel. The mean number of staff

---

<sup>13</sup> Non-significant regression models are presented in Appendix 2 (Table 5.6).

dedicated solely to women's football is 5.40. In total, there are 17 observations indicating no members of staff dedicated solely to women's football. Similar to financial support, between-country variation is higher than within-country variation for this factor. For this variable, Russia presents the highest within-variation in the sample. About half (50.8%) of the countries for which data is available on coaching qualifications indicate the presence of a UEFA Pro licenced coach managing their senior national team. Contrary to the first two programme-level variables, coaching provision varies more within than between countries, with Armenia showing the highest level of within-variation. 53.8% of countries observed have established a direct connection between national schools and women's football clubs in the previous five years. As for financial support and human resources, foundation phase varies more between than within countries<sup>14</sup>.

Overall, between-country variation is greater than within-country variation for financial support, human resources and foundation phase, while coaching provision presents the opposite. This means that most NFAs have only marginally altered their budget and use of human resources across the years. In contrast, NFAs have dedicated more attention to the quality of coaching provided to the senior national team. Challenges in finding significant results through our fixed-effect estimators might also be due to low levels of within-country variation for three of the four programme factors. Based on the descriptive statistics, however, it is important to note that most NFAs are unlikely to make considerable changes in elements like budget and full-time staff. Therefore, although elite sport policy literature has reported an increasing degree of convergence and homogenisation between elite

---

<sup>14</sup> A comment about the country with the highest within-variation for this factor is not presented because data for this policy area are lagged for 5 years, therefore within-variation can only be observed for one remaining year.

sport systems in different countries (e.g. Green & Houlihan, 2005; Houlihan, 2009; Oakley & Green, 2001), this closer inspection of programme-level variables highlights that differences still exist between countries in women's football.

With regard to country-level variables, Luxembourg, Norway and Switzerland have strong income per capita, while Armenia, Moldova and Ukraine are among those countries that have weaker economies. Nations such as Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden rely on large talent pools, while Albania, Armenia, Georgia and Montenegro have lower numbers of registered players. Average temperature represented in the dataset ranges from  $-0.6^{\circ}$  (Russia) to  $19.2^{\circ}$  (Israel). Of the states for which there is available information, Scandinavian countries such as Denmark, Iceland, Norway and Sweden present high scores on the Democracy Index while Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia are consistently classified as nations with authoritarian governments (i.e. Democracy Index  $< 4$ ). Similar to democracy levels, higher degrees of gender equality are found in Scandinavian countries, while in contrast, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Malta and Turkey display gender inequality. Finally, our proxy for a country's tradition in men's football indicates that Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain are ranked among the highest positions in the FIFA Men's ranking for the observed period, while low levels of sporting attainment in men's football were reported for Macedonia, Malta and Moldova.

#### *4.5.2 Regression analyses*

Table 4.5 reports the results of the regression analyses examining the short-term effect of programme-level factors on international women's football outcomes (Models 1 and 2). These are limited to the configuration with one-year lag for

coaching provision due to regressions with other programme-level variables providing non-significant results (Prob > F is higher than .05). Model 3 includes only country-level variables.

Panel data analysis allows the distinction of within-R<sup>2</sup> from between-R<sup>2</sup>. In the models presented here, it appears clear that factors included in the equation explain more than 50% of between-country variation and account for a minimal difference in within-country variation (1%). As a result, only a small part of the impact that a change in these variables have on an individual country's international success can be explained. Instead, the effect of the observed factors is easier to detect when countries are compared to one another. Given that both between-R<sup>2</sup> and within-R<sup>2</sup> remain practically unchanged when the only significant sport programme-level factor is excluded (Model 3), it can be argued that, even when dealing with longitudinal data, recognising the effect of sport policy-factors is inherently problematic (Dowling et al., 2018; Henry et al., 2005).

Looking at the results of Model 1 and Model 2, coaching provision significantly and positively affects women's football performance in the short-term, consistent with the proposition that coaching expertise and specialism can help players enhance their performances (Castagna et al., 2009; Frick & Simmons, 2008). Based on the UEFA reports, however, most of the countries that are expected to perform well in women's football (due to their socio-economic status and talent pool) already have an expert coach. Nonetheless, there are nations such as Turkey and Russia which might expect to marginally increase their levels of performance by investing in this area, either developing their present coach or hiring a more qualified one.

**Table 4.5.** Panel regression tests for predictors of women's football performance.

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	Coeff. (SE)	Sign.	Coeff. (SE)	Sign.	Coeff. (SE)	Sign.
Coaching provision	13.68 (6.69)	**	13.68 (7.01)	*		
Economic development	87.21 (20.34)	***	87.21 (32.57)	**	88.01 (20.49)	***
Talent pool	14.85 (5.08)	**	14.85 (10.79)		15.66 (5.13)	**
Climate	1.09 (.52)	**	1.09 (.79)		1.07 (.52)	**
Democracy	3.17 (11.99)		3.17 (16.18)		2.46 (12.07)	
Gender equality	1.73 (1.25)		1.73 (1.77)		1.81 (1.27)	
Men's football legacy	.05 (.01)	**	.05 (.02)	**	.05 (.01)	**
Constant	319.33 (180.20)	*	319.33 (292.63)		310.38 (181.17)	*
Observations		258			258	
Groups		48			48	
Within-R <sup>2</sup>		.01			.00	
Between-R <sup>2</sup>		.54			.54	
Overall-R <sup>2</sup>		.52			.52	
rho		.91			.91	

*Note:* Displayed are the coefficients (standard errors in parentheses) of random-effects estimator (through the command xtreg in Stata). Panel variable is country and time variable is year. 1-year lag predictor is used for Coaching provision. Results of Model 2 are based on bootstrap with 1,000 replications. The dependent variable is: Women's football performance.

\*  $p < 0.10$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ .

Focussing on country-level variables, economic development and men's football legacy are found as significant predictors of women's football performance with the expected signs based on previous literature about international success in women's football (e.g. Hoffman et al., 2006; Jacobs, 2014). For talent pool, the results reveal a positive effect on international women's football performances. However, this is non-significant in Model 2. The positive sign for climate in Models 1 and 3 indicates that countries that are far from 14°C perform better in women's football. This finding supports the expectation that colder countries are more successful in women's football (Congdon-Hohman & Matheson, 2011; Hoffman et al., 2006; Jacobs, 2014; Torgler, 2008). Nevertheless, this finding should be interpreted with caution since women's football has been developed earlier in (colder) Northern European countries (mostly Scandinavian). As such, the success of these countries might also be attributable to other elements. For instance, Scandinavian countries are also the best in terms of gender equality. On this, while we find gender equality having a non-significant impact, the results of a separate model (not reported here) excluding climate present a significantly positive coefficient for gender equality<sup>15</sup>. Finally, a country's democracy level, which has not been tested previously in the literature with this specific focus, has a non-significant impact across all specifications.

---

<sup>15</sup> Results of this model are not reported here but are available upon request. The significant and positive effect of gender equality, however, turns out to be non-significant after the application of bootstrap. Other results are unchanged.

## **4.6 Conclusions**

Given the growing interest of nations in gaining a competitive advantage in elite sport, an increasing number of studies have sought to identify common features of successful national elite sport systems. However, while the purpose of comparative research in elite sport has been predominantly to describe, classify and formulate hypothesis on how nations achieve international success (Dowling et al., 2018), in this paper we applied an empirical approach to test the longitudinal relationship between a country's sport programmes and its outcomes in high performance sport. By employing longitudinal data, we contributed to the existing literature on comparative elite sport policies and helped to move the focus of research from investigating *static* associations between programme-level factors and international success to examining the *dynamic* impact that these variables can have on a country's performance. To the best of our knowledge, this study represents the first attempt to inspect the longitudinal effect of programme-level factors on international sporting success in comparative elite sport policy research.

The results of this study show that predictors of international success in women's football can be identified by looking at differences across countries, while less explanatory power is provided by changes occurring within each country. However, this does not mean that sport governing bodies have no opportunity to foster success in the long run. Instead, this article confirms that an exclusively quantitative approach is unable to illuminate the full complexity and richness of the different components that contribute to elite level international success in different countries (De Bosscher, 2018; Dowling et al., 2018; Henry et al., 2005).

#### *4.6.1 Limitations and future research*

Four main limitations are identified in the present study. First, the sample selected includes only information about UEFA member countries. Hence, conclusions drawn from this research might not be applicable in other football regions where contextual and sport programme factors present different characteristics and possibly cause different impacts on women's football performance. The programme-level factors tested in our research have been identified as key to the development of football in non-European countries (e.g. in China; Peng, Skinner & Houlihan, 2018) but their actual impact on women's football performance remains to be examined. Second, most models have non-significant results, meaning that our conclusions on the effect of programme-level factors are drawn from one model only (i.e. one-year lag). Alongside the empirical analysis of programme-level factors, there would be merit future research collecting qualitative data to further guide understanding as to how programme-level factors work in relation to each country's international success. Moreover, the analysis presented in this study attempts to investigate the importance of programme-level factors across different countries. Despite the fact that this assists us to generalise our findings over various contexts, future studies may focus on a specific country (or a more restricted group of countries) to allow closer examination of the effect caused by programmes on a country's (within-)variation in success. Third, the proxies that account for the four sport-policy areas are based upon available information. However, aspects related to financial support, human resources, coaching provision and foundation phase might be controlled differently and more precisely. For instance, we include the overall budget used by each NFA for the development of women's football in its country. Yet, we do not know precisely how (or indeed whether) this sum is spent in

each country. Similarly, foundation phase is measured through the existence of formal links between schools and clubs. Future research might use different measures (e.g. number of youth clubs) to operationalise this. The fourth limitation relates to the lack of clarity about the inter-relationship between the nine pillars of the SPLISS framework (Henry & Ko, 2013). From a theoretical point of view, it remains unclear whether all pillars are necessary to develop a successful nation at elite level. This might reflect the difficulties in finding significant results when operationalising each pillar and relating these to international success.

## 4.7 References

- Andersen, S., & Ronglan, L. T. (2012). *Nordic elite sport: Same ambitions, different tracks*. Oslo: Copenhagen Business School Press.
- Balish, S. M. (2017). Democracy predicts sport and recreation membership: Insights from 52 countries. *Journal of Epidemiology and Global Health*, 7, 21-28.
- Barreira, J., Mazzei, L., & Galatti, L. R. (2018). Sport policy and women's football: Analysis of the development programs of continental football federations. 26<sup>th</sup> *European Association for Sport Management*, Malmö, Sweden, 5-8 September.
- Bernard, A. B., & Busse, M. R. (2004). Who wins the Olympic Games: Economic resources and medal totals. *The Review of Economics and Statistics*, 86(1), 413-417.
- Brendtmann, J., Carsten, J. C., & Otten, S. (2016). The effect of gender equality on international soccer performance. *International Journal of Sport Finance*, 11(4), 288-309.
- Brouwers, J., Sotiriadou, P., & De Bosscher, V. (2014). Sport-specific policies and factors that influence international success: The case of tennis. *Sport Management Review*, 18(3), 343-358.
- Castagna, C., Impelizzeri, F. M., Cecchini, E., Rampinini, E., & Alvarez, J. C. B. (2009). Effects of intermittent-endurance fitness on match performance in young male soccer players. *Journal of Strength and Conditioning Research*, 23, 1954-1959.
- Chappelet, J-L., & Mrkonjic, M. (2013). Basic indicators for better governance in international sport (BIBGIS): An assessment tool for international sport governing bodies. IDHEAP Working paper 1/2013.
- Cho, S-Y. (2013). A league of their own: Female soccer, male legacy and women's empowerment. Paper presented at the DIW, January, Berlin.
- Congdon-Hohman, J., & Matheson, V. (2011). International women's soccer and gender inequality: Revisited. Working paper no. 11-07, College of the Holy Cross, Worcester, Massachusetts.
- De Bosscher, V. (2018). A mixed methods approach to compare elite sport policies of nations. A critical reflection on the use of composite indicators in the SPLISS study. *Sport in Society*, 21(2), 331-355.

- De Bosscher, V., Bingham, J., Shibli, S., van Bottenburg, M., & De Knop, P. (2008). *The global sporting arms race. An international comparative study on sports policy factors leading to international sporting success*. Aachen: Meyer & Meyer.
- De Bosscher, V., De Knop, P., & Heyndels, B. (2003). Comparing relative sporting success among countries create equal opportunities in sport. *Journal for Comparative Physical Education and Sport*, 3(3), 109-120.
- De Bosscher, V., De Knop, P., & van Bottenburg, M. (2007). *Sports policy factors leading to international sporting success*. Brussels: Vubpress.
- De Bosscher, V., De Knop, P., van Bottenburg, M., & Shibli, S. (2006). A conceptual framework for analysing sports policy factors leading to international sporting success. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 6(2), 185-215.
- De Bosscher, V., Shibli, S., Westerbeek, H., & van Bottenburg, M. (2015). *Successful elite sport policies. An international comparison of the sports policy factors leading to international sporting success (SPLISS 2.0) in 15 nations*. Aachen: Meyer & Meyer.
- De Bosscher, V., Shilbury, D., Theeboom, M., Van Hoecke, J., & De Knop, P. (2011). Effectiveness of national elite sport policies: A multidimensional approach applied to the case of Flanders. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 11(2), 115-141.
- De Bosscher, V., Shibli, S., & Weber, A. C. (2018). Is prioritisation of funding in elite sport effective? An analysis of the investment strategies in 16 countries. *European Sport Management Quarterly*. doi: 10.1080/16184742.2018.1505926.
- Digel, H., Burk, V., & Fahrner, M. (2006). *High-performance sport. An international comparison. Edition Sports International* (Vol. 9). Weilheim/Teck: Brauer.
- Dowling, M., Brown, P., & Grix, J. (2018). Deconstructing comparative sport policy analysis: assumptions, challenges, and new directions. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 10(4), 687-704.
- FIFA (2014). *The Women's Survey*. Retrieved from: [http://www.fifa.com/mm/document/footballdevelopment/women/02/52/26/49/womensfootballsurvey2014\\_e\\_english.pdf](http://www.fifa.com/mm/document/footballdevelopment/women/02/52/26/49/womensfootballsurvey2014_e_english.pdf) (accessed 7 October 2016).
- FIFA (2016). *FIFA 2.0: The Vision for the Future*. Retrieved from: [https://www.sportanddev.org/sites/default/files/downloads/fifa\\_2.0.\\_the\\_vision\\_for\\_the\\_future.pdf](https://www.sportanddev.org/sites/default/files/downloads/fifa_2.0._the_vision_for_the_future.pdf) (accessed 22 November 2016).
- FIFA (2018). *FIFA Women's World Ranking Methodology*. Retrieved from: <https://www.fifa.com/fifa-world-ranking/procedure/women.html> (accessed 10 September 2018).

- Frick, B., & Simmons, R. (2008). The impact of managerial quality on organizational performance: evidence from German soccer. *Managerial and Decision Economics*, 29(7), 593-600.
- Frick, B., & Wicker, P. (2016). The trickle-down effect. How elite sporting success affects amateur participation in German football. *Applied Economics Letters*, 23(4), 259-263.
- Gelade, G. A., & Dobson, P. (2007). Predicting the comparative strengths of national football teams. *Social Science Quarterly*, 88(1), 244-258.
- Green, M., & Houlihan, B. (2005). *Elite sport development policy learning and political priorities*. London: Routledge.
- Henry, I., Amara, M., Al-Tauqi, M., & Lee, P.C. (2005). A typology of approaches to comparative analysis of sports policy. *Journal of Sport Management*, 19, 480-496.
- Henry, I. P., & Ko, L.-M. (2013). Analysing sport policy in a globalising context. In Henry, I. P. and Ko, L.-M. (Eds.), *Routledge Handbook of Sport Policy* (pp. 3-11). London: Routledge.
- Hoehn, T. (2006). Governance and governing bodies in sport. In W. Andreff and S. Szymanski (Eds.), *Handbook on the economics of sport* (pp. 227-240). Glasgow: Edward Elgar Publishing, Inc.
- Hoffmann, R. Ging, L., & Ramasamy, B. (2002). The socio-economic determinants of international soccer performance. *Journal of Applied Economics*, 2(2), 253-272.
- Hoffmann, R., Ging, L., Matheson, V., & Ramasamy, B. (2006). International women's football and gender inequality. *Applied Economics Letters*, 13(15), 999-1001.
- Houlihan, B. (2009). Mechanisms of international influence on domestic elite sport policy. *International Journal of Sport Policy*, 1(1), 51-69.
- Irish Football Association (2014). *Girls' and Women's Football Plan 2014-2018*. Retrieved from: <https://www.irishfa.com/media/7703/girls-womens-football-strategy.pdf> (accessed 7 December 2016).
- Jacobs, J. C. (2014). Programme-level determinants of women's international football performance. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 14(5), 521-537.
- Johnson, D., & Ali, A. (2004). A tale of two seasons: Participation and medal counts at the summer and winter Olympic Games. *Social Science Quarterly*, 85, 974-993.

- Klein, M. W. (2002). *Work and Play: International evidence of gender equality in employment and sports*. NBER Working Paper No. 9081. Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research.
- Leeds, M. A., & Leeds, E. M. (2009). International soccer success and national institutions. *Journal of Sports Economics, 10*(4), 369-390.
- Macmillan P., & Smith, I. (2007). Explaining international soccer rankings. *Journal of Sport Economics, 8*(2), 202-213.
- Mutter, F., & Pawlowski, T. (2014). The causal effect of professional sports on amateur sport participation – An instrumental variable approach. *International Journal of Sport Finance, 9*, 172-188.
- Oakley, B., & Green, M. (2001). The production of Olympic champions: International perspectives on elite sport development system. *European Journal for Sport Management, 8*, 83-105.
- Papanikos, G.T. (2017). Economic, population and political determinants of the 2014 World Cup match results. *Soccer & Society, 18*(4), 516-532.
- Peng, Q., Skinner, J., & Houlihan, B. (2018). An analysis of the Chinese football reform of 2015: Why then and not earlier? *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*. doi: 10.1080/19406940.2018.1536075.
- Pieper, J., Nüesch, S., & Franck, E. (2014). How performance expectations affect managerial replacement decisions. *Schmalenbach Business Review (sbr), 66*, 5-23.
- Robinson, J. A. (2006). Economic development and democracy. *Annual Review of Political Science, 9*, 503-527.
- Scelles, N., & Andreff, W. (2017). Determinants of long *versus* short-term national men's football team performance: FIFA point *versus* goal difference between teams. *9<sup>th</sup> European Conference in Sport Economics*, Paderborn, Germany, 30 August - 2 September.
- Sotiriadou, P., & De Bosscher, V. (2018). Managing high-performance sport: Introduction to past, present and future considerations. *European Sport Management Quarterly, 18*(1), 1-7.
- Storm, R. K., Nielsen, C. G., & Jakobsen, T. G. (2018). Can international elite sport success trickle down to mass sport participation? Evidence from Danish team handball. *European Journal of Sport Science, 18*(8), 1139-1150.
- Tan, T-C., Zheng, J., & Dickson, G. (2019). Policy transfer in elite sport development: The case of elite swimming in China. *European Sport Management Quarterly*. doi: 10.1080/16184742.2019.1572768.

- The Economist Intelligence Unit (2016). *Democracy Index 2016: Revenge of the “deplorables”*. Retrieved from: <http://felipesahagun.es/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Democracy-Index-2016.pdf> (accessed 27 June 2017).
- The Football Association (2016). *The FA Strategic Plan 2016-2020*. Retrieved from at: <http://www.thefa.com/about-football-association/what-we-do/strategy> (accessed 20 December 2017).
- The World Bank (2017). *World Bank open data*. Retrieved from: <http://data.worldbank.org> (accessed 25 March 2017).
- Torgler, B. (2004). The economics of the FIFA football World Cup. *Kyklos*, 57(2), 287-300.
- Torgler, B. (2008). The determinants of women's international soccer performances. *International Journal of Sport Management and Marketing*, 3(4), 305-318.
- UEFA (2011). *Women's Football across the National Associations 2011/12*.
- UEFA (2012). *Women's Football across the National Associations 2012/13*.
- UEFA (2013). *Women's Football across the National Associations 2013/14*. Retrieved from: [http://www.uefa.com/MultimediaFiles/Download/Women/WFDP/02/03/17/67/2031767\\_DOWNLOAD.pdf](http://www.uefa.com/MultimediaFiles/Download/Women/WFDP/02/03/17/67/2031767_DOWNLOAD.pdf) (accessed 7 October 2016).
- UEFA (2014). *Women's Football across the National Associations 2014/15*. Retrieved from: [http://www.uefa.com/MultimediaFiles/Download/Women/General/02/03/27/84/2032784\\_DOWNLOAD.pdf](http://www.uefa.com/MultimediaFiles/Download/Women/General/02/03/27/84/2032784_DOWNLOAD.pdf) (accessed 7 October 2016).
- UEFA (2015). *Women's Football across the National Associations 2015/16*. Retrieved from: [http://www.uefa.org/MultimediaFiles/Download/OfficialDocument/uefaorg/Women'sfootball/02/30/93/30/2309330\\_DOWNLOAD.pdf](http://www.uefa.org/MultimediaFiles/Download/OfficialDocument/uefaorg/Women'sfootball/02/30/93/30/2309330_DOWNLOAD.pdf) (accessed 7 October 2016).
- UEFA (2016). *Women's Football across the National Associations 2016/17*. Retrieved from: [https://www.uefa.com/MultimediaFiles/Download/OfficialDocument/uefaorg/Women'sfootball/02/43/13/56/2431356\\_DOWNLOAD.pdf](https://www.uefa.com/MultimediaFiles/Download/OfficialDocument/uefaorg/Women'sfootball/02/43/13/56/2431356_DOWNLOAD.pdf) (accessed 19 December 2016).
- UEFA (2017). *Women's Football across the National Associations 2017*. Retrieved from: [https://www.uefa.com/MultimediaFiles/Download/OfficialDocument/uefaorg/Women'sfootball/02/51/60/57/2516057\\_DOWNLOAD.pdf](https://www.uefa.com/MultimediaFiles/Download/OfficialDocument/uefaorg/Women'sfootball/02/51/60/57/2516057_DOWNLOAD.pdf) (accessed 20 December 2017).

- Valenti, M., Scelles, N., & Morrow, S. (2018). Women's football studies: an integrative review. *Sport, Business and Management: An International Journal*, 8(5), 511-528.
- Weatherbase.com (2017). *Country: Weather averages*. Retrieved from: <http://www.weatherbase.com> (accessed 25 March 2017).
- Wicker, P., & Frick, B. (2016). The inspirational effect of sporting achievements and potential role models in football: a gender-specific analysis. *Managing Sport and Leisure*, 21(5), 265-282.
- Wicker, P., Orłowski, J., & Breuer, C. (2018). Coach migration in German high performance sport. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 18(1), 93-111.

#### ***4.8 Summary of this study's contribution to the overall research***

While focussing mainly on the role of policy-factors as predictors of a country's international sporting success in women's football, this study also offers some interesting perspectives to expand the general discourse on the development of sport as it takes into account actions of governing bodies, which, as discussed in chapter 3, are central stakeholders of this process. The empirical analysis presented here applies panel data. This helps verify the impact of a programme or a policy on success over time. Yet, the results show that most regression models are non-significant. Also, causality between most policy-factors and sporting success cannot be concluded.

However, when looking at the correlation matrix of selected variables (Table 5.3), it appears clear that sporting performance correlates positively with governing bodies' expenditure ( $r = 0.77$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). As pointed out in the limitations section of the article, the proxy employed does not permit control over how these resources are spent. Moreover, correlations do not imply causations. Nevertheless, if this is put into the context of the theoretical framework presented in chapter 3, it can be argued that financial resources are to some extent linked with players' performances. Therefore, in line with the discourse on the development of sport expressed within previous sections, a positive association between profit redistribution and the possibility for players to enhance their sporting abilities is demonstrable. In addition, a significant and positive correlation ( $r = 0.82$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) between talent pool and financial support might denote that, when larger resources are available to a sport, a higher number of individuals are incentivised in partaking in such sport due to the possibility of increased likelihood of undertaking a potential career being more likely. Furthermore,

the positive correlation between the number of registered players and a country's international sporting success ( $r = 0.83$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) is consistent with the argument put forward that greater availability of players contributes to compressing the distribution of player ability, favouring those athletes who are able to show better skills.

In summary, rigid and precise juxtaposition between these correlation results and the conceptualised model on the development of sport cannot be inferred. However, the findings of this study justify utilising the theoretical framework as a guiding platform, which, in turn permits an overall impression of the different inter-related components influencing the process of development in women's football.

## Chapter 5

### **The determinants of stadium attendance in elite women's football: Evidence from the UEFA Women's Champions League (Study 3)**

This chapter examines another important issue relating to the concept of development in sport: game attractiveness. As explained in chapter 3, the attractiveness of the game at elite level is one of the dimensions that contribute to the development of a sport. In particular, women's football necessitates enhancing its attractiveness in order to draw greater and more consistent interest from sponsors, media and fans. In the following article, game attractiveness is analysed in the context of women's football using available information on stadium attendance. In the sports economics literature, stadium attendance is associated with a number of dimensions, including competitive balance and competitive intensity. Findings of this research help shed a light on determinants of fan interest in women's football, as well as suggest practical recommendations for women's football stakeholders. At the end of the chapter, reflections are provided on how the research article contributes to the general discourse about the development of women's football.

Full reference to research publication: Valenti, M., Scelles, N., and Morrow, S. (in press). The determinants of stadium attendance in elite women's football: Evidence from the UEFA Women's Champions League. *Sport Management Review*, available online <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2019.04.005>

## **5.1 Abstract**

Women's football struggles to build a solid platform in terms of fan interest. However, while an increase in gate receipts can help assist its long-term sustainability, there is limited evidence in the academic literature on the factors influencing spectator demand in women's football. The authors investigate determinants of stadium attendance for UEFA Women's Champions League (UWCL) matches. Using regression models deployed on 554 UWCL games played between 2009/10 and 2017/18, the authors examine contextual and sport-related variables as the main predictors of stadium attendance. Findings show that there is no continuous growth of attendance over the period examined, and highlight that spectators' interest is positively associated with five factors: stage of the competition, uncertainty of match outcome, competitive intensity, away club's reputation and weather conditions. Football governing bodies should put in place initiatives to ensure match outcome uncertainty is maintained as this represents a key determinant to maximise stadium attendance. Based on the specific context of European women's football, recommendations to foster its development are discussed. These include incentivising investment into the elite women's game and designing sport policies to encourage participation at grassroots levels.

**Keywords:** Attendance; Demand; Fan behaviour; Spectators; Women's football.

## **5.2 Introduction**

The promotion of women's football has recently emerged as a key priority in the agenda of international football governing bodies (FIFA, 2014, 2016; UEFA, 2017a). However, while participation rates and investments have increased dramatically in the last 25 years (FIFA, 2014; UEFA, 2017a), the lack of consistent spectator demand continues to be one of the strategic challenges that women's football currently faces.

Owners and executives of women's clubs have expressed their concerns regarding the increasing costs and the concomitant lack of revenues (e.g. ticketing, broadcasting) available to women's clubs (ECA, 2014), thus raising scepticism over the possibility that women's football can become financially sustainable in the near future (Allison, 2016; Meier, Konjer & Leinwather, 2016; Southall, Nagel & Le Grande, 2005). In practice, the financial structure of women's football clubs resembles that of men's amateur clubs, where the major sources of income come from private donations and subscriptions, with a much less substantial contribution from prize money and gate receipts (ECA, 2014; FIFPro, 2017). Therefore, the constraining financial situation of the women's game highlights a crucial need for women's clubs to generate further revenue from all sources, including match day attendance.

Although stadium demand may have common features across various sports, there are likely to be substantial differences between men's and women's activities. In particular, football represents a platform for the social construction and presentation of hegemonic masculinities, which contributes to emphasise logics of gender dominance both on and off the field (Pfister, 2015). This has influenced the

history, popularity and development of women's football in many countries, thus also affecting its overall positioning in the professional sports market. Hence, while attendance demand has been extensively researched in men's football (e.g. García & Rodríguez, 2009), results cannot necessarily be generalised and applied to the women's game.

In the literature, an extended scholarly discussion has considered the consumption of sport events (e.g. Andreff & Scelles, 2015; Pawlowski & Anders, 2012; Scelles et al., 2013, 2016). However, the debate has mainly focused on men's elite sports (e.g. Coates, Humphreys & Zhou, 2014), while research on women's sports has concentrated on elements related to both fan motivation (Funk, Ridinger & Moorman, 2003) and (the lack of) TV coverage (e.g. Cooky, Messner & Hextrum, 2013). A specific focus on women's football fandom was drawn from sociological (e.g. Guest & Luijten, 2017) and marketing (Hallmann, 2012; Southall et al., 2005) disciplines. Yet determinants of women's football stadium attendance have been less commonly investigated from a sports economics perspective, with only two studies having explored demand in the German (Meier et al., 2016) and US (LeFeuvre, Stephenson & Walcott, 2013) domestic leagues. More robust empirical evidence about women's football stadium attendance is therefore needed to guide stakeholders' managerial and policy actions focused on the future viability of the women's game.

To study demand in women's football, we have compiled a dataset comprising game-level attendance from the top European competition for elite women's football clubs, i.e. the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA) Women's Champions League (UWCL), between 2009/10 and 2017/18. The particular focus on this competition is primarily due to the availability of information regarding a

fundamental predictor of demand such as (*a priori*) uncertainty of outcome. In addition, this study can contribute to the on-going debate between the ECA (European Clubs Association) and UEFA over possible changes designed to improve the current format of this competition (ECA, 2018). Moreover, while previous studies of attendance in women's football have analysed individual leagues (LeFeuvre et al., 2013; Meier et al., 2016), this paper considers a competition involving teams from different nations. This allows us to explore the demand for women's football across various settings, in line with one of the objectives of international football governing bodies to foster the growth of women's football worldwide (FIFA, 2014, 2016; UEFA, 2017a).

The remainder of this article is organised as follows: previous literature on the determinants of stadium attendance is reviewed in the following section. The next part presents some background information about the UWCL and highlights important features of women's club football such as the emergence of integrated clubs. The third section provides commentary on the dependent and independent variables and the empirical estimation strategy employed for the analyses. In the fourth section, findings based on regression models are displayed and discussed. The fifth section concludes by suggesting implications that are relevant for women's football clubs and football governing bodies.

### **5.3 Literature review**

#### **5.3.1 Determinants of stadium attendance**

The sports economics literature has produced substantive amounts of empirical research on stadium attendance for professional team sports (see Downward, Dawson & Dejonghe, 2009; Feehan, 2006; and García & Rodríguez, 2009 for reviews). The usual approach to predict fan interest is the estimation of a demand equation. More precisely, attendance at a sports event is expressed as a function of both socio-economic and sport-related determinants which aid to verify the interest of fans in consuming a particular sport event (e.g. football match).

Socio-economic factors include ticket price, income, population and availability of substitute goods (Downward et al., 2009; Feehan, 2006; García & Rodríguez, 2009), which are usually controlled in order to determine attributes of each team or geographical area. In women's football, Meier et al. (2016) combined two different measures to control for regional income in Germany and found positive but non-significant results, indicating that women's football matches might represent a normal good. With regards to population size, past studies on sports attendance found that clubs operating in locations with larger populations draw larger stadium attendance (Scelles et al., 2013, 2016). However, in women's football, the significance of host site population remains to be confirmed.

Attendance can also vary according to opportunity costs (e.g. distance to the stadium, day of the week) and weather conditions (García & Rodríguez, 2009). For instance, greater distance between the host cities of the two teams is associated with lower stadium attendance (e.g. potentially higher travel costs for away fans) in

women's football (Meier et al., 2016), while increased attendance is displayed for games that are played in the afternoon and for games that are played under favourable weather conditions (e.g. higher temperature and absence of rain) (LeFeuvre et al., 2013; Meier et al., 2016).

Product- or sport-related determinants involve spectators' habit persistence, the expected quality of the match in terms of the characteristics of the teams (e.g. quality of the teams as expected at the start of the season and intra-season, see e.g. Sung & Mills, 2018), historical or geographical rivalries between clubs (Martins & Cró, 2018; Wooten, 2018), the significance of the match in a season- or competition-context and the degree of outcome uncertainty. Some of these factors were tested previously in women's football. For example, higher team quality (as reflected in league rankings) produces a positive impact on attendance (LeFeuvre et al., 2013; Meier et al., 2016). Moreover, Meier et al. (2016, p. 15) described women's football as a "niche product targeting mainly dedicated die-hard fans" identifying a positive association between match attendance and supporters' habit persistence (i.e. their past attendance). In addition, Meier et al. (2016) controlled for the quality of the football venue indicating non-significant results, while having previously hosted the FIFA Women's World Cup has been observed to provide a short-term boost to spectator demand (i.e. the season after the competition was held) (LeFeuvre et al., 2013; Meier et al., 2016). Finally, similar to the men's game (e.g. Jewell, 2017; Shapiro, DeSchrive & Rascher, 2017), spectators positively respond to 'superstar' player effect (LeFeuvre et al., 2013). Yet academic literature has provided scarce econometric indications regarding the applicability of outcome uncertainty in women's football. Precisely, only one of the past two studies in women's football controlled for the significance of this factor (Meier et al., 2016).

### 5.3.2 Outcome uncertainty

Following Szymanski (2003), three types of outcome uncertainty are identified in the sports economics literature: game uncertainty (e.g. individual match outcome), in-season sub competition uncertainty (e.g. championship race, fighting against relegation, competing for a prize) and long-run uncertainty (e.g. domination of a league by a restricted number of teams over a sustained number of seasons). The conceptual propositions on demand for sporting competitions provide that fans tend to prefer more balanced and unpredictable contests. Importantly, the theoretical assumption on competitive balance has played a pivotal role in shaping US professional sports league policies (e.g. salary caps, revenue sharing and reverse order draft), following the principle that the (re)distribution of talent and resources across more teams is essential to keep the competition balanced and maintain the level of fan interest.

Nonetheless, empirical research about the impact of outcome uncertainty on stadium attendance for sport events is far from definitive (Pawlowski, 2013). In fact, scholars who dealt specifically with outcome uncertainty at game-level (frequently measured through the use of betting odds) seldom show evidence to support thoroughly the competitive balance proposition (Pawlowski, 2013). This is the case for both European (Pawlowski, 2013) and American (Jewell, 2017; Sung & Mills, 2018) men's football (soccer) leagues. Instead, most studies find that maximum uncertainty does not maximise attendance (Feehan, 2006; Peel & Thomas, 1992). Rather, it has been observed that it is the *ex ante* probability of a home team's win which increases stadium attendance. More specifically, examining major league baseball games, Knowles, Sherony and Hauptert (1992) argued that demand peaks at the point where a home team's probability of winning is one and a half times

higher than that of the visiting team (i.e. around 60%). This finding is also confirmed for men's football (e.g. Forrest & Simmons, 2002), where additional increases in the home team's probability of winning contribute to lower attendance (i.e. uncertainty and attendance would follow an inverted U-shape).

However, other research finds opposite results, exhibiting a U-shaped relationship between uncertainty and attendance (Peel & Thomas, 1992). Consistent with this and, as such, contrary to the standard prediction of the uncertainty of outcome hypothesis (UOH), there are studies indicating that supporters show reference-dependent preferences (see e.g. Coates, Humphreys & Zhou, 2014). These interpretations refer to prospect theory (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979) and are based on two critical constructs regarding individuals' decision-making under uncertainty: (a) expected losses are treated differently than expected gains; (b) non-expected utility maximization considerably influences aspects of decisions made under uncertainty. In the case of sports contests, Coates et al. (2014, p. 960) suggested that the existence of the UOH only emerges "when the marginal utility of an unexpected loss exceeds the marginal utility of an unexpected win." In other words, fans' decisions to attend a sport competition is influenced by the opportunity to watch their team either playing a much inferior opponent (i.e. loss aversion) or assuming an outsider role (i.e. upset result). This explanation is also supported when employing a measure of perceived (rather than objective) game uncertainty (Pawlowski, Nalbantis & Coates, 2018).

In women's football, Meier et al. (2016) adopted two different measures of outcome uncertainty: one for individual match- and one for in-season sub competition-level. Their results show that despite match uncertainty having no significant effect in determining stadium attendance, games involving teams with a

chance to win the title attract more fans. However, while Meier et al. (2016)'s study represents the first attempt to control for the effect of uncertainty of outcome over attendance in women's football, the variables used in their article present some limitations. First, the match-level variable is based on the difference in league positions between the two competing teams. As acknowledged by the authors, this "represents a rather rough proxy for match uncertainty in comparison to betting odds" (Meier et al., 2016, p. 8). Second, the analysis of in-season sub competition-level uncertainty is restricted to the probability of the two competing teams winning the title, while Scelles et al. (2016) demonstrate that stadium attendance is significantly influenced by the contention of different sporting prizes (or competitive intensity).

To overcome these limitations, in this study, we will introduce betting odds as an objective measure of match outcome uncertainty. As this is the first time that this has been undertaken in women's football, our study will provide new results to the literature. Furthermore, due to the knock-out format of the UWCL, we construct a variable of intra-match uncertainty (Scelles et al., 2011) considering the possibility of score reversal after the first leg game has been played (i.e. competitive intensity, see Method section for more details).

## **5.4 Background**

### *5.4.1 The landscape of the UEFA Women's Champions League*

As part of its strategy to sustain the development of the women's game, UEFA provided the best European women's football clubs with the opportunity to

play each other launching the Women's Cup in 2001/02. After its early editions, however, the Women's Cup had generated limited results in terms of appeal and visibility (UEFA, 2008) as the competition was made up of mostly amateur clubs. In an attempt to overcome these initial hurdles, in 2009 UEFA rebranded the competition, changing its name to the UEFA Women's Champions League. Moreover, it started to include more entrants from the top eight nations (the top 12 since 2016) on the basis of the UEFA association coefficient rankings.

Until 2008/09, the Women's Cup included two qualifying rounds, played in the form of mini-tournaments, followed by quarter-finals, semi-finals and finals played on a home-and-away basis. Since 2009/10, the UWCL has adopted a format that is more similar to the men's Champions League, including a qualifying group stage and four two-legged knock-out stages (32-stage, 16-stage, quarter-finals and semi-finals) before the final (which is now played in a neutral stadium). In addition to the new format and a revamped brand identity, in 2010 UEFA introduced prize money for the first time, awarding €250,000 for the winners and €200,000 for the runners-up. The following year, UEFA extended the payments to semi-finalists and quarter-finalists, aiming to raise the prestige, the competitiveness and the status of UEFA's top competition for women's clubs (UEFA, 2013).

The composition of the UWCL, particularly at the higher competition stages, has been dominated by clubs coming from France and Germany. Also, clubs from England have made their appearances up to the semi-finals more frequently in the last seasons. However, over the nine seasons studied (2009/10-2017/18), the French club Olympique Lyon won the competition five times (including the last three seasons) and was runner-up twice. The other winners were three German clubs, Wolfsburg (winner and runner-up twice), Frankfurt and Turbine Potsdam (winner and

runner-up once each). Other runners-up have been the French club Paris Saint-Germain (twice) and the Swedish club Tyresö, the only non-French or German club able to reach the final over the period studied.

#### *5.4.2 The emergence of integrated women's football clubs*

Concomitant with reforms carried out by UEFA, a gradually increasing number of professional men's football clubs had started to establish a link with and/or integrate a women's team into their management and ownership structures (Aoki et al., 2010; ECA, 2014; Welford, 2013). For example, well-known and historical men's football clubs such as Arsenal, FC Barcelona, Juventus, Olympique Lyon and Wolfsburg have a women's section that plays under the same name and with the same colours as the men's team.

When men's clubs integrate a women's team, this often becomes part of the same organisation as the men's team, and can therefore benefit from this association in a number of ways (Aoki et al., 2010). Potential advantages deriving from a pre-existent professional men's club structure include the availability of technical and medical expertise, an established sponsorship platform, the possibility to practice in state-of-the-art structures and, most notably, a stronger financial position that can help the women's side secure the best players in the market. However, integration with a men's club can also represent a threat to the women's team financial stability. In fact, integrated women's sides often rely exclusively on the men's club resources and their management can be subject to the strategic decisions of the parent club (Aoki et al., 2010; Welford, 2013). In addition, women's teams that go through this process of integration might risk being perceived as inferior in comparison to the men's team, or as betraying the values connected with

the original club and their following communities. For instance, Meier et al. (2016) examined a similar construct by looking at whether a women's club had either seceded from or merged with a men's club. Their findings show that integration with an established men's football club leads to diminished stadium attendance for the women's side, indicating that integration was not well received by fans of clubs competing in the Women's Bundesliga.

Nevertheless, we argue that integration can be an opportunity to generate visibility and additional fan interest for both the integrated women's club and women's football as a whole. Examples of positive associations between clubs with an integrated ownership and increased attention come from different parts of the world. For instance, the Spanish La Liga recently launched a new women's league which constituted primarily of teams that are integrated with a men's club, which has led to the first official sponsorship contract for the league (LaLiga, 2016). Similarly, the entrance of Juventus in the Italian women's top division resulted in increased visibility and interest from other men's clubs in investing in a women's side (Castellano, 2018). The integrated ownership model has helped attract high numbers of spectators also in Central and South American nations. For example, in Mexico, each of the two La Liga MX Femenil's final games between Pachuca and Chivas de Guadalajara were played in front of a crowd of around 30,000 spectators (AS Mexico, 2018). Therefore, it might be assumed that these clubs' recognisable brand and reputation can help the whole sport increase its visibility. Related to this, past studies have suggested that attendance at men's football matches may be driven by the brand following of the visiting club (Coates, Naidenova & Parshakov, 2017; Czarnitzki & Stadtmann, 2002; Pawlowski & Anders, 2012). Thus, we suggest that the presence of a women's integrated club, where men's side has a prominent

reputation, will be positively reflected in the number of spectators at the stadium. We build upon past findings to verify the impact of such ‘superclub’ effect at the individual game-level in women’s football.

## ***5.5 Method***

### ***5.5.1 Dataset and variables***

All matches played in the UWCL qualifying rounds (group stage) and knockout phases (32-stage to semi-finals) between 2009/10 and 2017/18 formed the basis of the empirical analysis. The final was omitted for each season due to these games taking place in neutral stadiums. The period from 2009/10 to 2017/18 was selected due to unavailability of variables such as betting odds or stadium attendance data for previous seasons. The final sample consists of 554 games. Table 6.1 provides an overview of the measures used in this study.

To account for trends in attendance we employed a set of distinct dummies for each season. Similarly, stage of the competition was controlled by dummy variables. With regards to this factor, attendance would be expected to increase as the competition reaches its final stages due to the potentially better quality that is displayed in these games.

Both home and away teams’ recent performances are found as positive determinants of stadium attendance (Pawlowski & Anders, 2012). To capture this effect in our model, we calculated the number of points scored by the home and the away teams in the five national league matches played prior to the UWCL game.

The urban area population of the home team site was considered to determine each club's potential market size. Further, we included data about income per capita for the location where each team is based using data that are clustered on the smallest unit of administration of Nomenclature Territorial Units for Statistics (NUTS3) (Eurostat, 2018).<sup>16</sup> This gives us the possibility to measure economic information depending on each club's location, although it is important to consider that it was not possible to retrieve game-level price data, which limits the understanding of the specific price effect on attendance. Nonetheless, most women's teams operate either a free-of-charge entrance policy or charge fans a very modest sum to attend matches.<sup>17</sup> For instance, ticket prices for the last two UWCL finals equalled €7 in 2016/17 and €3.20 in 2017/18 (UEFA, 2017b, 2018).

**Table 5.1.** Description of variables.

Variable	Description	Measure	Source
Attendance	Number of spectators at the game	Ln (attendance)	<i>worldfootball.net;</i> <i>women.soccerway.com</i>
Season	Season in which the game was played	Seasonal dummies (2009/10-2017/18)	
Stage of competition	Stage of the competition in which the game was played	Dummy variable for each stage (group stage to semi-final)	
Recent performance	Points won by the home team as a percentage of the possible points in the	Points won / points available	Clubs' official website; <i>women.soccerway.com</i>

<sup>16</sup> NUTS is a geocode standard for referencing the subdivisions of countries for statistical purposes in European Union member states. The classification of regions is divided into three levels: major (NUTS 1), basic (NUTS 2) and small (NUTS 3). Note that we used country's GDP per capita for clubs that are based in non-EU countries.

<sup>17</sup> Examples from some of the most successful women's football clubs are presented here: Arsenal Women – the most successful English women's football club by number of trophies - and Manchester City Women – English 2016 Women Super League winner and 2017/18 UWCL semi-finalist - charge adults £6 for all their home games (Arsenal, 2018; Manchester City, 2018); Olympique Lyon – five-times UWCL winner – charged €5 for the UWCL 16-stage return leg in 2017/18 (Olympique Lyon, 2017).

Variable	Description	Measure	Source
home team	previous $n$ (max. = 5) matches in season $t$ (national league games only)		
Recent performance away team	Points won by the away team as a percentage of the possible points in the previous $n$ (max. = 5) matches in season $t$ (national league games only)		
Population	Population of the host city	Ln (population)	<i>citypopulation.de</i>
Income home team	Income per capita in the corresponding NUTS3 region for the home team	Ln (income)	<i>Eurostat (ec.europa.eu)</i>
Income away team	Income per capita in the corresponding NUTS3 region for the away team		
Distance	Distance between home and away teams	Distance in km	<i>distancefromto.net</i>
Same country	Dummy variable used to capture matches in which teams come from the same country	Dummy: 1 = clubs are from the same country; 0 = clubs are from different countries	
Weekend	Whether the match is played on a weekday/end	Dummy: 1 = weekend; 0 = weekday	
Temperature	Temperature in the host city on match day	Temperature in °C	<i>timeanddate.com</i>
Rain	Rain in the host city on match day	Dummy: 1 = rain 0 = no rain	<i>timeanddate.com</i>
Uncertainty of outcome	The level of uncertainty of outcome for the match played based on betting odds	Theil measure	<i>oddsportal.com</i>
Win probability home team	Predicted home team's probability to win based on betting odds	Adjusted home team's probability to win in percentage based on betting odds	<i>oddsportal.com</i>
Competitive intensity	The possibility of score reversals after the first leg game	Exact goal difference in absolute value after the first leg (including away goal rule) for the second leg games; 0 = otherwise	
Ownership	Home team's type of	Dummy: 1 = integrated;	Clubs' official website

Variable	Description	Measure	Source
home team	ownership	0 = independent	
Ownership away team	Away team's type of ownership		
Big-5 home team	Dummy variable used to capture whether the home team is based in one of the Big-5 leagues	Dummy: 1 = Big-5; 0 = Non Big-5	
Big-5 away team	Dummy variable used to capture whether the away team is based in one of the Big-5 leagues		
Integrated and Big-5 home team	Matches where the home team is an integrated club from the Big-5 leagues (e.g. 'superclub' effect)	Dummy: 1 = integrated and Big-5; 0 = all clubs (integrated and independent) not from Big-5	
Integrated and Big-5 away team	Matches where the away team is an integrated clubs from the Big-5 leagues (e.g. 'superclub' effect)		

We measured distance between home and away teams' host cities to control for potential travelling costs for away supporters (although it is not possible to distinguish between home and away fans). Furthermore, we included a dummy variable indicating whether clubs are based in the same country. Previous studies in men's football controlled for 'derby' or 'rivalries' in national competitions, while our paper analyses a multinational tournament. This allows us to verify whether matches where the two competing teams come from the same country attract larger audiences than other UWCL games (e.g. potential derby). Controls for opportunity costs related to the scheduling of the game (i.e. week-day/end) and weather conditions (i.e. temperature and rain) were inputted in our demand equation.

Following Peel and Thomas (1992), and Pawlowski and Anders (2012), betting odds for the probabilities of home team's win, away team's win and draw

game served to operationalise match outcome uncertainty. These three conditions were condensed via the calculation of the Theil measure for uncertainty (see Theil, 1967):

$$THEIL = \sum_{i=1}^3 \frac{p_i}{\sum_{i=1}^3 p_i} \log \left( \frac{\sum_{i=1}^3 p_i}{p_i} \right)$$

where  $p_i$  reports the home team's win probability, the away team's win probability, as well as the draw probability of a certain match based on unbiased betting odds provided by *oddsportal.com*. The Theil index increases when the *ex ante* uncertainty of match outcome is higher and vice versa. Related to this, the probability of home team's win and its squared term were used in an alternative model to verify the existence of reference-dependent preferences.<sup>18</sup>

In addition to a standard measure of individual game outcome uncertainty, this study controls for competitive intensity (Scelles et al., 2013, 2016). In the UWCL knock-out stages, teams play each other twice on a home-and-away basis (i.e. once at each team's home ground). The final result of each match is determined by the aggregate score of the two individual fixtures. When aggregate scores are equal, the 'away goal rule' is applied (i.e. any goals scored away count double when aggregate scores are equal). Football being a low-scoring sport, a lower goal difference (including the 'away goal rule') before the second leg is played would be expected to determine higher interest from fans due to the final score still being in contention (i.e. competitive intensity).

---

<sup>18</sup> The Theil index as well as the probability of home team's win and its squared term were also used simultaneously in another model (see Results and discussion section).

Based on what is described in *Section 5.4.2*, a variable controlling for the possibility that integrated clubs have an effect on attendance was included in the estimation equation. The presence of clubs with an integrated model of ownership is now common across many European countries (ECA, 2014). However, it is reasonable to argue that those integrated clubs that are based in the most financially lucrative (and therefore more renowned) men's leagues (e.g. England, France, Germany, Italy and France, referred as 'the Big-five') are more likely to produce a significant 'superclub' effect. To provide a practical example, despite both men's clubs having a women's side, the brand of FC Barcelona (Spain) is internationally more popular than the one of Stabæk (Norway). Hence, an additional dummy variable was formulated indicating whether teams were integrated and based in one of the Big-five leagues<sup>19</sup>

Table 5.2 presents the summary statistics for the dependent and independent variables.

---

<sup>19</sup> A variable controlling for integrated clubs that are not based in the Big-five and one controlling for home team supporters' habit persistence were also tested. These provided non-significant results and are therefore not displayed in the paper. Results are available upon request.

**Table 5.2.** Descriptive statistics of dependent and independent variables.

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. deviation</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>
Attendance	6.88	1.15	3.43	10
Habit persistence home team	6.38	0.98	4.50	8.04
Recent performance home team	0.83	0.19	0	1
Recent performance away team	0.83	0.17	0.13	1
Population	12.57	1.54	7.77	16.09
Income home team	10.03	1.11	7.04	12.26
Income away team	10.06	1.15	6.26	12.26
Distance	7.01	0.72	4.57	8.63
Same country	0.02	0.16	0	1
Weekend	0.15	0.35	0	1
Temperature	14.59	8.26	-12	37
Rain	0.14	0.35	0	1
Uncertainty of outcome	0.75	0.24	0.28	1.09
Competitive intensity	1.04	1.86	0	14
Win probability home team	0.48	0.30	0.02	0.93
Ownership home team	0.52	0.49	0	1
Ownership away team	0.46	0.49	0	1
Big-5 home team	0.35	0.47	0	1
Big-5 away team	0.35	0.47	0	1
Integrated and Big-5 home team	0.23	0.42	0	1
Integrated and Big-5 away team	0.23	0.42	0	1

### 5.5.2 Estimation strategy

The estimation strategy for this study is a demand equation that distinguishes among groups of explanatory factors that have an effect on attendance. The standard model to be estimated is:

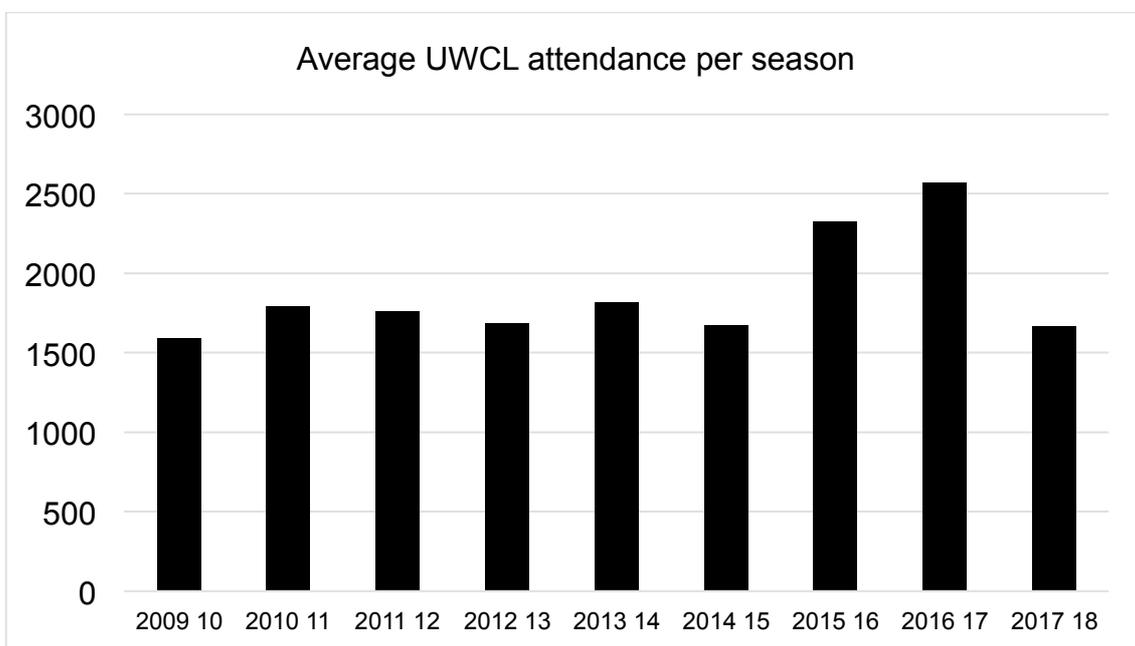
$$\begin{aligned} \ln (Att_{gijt}) = & \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{Recent Performance}_i + \beta_2 \text{Recent Performance}_j \\ & + \beta_3 \ln(\text{Population}_i) + \beta_4 \ln(\text{Income}_{it}) + \beta_5 \ln(\text{Income}_{jt}) \\ & + \beta_6 \ln(\text{Distance}) + \beta_7 \text{Same country} + \beta_8 \text{Weekend} + \beta_9 \text{Temperature} \\ & + \beta_{10} \text{Rain} + \beta_{11} \text{Theil} + \beta_{12} \text{Win Probability}_i \\ & + \beta_{13} \text{Competitive Intensity} \\ & + \beta_{14} \text{Ownership}_i + \beta_{15} \text{Ownership}_j + \beta_{16} \text{Big Five}_i + \beta_{17} \text{Big Five}_j \\ & + \beta_{18} \text{Ownership}_i * \text{Big Five}_i + \beta_{19} \text{Ownership}_j * \text{Big Five}_j \\ & + \tau_t + \varphi_g + \mu_i + \varepsilon_{gijt} \end{aligned}$$

where the dependent variable is the log-attendance for the match  $g$  between home team  $i$  and away team  $j$  in season  $t$ . The yearly effects are represented by  $\tau$  while  $\varphi$  is the dummy for the tournament stage. To control for unobserved heterogeneity across home teams' countries, we input  $\mu$ . Our empirical specifications include alternative models to test the significance of various determinants of stadium attendance (e.g. with and without uncertainty of outcome and home team's win probability). The specification above implies random effects (RE) for home and away teams due to lack of variability across our short time periods for variables such as income and population. Further, we control for club-specific unobserved heterogeneity in a model that accounts for individual home teams' fixed-effect (FE).

This allows the models to focus on uncertainty variables. Breusch-Pagan test revealed heteroscedasticity in our data ( $p < .05$ ). Therefore, robust standard errors were applied. The software used for the analysis was Stata/IC 14.2.

## 5.6 Results and discussion

The empirical results of this study (reported in Tables 6.3 and 6.4) offer insights into the effect of contextual- and sport-related determinants of stadium attendance in women's football. Both our FE and RE models predict a moderate percentage of within-clubs variation ( $R^2 = 45\%$ ), while, as expected, the RE specification performs better in explaining variance in stadium attendance between the teams ( $72\% < R^2 < 73\%$ ) than the FE models ( $R^2 = 17\%$ ).



**Figure 5.1.** Average UWCL attendance per season.

As graphically presented in Figure 1, attendance reached peaks of interest in 2015/16 and 2016/17. Alongside attendance for games played in 2011/12, seasonal dummies are consistently positive and some of these present significant results across all models. However, if we compare the first and the last years of our dataset, attendance has remained relatively stable over time. Also, stadium attendance figures remain very low if compared to average crowd sizes for top quality men's football. This means that despite the fact that the women's game has experienced increasing levels of attention by football governing bodies in recent years (FIFA, 2014, 2016; UEFA, 2017a), these efforts have not yet resulted in increased numbers of spectators. In line with previous studies, this provides little support for the idea that fan interest in women's football is developing constantly and continuously (Allison, 2016; Meier et al., 2016; Southall et al., 2005).

As expected, a positive and significant effect is reported for games played in the knock-out stages compared to matches played in the qualifying group stage. Coefficients for quarter-finals and semi-finals denote a greater impact on attendance for stages that are closer to the final. Both home and away teams' recent performances were controlled via the percentage of points won in the five national league games preceding the UWCL match. These variables indicate non-significant results, meaning that fans are not specifically interested in successful teams.

**Table 5.3.** Attendance for UWCL matches.

	RE		FE	
Recent performance home team	.28 (.21)		.29 (.22)	
Recent performance away team	.16 (.13)		.18 (.13)	
Population	-.01 (.09)		Omitted	
Income home team	-.16 (.14)		.50 (.71)	
Income away team	.00 (.02)		.00 (.02)	
Distance	-.04 (.03)		-.03 (.03)	
Same country	.16 (.12)		.14 (.12)	
Weekend	-.01 (.11)		-.02 (.11)	
Temperature	.01 (.00)	*	.01 (.00)	*
Rain	-.02 (.06)		-.00 (.06)	
Uncertainty of outcome	.47 (.16)	***	.50 (.16)	***
Competitive intensity	-.02 (.01)	*	-.02 (.01)	*
Ownership home team	.06 (.37)		Omitted	
Big-5 home team	-.13 (.49)		Omitted	
Integrated and Big-5 home team	.14 (.47)		Omitted	
Ownership away team	.08 (.07)		.09 (.07)	
Big-5 away team	.13 (.08)		.13 (.07)	*
Integrated and Big-5 away team	.29 (.11)	***	.28 (.10)	***
Group stage	Ref.		Ref.	
32-stage	.86 (.15)	***	.84 (.15)	***
16-stage	.86 (.20)	***	.85 (.19)	***
Quarter	1.44 (.22)	***	1.42 (.22)	***
Semi	1.53 (.23)	***	1.51 (.23)	***
2009 10	-.09 (.21)		-.07 (.21)	
2010 11	Ref.		Ref.	
2011 12	.37 (.15)	**	.33 (.15)	**

	RE		FE	
2012 13	.23 (.16)		.18 (.18)	
2013 14	.32 (.20)		.24 (.22)	
2014 15	.33 (.19)	*	.20 (.21)	
2015 16	.49 (.16)	***	.36 (.20)	*
2016 17	.50 (.16)	***	.33 (.19)	*
2017 18	.20 (.17)		.04 (.20)	
Constant	6.49 (1.17)	***	-.07 (7.16)	
Home team	No		Yes	
Home country	Yes		No	
Within	.45		.45	
Between	.72		.17	
Overall	.62		.30	
Observations	554		554	
Groups	90		90	

*Note:* The dependent variable is Ln Attendance; \*  $p < .10$ ; \*\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*\* $p \leq .01$ . Season 2010/11 as reference category for seasonal dummies. Group stage as reference category for stage of the competition dummies. Coefficients (and standard errors) are displayed in the first columns of each model. Robust standard errors are clustered by home team.

With regards to the effect of contextual variables, population is omitted in FE models due to the inclusion of home club-specific effect while it is non-significant in RE specifications. Likewise, income has a non-significant impact on attendance. Yet the different signs in the coefficient between FE and RE specifications would suggest that an increase in income for a given club's area generates an increase in fan attendance (FE). However, clubs in areas with lower income attract more fans than clubs in areas with higher income (RE).

In line with Meier et al. (2016), the negative sign of distance indicates that fans might be unwilling to follow their team when away matches are located in a distant place. However, this has a non-significant impact in our results. As shown by the positive sign of the variable *Same country*, matches where the two competing clubs come from the same nation have the potential to attract larger audiences. Nonetheless, the effect is non-significant across all models. The effect of temperature is significantly positive on attendance, while rain and scheduling variables yield non-significant results.

Looking at the sport-specific factors, the Theil index measuring uncertainty of match outcome displays a positive coefficient and a significant effect. This means that (*a priori*) match outcome uncertainty favours stadium attendance increases. In addition, alternative model specifications present a significant effect of home team's win probability on attendance. This resembles an inverted-U shape with coefficients of home team's win probability and its squared term showing that fan interest peaks when the probability for the home team to win is 0.41 (RE) and 0.43 (FE). This fairly low probability may indicate that uncertainty of match outcome matters more than a higher home team's win probability.<sup>20</sup> Models (reported in Table 6.4) including both uncertainty of match outcome and home team team's win probability show that uncertainty of match outcome has a non-significant positive impact, while the association between attendance and home team win's probability now follows a U shape and becomes non-significant. These findings do not provide support to the hypothesis indicating that spectators show either loss aversion or interest in one-sided games (e.g. Coates et al., 2014). In contrast, women's football supporters

---

<sup>20</sup> Although it should be kept in mind that draws are possible in football (average adjusted probability equal to 16.8% for draws vs. 48.4% for home wins and 34.8% for away wins in our dataset).

seem to give up on attending games where there is a clear favourite, suggesting that they might evaluate the possibility of a surprising result (i.e. utility maximisation) as being very unlikely to happen. This is further supported by the negative sign of competitive intensity. In fact, the negative sign for competitive intensity indicates that fans are reluctant to attend second-leg games if the difference in aggregate score is already high after the first-leg match has been played. In other words, women's football fans are not interested in games where there is a clear favourite.

**Table 5.4.** Alternative models with Win probability for the home team, and alternatively with and without uncertainty of outcome.

	RE	RE	FE	FE
Recent performance home team	.28 (.22)	.29 (.22)	.28 (.22)	.29 (.22)
Recent performance away team	.15 (.13)	.16 (.13)	.18 (.13)	.19 (.13)
Population	-.00 (.08)	-.01 (.09)	Omitted	Omitted
Income home team	-.16 (.14)	-.16 (.14)	.50 (.71)	.50 (.71)
Income away team	.00 (.02)	.00 (.02)	-.00 (.02)	.00 (.02)
Distance	-.04 (.03)	-.04 (.03)	-.03 (.03)	-.03 (.03)
Same country	.17 (.12)	.16 (.12)	.14 (.12)	.14 (.12)
Weekend	-.03 (.12)	-.02 (.12)	-.02 (.12)	-.01 (.12)
Temperature	.01 (.00) *	.01 (.00) *	.01 (.00) **	.01 (.00) *
Rain	-.02 (.06)	-.02 (.06)	-.01 (.06)	-.00 (.06)

	RE		RE		FE		FE	
Uncertainty of outcome			.46 (.38)	*			.58 (.37)	
Competitive intensity	-.02 (.01)	*	-.02 (.01)	**	-.02 (.01)	*	-.02 (.01)	*
Win probability home team	1.24 (.60)	**	-.05 (1.20)		1.43 (.60)	**	-.22 (1.15)	
Win probability <sup>2</sup> home team	-1.53 (.61)	***	.00 (1.38)		-1.66 (.60)	***	.28 (1.33)	
Ownership home team	.03 (.37)		.05 (.37)		Omitted		Omitted	
Big-5 home team	.58 (.80)		.60 (.80)		Omitted		Omitted	
Integrated and Big-5 home team	.16 (.47)		.15 (.47)		Omitted		Omitted	
Ownership away team	.08 (.07)		.08 (.07)		.09 (.07)		.09 (.07)	
Big-5 away team	.11 (.07)		.12 (.07)		.13 (.07)	*	.13 (.07)	*
Integrated and Big-5 away team	.28 (.12)	***	.28 (.12)	**	.29 (.11)	**	.28 (.11)	**
Group stage	Ref.		Ref.		Ref.		Ref.	
32-stage	.83 (.17)	***	.84 (.17)	***	.83 (.17)	***	.85 (.17)	***
16-stage	.82 (.21)	***	.84 (.22)	***	.84 (.21)	***	.86 (.22)	***
Quarter	1.40 (.25)	***	1.42 (.25)	***	1.42 (.25)	***	1.44 (.25)	***
Semi	1.49 (.25)	***	1.51 (.26)	***	1.51 (.25)	***	1.52 (.26)	***
2009 10	-.09 (.21)		-.09 (.21)		-.07 (.21)		-.07 (.21)	
2010 11	Ref.		Ref.		Ref.		Ref.	
2011 12	.37 (.15)	**	.37 (.15)	**	.33 (.15)	**	.33 (.15)	**

	RE		RE		FE		FE
2012 13	.23 (.16)		.23 (.16)		.17 (.18)		.18 (.18)
2013 14	.32 (.20)		.32 (.20)		.23 (.22)		.24 (.22)
2014 15	.33 (.19)	*	.33 (.19)	*	.20 (.22)		.20 (.21)
2015 16	.49 (.17)	**	.49 (.17)	**	.35 (.20)	*	.36 (.20) *
2016 17	.50 (.16)	**	.50 (.16)	**	.33 (.19)	*	.33 (.19) *
2017 18	.20 (.18)		.20 (.18)		.04 (.20)		.04 (.20)
Constant	6.80 (1.17)	**	6.53 (1.18)	***	.18 (7.15)		-.16 (7.14)
Home team	No		No		Yes		Yes
Home country	Yes		Yes		No		No
Within	.45		.45		.45		.45
Between	.73		.72		.17		.17
Overall	.62		.62		.30		.30
Observations	554		554		554		554
Groups	90		90		90		90

*Note:* The dependent variable is Ln Attendance; \*  $p < .10$ ; \*\*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*\* $p \leq .01$ . Season 2010/11 as reference category for seasonal dummies. Group stage as reference category for stage of the competition dummies. Coefficients (and standard errors) are displayed in the first columns of each model. Robust standard errors are clustered by home team.

Lastly, when the away team belongs to the 'superclub' category, we find significant positive effects on stadium attendance. Similar to men's football (Coates et al., 2017; Czarnitzki & Stadtmann, 2002; Pawlowski & Anders, 2012), this means

that spectators' decision to attend a match in person is influenced by the brand strength of the away team. Importantly, clubs with an integrated structure that are based in one of the Big-five leagues have the greatest impact on demand in women's football.

### *5.6.1 Managerial implications*

Findings presented here help expand the debate on the positioning of women's football overall and provide women's football stakeholders with guidance in respect of stadium attendance. First, given the slow pace of growth in attendance for the top European club competition in recent years, the progression of women's football towards financial sustainability seems problematic in the short-term. Second, UWCL attendance responds to a 'superclub' effect as demonstrated by the positive impact of the variable integrated and Big-5 away team (32 to 40% more fans than independent non Big-5 away team). Specifically, it appears that brand strength can be 'transferrable' from the men's to the women's section as supporters might associate the brand of a men's club with its integrated women's side. Hence, professional men's clubs with a recognisable brand should be encouraged to invest in a women's section to increase the visibility of the sport. However, at the same time, the positioning of those pioneering all-female independent clubs needs protection, as they may be put at risk due to the financial power of integrated clubs. Therefore, before directing any specific policy actions in this area, it is important to consider more broadly whether the aim of women's football should be to end up at the same or a different place as the men's game in terms of its commercialisation (Morrow, 2017).

Third, moving to outcome uncertainty and competitive intensity, the significant associations identified between these two variables and attendance is of particular importance for football governing bodies and clubs, as they consider potential changes in the competition format (ECA, 2018).<sup>21</sup> However, maintaining (or improving) the level of match uncertainty is complex. In the case of women's football, it is reasonable to suggest that the relatively low interest of spectators in attending the stadium might be due to the transitioning period of women's football in terms of its popularity and the still relatively low participation rates in many countries. For instance, it is possible that due to the low numbers of participants, only a few players per team are currently able to produce outstanding performances. That said, football governing bodies need to continue their efforts in strengthening the rate of participation at grassroots levels. In fact, over time, this is expected to narrow the gap between players' performances and therefore encourage contests that are more balanced (for a discussion on the relationship between available playing talent and changes in competitive balance, see Berri, Brook, Frick, Fenn & Vicente-Mayoral, 2005; Flores, Forrest & Tena, 2010; Schmidt & Berri, 2003). An additional direction relates to the need to further improve both distributions (i.e. number of clubs awarded) and overall levels of prize money. Importantly, Frick (2011) explored differences in prize money between men's and women's professional distance running and empirically demonstrated that competitive balance of the women's sport improved in line with increasing returns to success (i.e. higher prize money).

---

<sup>21</sup> More precisely, our results indicate that for every additional goal separating home and away teams after the first-leg (i.e. lower competitive intensity), stadium attendance for the second-leg game decreases of 2%. The marginal effect of uncertainty of outcome is more difficult to interpret due to the nature of the Theil measure.

### *5.6.2 Conclusions and future research*

This study of fan interest presents an original contribution with regards to stadium attendance in women's football and offers interesting perspectives about the development of the women's game in Europe. Our results highlight the importance of outcome uncertainty as a critical determinant of stadium attendance for elite women's football. Also, this study indicates that supporters of women's football are not driven by the quality of the competing teams. In contrast, they seem to be motivated to watch clubs with a brand that is recognisable from the men's game. In this direction, there is a potential for spillover effects between men's and women's sections of football clubs with an integrated structure. Thus, this scenario requires further investigation. For instance, future research could focus on club-specific characteristics to determine what factors (e.g. club's history of success) motivate fans to attend the stadium. Also, opportunities for cross-fertilisation between supporters of men's and women's football should be examined more closely. In addition, future studies should continue to investigate fan culture in relation to women's football teams (e.g. Guest & Lujten, 2017), as this can provide a better understanding of how supporters can be attracted and retained in women's football. Furthermore, the availability of substitute products and the opportunity to watch the game on TV should be considered in future studies of attendance demand in order to provide more precise interpretations regarding the behaviour of women's football fans.

## 5.7 References

- Allison, R. (2016). Business or cause? Gendered institutional logics in women's professional soccer. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, 40(3), 237-262.
- Andreff, W., & Scelles, N. (2015). Walter C. Neale 50 years after: Beyond competitive balance, the league standing effect tested with French football data. *Journal of Sports Economics*, 16(8), 819-834.
- Aoki, K., Crumbach, S., Naicker, C., Schmitter, S., & Smith, N. (2010). Identifying best practice in women's football: Case study in the European context. FIFA Master 10<sup>th</sup> Edition, unpublished thesis, available at: [http://www.cies-uni.org/sites/default/files/identifying\\_best\\_practices\\_in\\_women\\_football.pdf](http://www.cies-uni.org/sites/default/files/identifying_best_practices_in_women_football.pdf) (accessed 18 August 2016).
- Arsenal (2018). Arsenal Women tickets, available at: <https://arsenal.com/tickets/women-tickets> (accessed 13 June 2018).
- AS Mexico (2018). Pachuca vence a Chivas en la ida de la final de Liga MX Femenil, available at: [https://mexico.as.com/mexico/2017/11/21/futbol/1511240222\\_977866.html](https://mexico.as.com/mexico/2017/11/21/futbol/1511240222_977866.html) (accessed 13 June 2018).
- Berri, D. J., Brook, S. L., Frick, B., Fenn, A. J., & Vicente-Mayoral, R. (2005). The short supply of tall people: Competitive imbalance and the National Basketball Association. *Journal of Economic Issues*, 39(4), 1029-1041.
- Castellano, L. (2018). Martina Rosucci: «La Juve sta dando grande visibilità al movimento femminile», available at: <https://juventusnews24.com/martina-rosucci-juve-grande-visibilita-movimento-femminile/> (accessed 13 June 2018).
- Coates, D., Naidenova, I., & Parshakov, P. (2017). Determinants of Russian football club brands. *International Journal of Sport Finance*, 12(4), 321-341.
- Coates, D., Humphreys, B. R., & Zhou, L. (2014). Reference-dependent preferences, loss aversion, and live game attendance. *Economic Inquiry*, 52(3), 959-973.
- Cooky, C., Messner, M. A., & Hextrum, R. H. (2013). Women play sport, but not on TV: A longitudinal study of televised news media. *Communication & Sport*, 1(3), 203-230.

- Czarnitzki, D., & Stadtmann, G. (2002). Uncertainty of outcome versus reputation: Empirical evidence for the First German Football Division. *Empirical Economics*, 27, 101-112.
- Downward, P., Dawson, A., & Dejonghe, T. (2009). The demand for professional team sports: Attendance and broadcasting. In Downward, P., Dawson, A., & Dejonghe, T. (Eds.) *Sports Economics: Theory, Evidence and Policy*, Butterworth-Heinemann: Oxford, pp. 261-300.
- ECA (2014). European Clubs Association - Women's Football Committee – Women's Club Football Analysis (Report), available at [http://www.ecaeurope.com/PageFiles/7585/ECA\\_Womens%20Club%20Football%20Analysis\\_double%20pages.pdf](http://www.ecaeurope.com/PageFiles/7585/ECA_Womens%20Club%20Football%20Analysis_double%20pages.pdf) (accessed 22 November 2016).
- ECA (2018). European Club Association – Media Release: The ECA Executive Board, available at: <https://www.ecaeurope.com/news/eca-executive-board-meets-in-warsaw/> (accessed 9 July 2018).
- Eurostat (2018). *Gross domestic product (GDP) at current market prices by NUTS 3 regions*, available at: [http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=nama\\_10r\\_3gdp&lang=en](http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=nama_10r_3gdp&lang=en) (accessed 8 January 2019).
- Feehan, P. (2006). Attendance at sports events. In Andreff, W. & Szymanski, S. (Eds.) *Handbook on the Economics of Sport*, Edward Elgar: Cheltenham, pp. 90-99.
- FIFA (2014). The women's survey, available at: [http://www.fifa.com/mm/document/footballdevelopment/women/02/52/26/49/womensfootballsurvey2014\\_e\\_english.pdf](http://www.fifa.com/mm/document/footballdevelopment/women/02/52/26/49/womensfootballsurvey2014_e_english.pdf) (accessed 7 October 2016).
- FIFA (2016). FIFA 2.0: The vision for the future, available at: [https://www.sportanddev.org/sites/default/files/downloads/fifa\\_2.0\\_the\\_vision\\_for\\_the\\_future.pdf](https://www.sportanddev.org/sites/default/files/downloads/fifa_2.0_the_vision_for_the_future.pdf) (accessed 22 November 2016).
- FIFPro (2017). 2017 FIFPro global employment report: Working conditions in professional women's football, available at: <https://www.fifpro.org/attachments/article/6986/2017%20FIFPro%20Women%20Football%20Global%20Employment%20Report-Final.pdf> (accessed 15 December 2017).

- Flores, R., Forrest, D., & Tena, D. (2010). Impact on competitive balance from allowing foreign players in a sports league: Evidence from European soccer. *Kyklos*, 63(4), 546-557.
- Forrest, D., & Simmons, R. (2002). Outcome uncertainty and attendance demand in sport: The case of English soccer. *Statistician*, 51(2), 229-241.
- Frick, B. (2011). Gender differences in competitiveness: Empirical evidence from professional distance running. *Labour Economics*, 18(3), 389-398.
- Funk, D. C., Ridinger, L. L. & Moorman, A. M. (2003). Understanding consumer support: Extending the Sport Interest Inventory (SII) to examine individual differences among women's professional sport consumers. *Sport Management Review*, 6(1), 1-31.
- García, J., & Rodríguez, P. (2009). Sports attendance: A survey of the literature 1973-2007. *Rivista di Diritto ed Economia dello Sport*, 5(2), 111-151.
- Guest, A. M., & Luijten, A. (2017). Fan culture and motivation in the context of successful women's professional team sports: A mixed-methods case study of Portland Thorns fandom. *Sport in Society*, 21(7), 1013-1030.
- Hallmann, K. (2012). Women's 2011 football World Cup: The impact of perceived images of women's soccer and the World Cup 2011 on interest in attending matches. *Sport Management Review*, 15(1), 33-42.
- Jewell, R.T. (2017). The effect of marquee players on sports demand: The case of US Major League Soccer. *Journal of Sports Economics*, 18(3), 239-252.
- Kahneman, D., & Tverski, A. (1979). Prospect theory: An Analysis of decision under risk. *Econometrica*, 47(2), 263-292.
- Knowles, G., Sherony, K., & Hauptert, M. (1992). The demand for Major League Baseball: A test of the uncertainty of outcome hypothesis. *The American Economist*, 36(2), 72-80.
- LaLiga (2016). Iberdrola to sponsor the women's First Division, available at: <http://laliga.es/en/news/iberdrola-to-sponsor-the-womens-first-division> (accessed 13 June 2018).
- LeFeuvre, A. D., Stephenson, F. E., & Walcott, S. M. (2013). Football frenzy: The effect of the 2011 World Cup on Women's Professional Soccer League attendance. *Journal of Sports Economics*, 14(4), 440-448.

- Manchester City (2018). Match tickets, available at: <http://manchestercity.fawsl.com/tickets.html> (accessed 13 June 2018).
- Martins, A. M., & Cró, S. (2018). The demand for football in Portugal: New insights on outcome uncertainty. *Journal of Sports Economics*, 19(4), 473-497.
- Meier, H. E., Konjer, M., & Leinwather, M. (2016). The demand for women`s league soccer in Germany. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 16(1), 1-19.
- Morrow, S. (2017). Football, economics and finance. In Hughson, J., Moore, K., Spaaij, R., Maguire, J., *Routledge Handbook of Football Studies*, Routledge, New York, pp. 163-176.
- Olympique Lyon (2017). UWCL ticketing: OL Women - Medyk Konin, available at: <https://olweb.fr/en/article/uwcl-ticketing-ol-women-medyk-konin-32091.html> (accessed 13 June 2018).
- Pawlowski, T. (2013). Testing the uncertainty of outcome hypothesis in European professional football: A stated preference approach. *Journal of Sports Economics*, 14(4), 341-367.
- Pawlowski, T., & Anders, C. (2012). Stadium attendance in German professional football: The (un)importance of uncertainty of outcome reconsidered. *Applied Economics Letters*, 19(16), 1553-1556.
- Pawlowski, T., Nalbantis, G., & Coates, D. (2018). Perceived game uncertainty, suspense and the demand for sport. *Economic Inquiry*, 56(1), 173-192.
- Peel, D. A., & Thomas, D. A. (1992). The demand for football: Some evidence on outcome uncertainty. *Empirical Economics*, 17(2), 323-331.
- Pfister, G. (2015). Assessing the sociology of sport: On women and football. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 50(4-5), pp. 563-569.
- Scelles, N., Durand, C., Bah S. T., & Rioult, F. (2011). Intra-match competitive intensity in French football Ligue 1 and rugby Top 14. *International Journal of Sport Management and Marketing*, 9(3/4), 154-169.
- Scelles, N., Durand, C., Bonnal, L., Goyeau, D., & Andreff, W. (2013). Competitive balance versus competitive intensity before a match: Is one of these two concepts more relevant in explaining attendance? The case of the French

- football Ligue 1 over the period 2008-2011. *Applied Economics*, 45(29), 4184-4192.
- Scelles, N., Durand, C., Bonnal, L., Goyeau, D., & Andreff, W. (2016). Do all sporting prizes have a significant positive impact on attendance in a European national football league? Competitive intensity in the French Ligue 1. *Economic Policy*, 11(3), 82-107.
- Schmidt, M. B., & Berri, D. J. (2003). On the evolution of competitive balance: The impact of an increasing global search. *Economic Inquiry*, 41(4), 692-704.
- Shapiro, S.L., DeSchraver, T.D., & Rascher, D.A. (2017). The Beckham effect: Examining the longitudinal impact of a star performer on league marketing, novelty, and scarcity. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 17, 610-634.
- Southall, R. M., Nagel, M. S. & LeGrande, D. J. (2005). Build it and they will come? The Women's United Soccer Association: A collision of exchange theory and strategic philanthropy. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 14(3), 158-167.
- Sung, H., & Mills, B. M. (2018). Estimation of game-level attendance in major league soccer: Outcome uncertainty and absolute quality considerations. *Sport Management Review*, 21(5), 519-532.
- Szymanski, S. (2003). The economic design of sporting contests. *Journal of Economic Literature*, 41(4), 1137-1187.
- Theil, H. (1967). *Economics and information theory* (Vol. 7). Amsterdam: North Holland.
- UEFA (2008). Women's Champions League launches in 2009, available at: <https://uefa.com/womenschampionsleague/news/newsid=781313.html> (accessed 9 July 2018).
- UEFA (2013). UEFA Women's Champions League, available at: [https://www.uefa.com/MultimediaFiles/Download/EuroExperience/competitions/General/01/72/39/64/1723964\\_DOWNLOAD.pdf](https://www.uefa.com/MultimediaFiles/Download/EuroExperience/competitions/General/01/72/39/64/1723964_DOWNLOAD.pdf) (accessed 9 July 2018).
- UEFA (2017a). *Women's Football across the National Associations 2017*, available at: [https://www.uefa.com/MultimediaFiles/Download/OfficialDocument/uefaorg/Women'sfootball/02/51/60/57/2516057\\_DOWNLOAD.pdf](https://www.uefa.com/MultimediaFiles/Download/OfficialDocument/uefaorg/Women'sfootball/02/51/60/57/2516057_DOWNLOAD.pdf) (accessed 20 December 2017).

UEFA (2017b). Women's Champions League final tickets on sale, available at: <https://uefa.com/womenschampionsleague/news/newsid=2441643.html> (accessed 13 June 2018).

UEFA (2018). Women's Champions League final tickets sales, available at: <https://uefa.com/womenschampionsleague/ticketing/index.html> (accessed 13 June 2018).

Welford, J. (2013). Outsiders on the inside: Integrating female and male football clubs in the UK, paper presented at Football Research in an Enlarged Europe (FREE) conference, June, University of Copenhagen (Denmark).

Wooten, J.J. (2018). A case for complements? Location and attendance in Major League Soccer. *Applied Economics Letters*, 25(7), 442-446.

### ***5.7 Summary of this study's contribution to the overall research***

The principal focus of this study is fan interest in attending women's football games. The analysis applied here highlights the importance of outcome uncertainty, competitive intensity and club reputation as factors influencing the decision of fans to attend the game. All these factors are in line with the assumptions put forward in the theoretical framework. More specifically, competitive balance and competitive intensity are acknowledged as direct contributors of game attractiveness in the theoretical model. These associations are supported empirically in this research article.

Moreover, an indirect relationship between profit redistribution and game attractiveness can be argued based on the results of this study. In fact, clubs that draw higher interest from fans are those with higher reputation. Although this paper does not examine whether these clubs also have higher financial budgets, it is likely that, due to their association with a professional men's club competing in the most financially lucrative football leagues (i.e. Big-Five), integrated women's clubs provide their players with higher salaries and a more professional environment (e.g. better training facilities). This would be consistent with the argument that profit redistribution (at club-level) helps increase athletes' sporting abilities and, as a consequence, enhance game attractiveness.

However, more detailed evidence on these particular aspects is presented in the next chapter, in which organisational and managerial practices of European women's football clubs are examined more closely. In addition, the next chapter presents evidence on how the entrance of integrated clubs affects the level of outcome uncertainty. This helps further discussions about the rapidly changing landscape of the women's game in Europe.



# Chapter 6

## Additional research outputs (Studies 4, 5 and 6)

This chapter offers research outputs supplementing the previously presented studies. As outlined in *Section 1.3*, these additional contributions are two academic conference papers and a research project funded by UEFA as part of its Research Grant Programme 2018/19. In particular, these works focus on women's football clubs, examining their financial, organisational and managerial practices, while, more generally, continuing to improve understanding of elements influencing the development of the women's game in Europe (e.g. competitive balance). At the time of writing, the two academic conference papers (*Studies 4* and *5*) have not been extended to full-text articles, while the results of the research project conducted in collaboration with UEFA and two national football associations (*Study 6*) are publicly available both in English (via the UEFA Academy website) and in Italian (via the Federazione Italiana Giuoco Calcio website). The aims, objectives, methodology, results and conclusions of these research outputs are summarised below. At the end of this chapter, the contribution that these add to the overall research is discussed.

## **6.1 Competitive balance in European elite women's club football**

Rottenberg (1956) and Neale (1964) were the first authors to bring forward the debate on the positive relationship between the level of balance between competitors within a sport contest and its attractiveness for spectators. Competitive balance is a crucial issue for the advancement of women's football. In this regard, the entrance of integrated clubs has determined a new scenario in the European context, as they have the potential to offer their players and staff better conditions than independent clubs both in financial and infrastructural terms. This results in integrated clubs having the opportunity to acquire the best talents in the market. Yet, integrated clubs also risk creating significant disparities with clubs that have an independent structure. Overall, this has the potential to undermine competitive balance, thus ultimately damaging the process of development in European women's football. The following two research outputs presented below analyse levels of competitive balance in domestic (*Study 4*) and European (*Study 5*) competitions and test whether these are affected by the entrance of clubs with an integrated structure.

### 6.1.1 *Is European elite women's club football a male-dominated sport?*

(Study 4)

Full reference: Valenti, M., Scelles, N., and Morrow, S. (2018). Is European elite club women's football a male-dominated sport? Paper presented at *The Political Studies Association – Sport and Politics Annual Conference 2018*, March 21-22, University of Stirling, Stirling, Scotland.

#### **Abstract**

**Purpose:** This study focussed on the two most common types of ownership structure present in European elite club women's football: (i) independent clubs; and (ii) integrated clubs. Specifically, the main purposes of this study are to: (a) map European women's football clubs with regards to their ownership structure and; (b) test the relationship between clubs' ownership structure and their sporting success.

**Research methods:** Data were collected from clubs competing in the English, French, German and Swedish top divisions between 2004 and 2016. A total of 482 club-seasons were analysed through regression tests.

**Results:** Findings indicate that clubs with an integrated structure are significantly more successful than independent clubs, suggesting that potential opportunities to exploit advantages deriving from the integration with a men's club (e.g. around player recruitment, finance, training facilities) are ultimately reflected in sporting performance. However, a closer inspection of the studied countries reveals that while this assumption holds true in England and France, the opposite is found in the Swedish context, while non-significant results are displayed for Germany. Thus, the

existence of an integrated structure does not automatically lead to football success, meaning that other factors (e.g. the respective men's clubs' financial strength, women's football popularity) may play a role as well.

***Implications:*** These preliminary results help develop an understanding of the trajectories that European women's football clubs are pursuing in different contexts and contribute to the critical debate about gender and power relations that exist in football. Also, they pose a question on: (a) the positioning of those pioneering all-female independent clubs which might be threatened by the financial supremacy of integrated clubs and; (b) the threats that such transformation can represent for competitive balance in women's football contests.

6.1.2 *The impact of women's superclubs on competitive balance: An analysis of the UEFA Women's Champions League (Study 5)*

Full reference: Valenti, M., Scelles, N. and Morrow, S. (2019). The impact of women's superclubs on competitive balance: An analysis of the UEFA Women's Champions League. Paper presented at the 12<sup>th</sup> *International Conference Football & Research: Football by and for women – State of play and perspectives*, June 20-22, 2019, University of Lyon 1, Lyon, France.

**Abstract**

**Purpose:** An increasing number of men's football clubs based in the most financially lucrative men's leagues (i.e. Big-5) have started to integrate a women's section into their ownership structures. This is likely to create financial and sporting disparities between these clubs (hereafter, referred as 'superclubs') and their competitors, risking undermining the competitive balance of the women's game. Rottenberg (1956)'s uncertainty of outcome hypothesis suggests that sporting contests necessitate equilibrium between teams to attract fan interest and thus generate revenues. This study examines the level of outcome uncertainty in elite women's football and how this is influenced by the presence of superclubs.

**Research methods:** 640 UEFA Women's Champions League games played between 2009/10 and 2017/18 form the basis of our empirical analysis. We distinguish between three types of games: a) 'superclub vs. superclub' (n = 52); b) 'superclub vs integrated non-Big-5 or independent' (n = 191); and c) 'integrated non-

Big-5 or independent vs integrated non-Big-5 or independent' (n = 397). We statistically test the difference in competitive balance (measured both *ex ante* via the Theil measure and *ex post* at the end of the match through absolute goal difference) across types of game.

**Results:** Superclubs won 73.8% of all games played against integrated non-Big-5 or independent clubs. Of these, 63.8% ended with a goal difference of three or more in favour of the superclub. When superclubs played against each other, a goal difference of three or more was displayed in 23.1% of cases, while 39.3% of games between integrated non-Big-5 or independent clubs finished with a margin of three or more goals. 'Superclub vs integrated non-Big-5 or independent' games have the highest mean level of absolute goal difference and the lowest mean level of Theil (i.e. less uncertainty), while 'superclub vs superclub' games have the lowest mean level of absolute goal difference and the highest mean level of Theil (i.e. more uncertainty). A Kruskal-Wallis test (data not normally distributed) revealed significant differences in the mean level of *ex ante* match outcome uncertainty ( $p < 0.05$ ) and absolute goal difference ( $p < 0.10$ ) across types of game. Pairwise comparisons indicated that 'superclub vs superclub' have a significantly higher mean level of outcome uncertainty than 'superclub vs integrated non-Big-5 or independent' matches ( $p = 0.002$ ), while the mean level of absolute goal difference is significantly lower for 'superclub vs superclub' games than 'superclub vs integrated non-Big-5 or independent' matches ( $p = 0.078$ ).

**Implications:** As competitive balance and uncertainty of outcome in women's football are important to improve the level of spectator demand, the results of this study suggest that policy-makers should take action to either limit the number of games between superclubs and integrated non-Big-5 or independent clubs, or

enhance the level of revenue distribution among clubs with different types of ownership.

## **6.2      *Exploring club organisation structures in European women's football (Study 6)***

As discussed in broad terms, the increasing attention of men's clubs towards investing in the women's game has contributed to different scenarios regarding the legal, organisational, managerial and financial aspects of women's club football. Also, collaborations between women's and men's clubs can represent an instrument for close cooperation between the two sectors of the game and ultimately result in an effective vehicle for the promotion and development of women's football (e.g. ECA, 2014; FIGC, 2015). During the period of research, the PhD candidate has been awarded one of the Research Grants assigned by UEFA to conduct a project that explores the organisational structures of women's football clubs in Europe. The executive summary of the study is reported below.

Full reference: Valenti, M. (2019). *UEFA Research Grant Programme 2018/19 - Exploring club organisation structures in European women's football*. Final Report presented at the UEFA Research Grant Programme Meeting, June 17, 2019, UEFA HQ, Nyon, Switzerland. Available at: [https://uefaacademy.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2019/07/2019\\_UEFA-RGP\\_Final-report\\_Valenti-Maurizio.pdf](https://uefaacademy.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2019/07/2019_UEFA-RGP_Final-report_Valenti-Maurizio.pdf) (English); [https://www.figc.it/media/110957/uefa-research-grant-programme-2018-2019\\_maurizio-valenti\\_gestione-e-strutture-organizzative-dei-club-di-calcio-femminile-in-europa.pdf](https://www.figc.it/media/110957/uefa-research-grant-programme-2018-2019_maurizio-valenti_gestione-e-strutture-organizzative-dei-club-di-calcio-femminile-in-europa.pdf) (Italian)

### *6.2.1 Executive summary*

This executive summary outlines the results of a study selected by the UEFA Research Grant Jury to investigate aspects related to the development of women's club football in Europe. Specifically, the study seeks to: (a) identify and map organisational and managerial practices of women's football clubs, and (b) explore integration between men's and women's football clubs.

Two concrete research questions are formulated for this study:

1. What are the different forms and profiles of club organisation structure in European women's football?
2. Why do professional men's football clubs support the integration of a women's football section?

In answering these research questions, the study pursues two underpinning objectives:

1. To engage in a consultation with women's football clubs to enable the collection of information about their management and organisational practices, and study the factors influencing club integration.
2. To provide UEFA and National Associations (NAs) with insights into the most appropriate approaches to support the sustainability and long-term development of women's club football.

The review of academic literature on women's football highlights the limited attention that has been dedicated to studying the women's game from managerial and economic perspectives (Allison, 2016; Edelman & Masterson, 2009; Hellborg, 2013; Southall, Nagel & LeGrande, 2005). Also, although the phenomenon of club integration in football is growing in the European context and both European and national football governing bodies have acknowledged the potential for close

cooperation between the two sectors of the game, there is still scarce empirical and conceptual evidence regarding the notion of club integration in football (ECA, 2014; UEFA, 2017). Previous studies have considered a comparable situation in basketball, namely the collaboration between men's and women's franchises competing in the National Basketball Association (NBA) and the Women's NBA (WNBA) (e.g. Anthony, Caudil & Mixon, 2012; Edelman & Harrison, 2010; Walker, Sartorie & MacIntosh, 2012). This has led some authors to discuss that Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) could be one of the underpinning elements to guide executive decision-making about the WNBA. Given the fragile financial set-up of women's football, club integration in this sport might also be considered as a form of CSR or strategic philanthropy as in the case of the WNBA.

Organisational scholars have been theorising about CSR for over three decades (Carroll, 1979; Margolis & Walsh, 2003; McWilliams & Siegel, 2000). Although definitions of CSR differ according to context, the key components of CSR have remained constant over time. For example, CSR definitions address "societal relationship" (Wood, 1991, p. 693) and the "expectations that society has of organisations" (Carroll, 1979, p. 500). McWilliams and Siegel (2000) argued that CSR comprises a set of actions aimed to further some social good that goes beyond the explicit pecuniary interests of an organisation. Related areas of inquiry explored whether firms adopt CSR initiatives as a strategic response to external pressures (Hess, Rogovsky & Dunfee, 2002). Also, Belliveau, Cottrill and O'Neill (1994) proposed a model that predicts an organisation's social responsiveness based on factors such as institutional variables (e.g. legal requirements, competitors' behaviour), economic variables (e.g. level of concentration, market share), and managerial variables (e.g. openness to innovation). Similarly, Aguinis and Galvas

(2012) reviewed the academic literature on CSR and outlined predictors, underlying mechanisms and outcomes of CSR actions, synthesising these through three levels of analysis: institutional, organisational and individual.

In the case of women's football, institutional factors can be linked to the societal and political pressures and/or the introduction of regulatory frameworks to support the development of the women's game. At the organisational level, collaboration with a women's club can be associated to an instrumentally viable action that men's clubs conduct in an attempt to improve their reputation and image. Professional men's football clubs face the challenge of reconciling their financial and business activities with their role as social institutions (Morrow, 2003). As such, their investment in women's football might be perceived as fulfilling that need. At the individual level, integration between men's and women's football might be explained by the level of awareness that managers of a men's club have with regards to broader societal objectives such as gender equality and the representation of woman. Moreover, alternative explanations might be that men's clubs consider the development of a women's section as a financially attractive investment in the long-term, particularly due to ever-increasing media attention and the growing levels of participation in the women's game.

A mixed methodological approach is employed to facilitate the achievement of research objectives comprising both quantitative and qualitative elements. The quantitative aspect of the study involves a survey of women's football clubs competing in UEFA member countries. This is based on eight components identified as key for the management of women's football clubs: (1) human and financial resources; (2) budget and finance; (3) infrastructure and training facilities; (4) women's football academy; (5) media, marketing and match day; (6) club

organisation and legal structure; (7) connection(s) between women's and men's football; and (8) women's football development and challenges. The qualitative element consists of interviews with a selected number of clubs that have an integrated organisational structure. Each interview is based on the connection between men's and women's football sections and explores the rationale behind the club's involvement in women's football.

507 women's football clubs from 55 UEFA National Associations (NAs) in 2017/18 were contacted. Of these, 69 clubs located in 28 UEFA member countries returned completed surveys (13.6% response rate). In terms of organisational structure, these clubs follow the two most common forms currently present in European women's football. More specifically, 21 of these run a women's team on an autonomous basis (i.e. independent clubs), while 48 have to some extent developed a collaboration with a men's football club (i.e. integrated clubs). Survey responses assist profiling of management and organisational practices in women's football clubs. Findings of this study show that each club has on average 21 first team players. Of these, almost 48.9% are not paid by their clubs, while 15.5% have a full-time contract and 35.6% receive expenses or are in a part-time agreement. In general, women are underrepresented in technical and coaching positions with over 75% of coaches being men, while there is a more balanced gender ratio for medical staff and professionals working at managerial levels. Reflective of the possibility to rely on larger financial resources, working conditions are usually more stable for professionals that are employed by integrated clubs.

Figures of clubs' overall budgets show heterogeneity amongst the sample. In sum, 43.7% of the clubs spend less than €100,000 per year; about a third (37.5%) of the clubs have a budget ranging between €100,001-€500,000; while 18.8% have a

budget that is greater than half a million Euros per year (of these, 83% are integrated). Also, findings of this research confirm the fragile financial conditions of women's clubs as only 12.7% of the surveyed clubs report a profit, while 52.4% reach a break-even position. 34.9% of clubs indicate a loss at the end of previous season (2017/18). In light of the challenges of achieving financial sustainability in women's football, only 13% of clubs expect their financial situation to become better in the next season (i.e. from loss to break-even position or from break-even position to profit). The revenue mix is predominantly affected by the direct contribution of the owner or of the parent club in the case of integrated clubs (31%). Other club incomes consist of sponsorships, grants and subventions from various stakeholders coupled with prize money derived from the team's sporting performance. On the other side, a third of club expenditures is spent on players' and staff salaries, while facilities and transport to away games absorb another third of club costs.

In terms of infrastructure and training facilities, independent clubs have, on average, 1.3 pitches available for their first teams' training, while 1.6 pitches are accessible by integrated clubs. The most frequently used surface for trainings is artificial grass (55%).

Out of the 69 clubs that took part in the survey, 47 have an academy for the development of young girls. Regardless of their club structure, fewer than 70% of women's clubs focus on the development of youth football. Of note, most clubs focus on the age range between U12 and U15. From a financial point of view, more than two in three clubs invest €75,000 or less every year (of these, 62% are integrated clubs); while clubs that spend more than €100,000 on their academy (22.2%) are all integrated within the structure of a professional men's club.

The marketing strategy of almost all women's clubs includes a Facebook page, an account on Instagram and a dedicated official website. However, there are substantial differences in the average audience following independent and integrated clubs. For instance, integrated clubs present an average of 240,000 subscribers to their social media channels dedicated to women's football, while independent clubs engage 5,600 users. A similar trend is seen in respect of viewership for games that are either aired or streamed on TV / online: an average of 4,511 viewers follow independent clubs while 72,101 watch games of integrated clubs. In contrast, the average numbers of spectators attending live matches at the stadium are relatively closer (308 for integrated clubs and 206 for independent clubs). Ticket prices range from 0 to more than 10 Euros. Interestingly, all clubs that let supporters free of charge are integrated, while independent clubs necessitate of at least a minimal contribution from gate receipts to sustain their business.

From a legal point of view, the most frequently used structure is association (e.g. amateur, voluntary sport clubs or charities). All independent clubs but two are organised as association, with the remaining two being limited companies. Similarly, most integrated clubs operate as associations. However, 15 integrated clubs follow the same business structure as their men's counterpart (8 limited companies; 5 joint stock companies; and 2 listed companies).

Of the 48 clubs that are associated with a men's club, 19 describe their relationship as being fully integrated within the structure of their men's counterpart; 9 are part of the same entity as the men's club but have independent organisational structures; while the remaining 20 clubs present different degrees of involvement with a men's club (ranging from 'very little involvement' to 'strong involvement') but remain separate entities. Collaboration between men's and women's clubs often

includes, but it is not limited to, having the same brand and identity, developing marketing and communication strategies, sharing training facilities and having the same executive board. The great majority (89.5%) of women's integrated teams stated that their collaboration with a men's club is 'advantageous'. In particular, they rate 'access to facilities', 'professional environment' and 'visibility and marketing attractiveness' as the most important advantages which can be derived from integration with a professional men's club.

In relation to the factors and rationale influencing the decision of integrating a women's section, interviews were conducted with 13 senior executives of 8 clubs located in 6 UEFA countries. These discussed that the decision of professional men's football clubs to start a women's section is influenced by factors such as institutional pressures (e.g. from local governments), the need to comply with regulation standards (e.g. licensing criteria), instrumental motives (e.g. opportunity to increase financial and non-financial performances), normative considerations (e.g. sense of responsibility and duty) and internal capabilities (e.g. slack resources and organisational values).

In terms of outcomes, senior executives perceive that the club benefits from having a women's football sections in various ways. These include enhanced image and reputation and increased attractiveness to new investors. Moreover, incorporating a women's team that plays under the same name and with the same colours as the parent club offers these integrated clubs the opportunity to attract an audience that otherwise would not be interested in their men's football activities. This can have consequences for their brand strength and open different market opportunities. In addition, as a result of club integration, senior executives indicate improvements in the club's organisational capabilities and individual employees'

development. Another important aspect that emerged from interviews was the opportunity to reduce risks related to possible changes in the requirements to participate in men's international competitions. More precisely, clubs that have started a process of integration consider their initiative as an effective strategy in case in future international football governing bodies impose the integration of a women's football team as a necessary condition to partake in their competitions. Finally, senior executives believe that introducing a women's football section in an organisation whose traditional purpose has been to manage a men's team acts to raise awareness among both playing and non-playing members about gender issues.

Two pitfalls were identified in the approach adopted by men's clubs to manage their women's football initiative: one related to (the absence of) monitoring systems to track the impact of the women's section initiative; and one related to the possibility of the club continuing to invest in the future (i.e. defining exit options). To track the impact of their women's football initiative, some integrated clubs referred to increases in the number of spectators at the stadium or in the number of sponsors approaching the club, while others acknowledged the complete absence of objective metrics to evaluate the positioning and effects of the women's section. Related to this, most senior executives explicitly identified the lack of financial returns as the greatest risk to continuing their women's football initiative. In view of that, there is a crucial need for football and football clubs to objectively measure the effects of initiatives that go beyond sporting and/or financial dimensions. In fact, while fan interest and media attention are growing in women's football, its current financial set-up demonstrates that the traditional model based on commercial revenues and TV rights might need some time before it becomes sustainable. Therefore, providing

these clubs with practical instruments which can be used to evaluate their social impact might help them follow alternative routes to become sustainable. Demonstrating how football clubs contribute to improve broader societal aspects can help strengthening inter-connections with social and governmental institutions that work on similar issues. For example, encouraging higher participation of women in sport can be one of the common goals for both football clubs and governing bodies.

The consultation with women's football clubs has enabled a comprehensive picture about the perspectives of executives and managers on the development and challenges that European women's club football currently faces. These include the lack of commercial revenues, business sustainability and interest from spectators. However, there are differences in the way these are perceived by independent and integrated clubs. This might be due to the fact that being part of a professional men's club can help those with an integrated structure to perceive certain problems as less prominent (e.g. access to facilities, women's football popularity and support from NA). Other specific issues were discussed during interviews. For example, clubs identified overlaps between international and domestic calendars, the need for reformulations of competition formats and the lack of training compensation mechanisms as some of the challenges that are intrinsically related to the general problems of sustaining a women's section.

Overall, information collected for this research helps to monitor the situation of the women's game from the perspective of clubs. The results of this study contribute to advancing knowledge about forms of club organisation and management practices adopted in European elite women's football. Also, for the first time this research gains critical insights about the views that decision-makers working at men's and women's clubs have regarding club integration.

### *6.2.2 Introduction*

The development of women's football is a key objective for UEFA. This has led National Associations (NAs) to dedicate higher levels of resources towards the growth of the women's game in their respective countries. In line with this, several changes have occurred in the European football scene, with the rapid evolution of women's club football being at the forefront. A great illustration of this growth is expressed by the increasingly large crowds gather to attend women's football matches, with two recent examples being Juventus-Fiorentina in Italy and Atlético Madrid-Barcelona in Spain.

The increasing attention of men's clubs towards investing in the women's game has contributed to different scenarios regarding the legal, organisational, managerial and financial aspects of women's club football. This has stimulated the creation of an integrated form of club organisation in women's football. As such, two forms of club organisation are now common in the European context: (1) independent clubs; and (2) integrated clubs. Independent clubs manage a women's team on an autonomous basis, while integrated clubs are usually linked or associated to a larger entity whose original purpose was to run a men's football team.

Two of the challenges that women's football clubs currently face are the needs for business sustainability and professionalization. In view of that, integration with a professional men's club can represent an opportunity for a women's team to grow, as this can provide its women's side with potential to draw on various pre-existing business functions (e.g. administration, player recruitment, academy, infrastructure, finance, marketing, media, sponsorship, match day) (Aoki, Crumbach, Naicker, Schmitter & Smith, 2010; Welford, 2013). Similarly, as discussed with the Italian Football Association's (FIGC) Executive Office and Women's Football Division,

collaborations between women's and men's clubs can represent a vehicle for the promotion of women's football. For FIGC the integration between women's activity and men's professional football represents one of the pillars of the Women's Football Development Programme launched in 2015. This has led to 8 of the 12 Italian Women's First Division clubs to be supported by a professional men's side. Also, this perspective is shared by the European Club Association (ECA, 2014), which recommended its affiliated clubs' men's section to increase their support towards women's football, recognising the potential for close cooperation between the two sectors.

Yet, there is limited evidence about the organisational structures of women's clubs and their collaboration with men's football. In particular, the literature on the women's football industry says little about club integration and how this should be interpreted from a football business perspective. In view of that, this study collects detailed information about different areas of club management and presents a comprehensive survey of club organisational structures in women's football. In addition, it focuses more closely on clubs with an integrated structure, exploring some of the aspects that lead to club integration in UEFA member countries.

### *6.2.3 Aims, Research questions and Objectives*

This study has two principal aims. First, it examines the ownership, and legal and management aspects of both independent and integrated clubs. This will help to systematically map and identify trends/profiles of management and organisational practices in European women's football. Second, this research explores the integration between men's and women's football clubs, with the purpose to:

(a) investigate to what extent integrated men's and women's clubs collaborate with each other;

(b) understand how integration differs and is interpreted across contexts; and

(c) analyse the underlying reasons that lead to club integration in women's football.

Two concrete research questions are formulated to facilitate the fulfilment of the proposed aims:

1. What are the different forms and profiles of club organisation structure in European women's football?
2. Why do professional men's football clubs support the integration of a women's football section?

In answering these research questions, the study pursues two underpinning objectives:

1. To engage in a consultation with women's football clubs to enable the collection of information about their management and organisational practices, and study the factors influencing club integration.
2. To provide UEFA and National Associations (NAs) with insights into the most appropriate approaches to support the sustainability and long-term development of women's club football.

#### *6.2.4 Literature Review*

To date academic contributions on women's football have been mainly concerned with socio-political and historical aspects of the sport, while comparatively less attention has been dedicated to studying the women's game from managerial and economic perspectives (Valenti, Scelles & Morrow, 2018). More precisely, only a few studies have focussed on the organisation of European women's football clubs (Aoki et al., 2010; Welford, 2013), while a general debate on the overall positioning of the women's game and its potential for professionalization and sustainability has emerged in the United States (Allison, 2016; Edelman & Masterson, 2009; Hellborg, 2013; Southall, Nagel & LeGrande, 2005). In recent years, European football stakeholders such as UEFA and ECA have monitored the evolving situation of women's football, gathering information about organisational and managerial aspects of NAs and women's clubs (ECA, 2014; UEFA, 2017). Overall, these works have served to delineate profiles of women's clubs and to enhance understanding of women's football leagues and their financial context across countries. However, literature on women's football still shows conceptual and empirical gaps with regards to the notion of club integration.

At the conceptual level, the phenomenon of club integration in women's football has not been examined, while some authors have studied a comparable situation in basketball, namely the collaboration between men's and women's franchises competing in the National Basketball Association (NBA) and the Women's NBA (WNBA) (e.g. Anthony, Caudil & Mixon, 2012; Edelman & Harrison, 2010; Walker, Sartorie & MacIntosh, 2012). Of note, Walker et al. (2012) argued that Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) could be one of the underpinning elements to guide

executive decision-making about the WNBA. Likewise, club integration in football might be considered as a form of CSR or strategic philanthropy.

Organisational scholars have been theorising about CSR for over three decades (Carroll, 1979; Margolis & Walsh, 2003; McWilliams & Siegel, 2000). Although definitions of CSR differ according to context, the key components of CSR have remained constant over time. For example, CSR definitions address “societal relationship” (Wood, 1991, p. 693) and the “expectations that society has of organisations” (Carroll, 1979, p. 500). McWilliams and Siegel (2000) argued that CSR comprises a set of actions aimed to further some social good that goes beyond the explicit pecuniary interests of an organisation. Related areas of inquiry explored whether firms adopt CSR initiatives as a strategic response to external pressures (Hess, Rogovsky & Dunfee, 2002). Also, Belliveau, Cottrill and O’Neill (1994) proposed a model that predicts an organisation’s social responsiveness based on factors such as institutional variables (e.g. legal requirements, competitors’ behaviour), economic variables (e.g. level of concentration, market share), and managerial variables (e.g. openness to innovation). Similarly, Aguinis and Galvas (2012) reviewed the academic literature on CSR and outlined predictors, underlying mechanisms and outcomes of CSR actions, synthesising these through three levels of analysis: institutional, organisational and individual.

In the case of women’s football, institutional factors can be linked to the societal and political pressures and/or the introduction of regulatory frameworks to support the development of the women’s game. At the organisational level, collaboration with a women’s club can be associated to an instrumentally viable action that men’s clubs conduct in an attempt to improve their reputation and image. Professional men’s football clubs face the challenge to reconciling their financial and business activities

with their role as social institutions (Morrow, 2003). As such, their investment in women's football might be perceived as fulfilling that need. At the individual level, integration between men's and women's football might be explained by the level of awareness that managers of a men's club have with regards to broader societal objectives such as gender equality and the representation of woman. Moreover, alternative explanations might be that men's clubs consider the development of a women's section as a financially attractive investment in the long-term, particularly due to ever-increasing media attention and the growing levels of participation in the women's game.

At the empirical level, there are still very few studies that examine club integration in women's football. For instance, Aoki et al. (2010) discussed how the relationship between men's and women's football clubs can ultimately affect women's clubs' access to facilities, and to financial and human resources, arguing that integrated women's clubs can gain an advantage over their competitors with an independent structure. Furthermore, Welford (2013) created a women's club categorisation spectrum that ranges from 'completely independent' to 'fully integrated' or 'partnership', indicating that degrees of involvement between men's and women's sides often differ depending on club-specific circumstances.

There is growing evidence of, and interest in, professional sports organisations partaking in CSR type activities (e.g. Babiak & Wolfe, 2009; Hamil & Morrow, 2011). Nonetheless, the literature about CSR in sports organisations has not taken into account initiatives such as the integration of a women's football team within a men's club structure (Walzel, Robertson & Anagnostopoulos, 2018). This might be due to the lack of available data about women's football clubs (Valenti et al., 2018). Therefore, this study will seek to collect primary information from European elite

women's football clubs. Based on this, this research will explore how football clubs' senior executives perceive the integration of women's football and discuss where women's club integration is situated in respect of its attributes and characteristics.

## *6.2.5 Methodology*

### *6.2.5.1 Research design and strategy*

Exploration is the preferred methodological approach when a group, process, activity, or situation has received little or no systematic empirical scrutiny (Stebbins, 2001). In this research, exploration includes gathering of primary information about a group (i.e. women's clubs) and their activities (i.e. organisational and managerial practices). A mixed methodological approach is employed to meet the principal aims of this study. To this end, the research strategy involves a two-stage data collection comprising both quantitative and qualitative elements. The quantitative aspect of the study includes a survey of women's football clubs competing in UEFA member countries. The qualitative element consists of interviews with a selected number of women's clubs that have to some extent developed a connection with a men's club.

The rationale for selecting a mixed-method approach is two-fold. First, mixed-methods ensure that answers can be provided for both research questions, which are inherently different in nature. Based on this, the quantitative survey is better equipped to address the *what* question (i.e., what are the different forms and profiles of club organisation in European women's football?), while the qualitative interviews contribute to answer the *why* question (i.e. why do professional men's football clubs support the integration of a women's football section?). Second, mixed-method

approaches facilitate sampling procedures. In this study, the quantitative findings (i.e. survey) are used to screen potential participants in respect of follow-up interviewing in the second stage of data collection, i.e. clubs that have both men's and women's sections.

#### 6.2.5.2 *Areas of analysis*

The analysis of the management and organisational structures in football clubs is challenging. This is due to modern football clubs becoming increasingly complex and multi-faceted entities where divergent political, societal and commercial interests find a common platform to interact (Gammelsæter & Senaux, 2011). Nevertheless, in this study, eight areas are identified to assist profiling of women's clubs:

- Human and financial resources
- Budget and finance
- Infrastructure and training facilities
- Women's football academy
- Media, marketing and match day
- Club organisation and legal structure
- Connection(s) between women's and men's football
- Women's football development and challenges

These eight areas of analysis are chosen following a review of the agendas, reports and programmes on the development of women's football released by national and international football stakeholders (e.g. UEFA, ECA and various NAs). The selection of these areas is also influenced by a review of existing literature in the football

industry and consultation with subject matter experts at UEFA, FIGC and the Scottish Football Association. While not exhaustive, these eight areas offer an opportunity to study important aspects of managerial and organisational practices relevant to women's football clubs.

#### *6.2.5.3 Sample and contact with clubs*

628 women's clubs competing in the women's national leagues of the 55 UEFA members were identified as potential candidates to take part in the study. Suitable respondents for each club include executives and/or decision-makers (e.g. board members, chairs, directors, general managers, secretaries) who have access to financial and operational information about the club. Identification of the right contact person within each club was carried out in collaboration with either the respective NA or UEFA. When these governing bodies could not provide such information, contacts were manually searched online through clubs' official websites or social media pages. For 121 clubs, a representative person or contact details could not be identified. Overall, 507 women's football clubs were contacted. A total of 69 clubs from 28 countries returned completed questionnaires. Of these, 8 clubs from 6 countries were selected for further interviewing.

#### *6.2.5.4 Quantitative part: surveying women's football clubs*

The first stage of data collection consisted of a survey comprising 140 questions. All questions related to the eight areas of analysis, which were further divided into sub-sections. For example, questions within the *Human and financial resources* section involved information about the technical (e.g. coaches, players, scouts),

medical (e.g. doctors, physiotherapists) and administrative (e.g. executives, managers) areas of the club. Access to the survey was made available online via private URLs. In order to maximise response rate, a letter of support signed by Thomas Junod (UEFA Head of National Associations Education and Research) and Nadine Kessler (UEFA Head of Women's Football) was attached to the original message of invitation. Further, Francesca Sanzone (FIGC Deputy Chief Executive Officer and UEFA Women's Football Committee Member), invited representatives of the NAs in the Committee to encourage participation of clubs from their respective countries. The language used for the survey was English. However, given the potential language barriers for clubs based in non-English speaking countries, all questions required participants to input relatively straight forward information about the club they represent. Moreover, to facilitate understanding and completion of the survey, 131 items were designed for closed/pre-coded responses, 7 were based on a pre-coded scale and 2 were open questions. Participants were given the option to answer the two open questions in their original language. At the end of the survey, women's clubs that were partially associated or fully integrated with a men's club were asked whether they would be available to take part in the follow-up interview.

#### *6.2.5.5 Qualitative part: interviews with partially associated or fully integrated clubs*

The second stage of data collection includes semi-structured interviews regarding the *Connection(s) between women's and men's football*. Clubs were selected based on the following criteria: a) the existence of some form of link with a men's club; b) confirmed availability to partake in the follow-up; c) the men's section being

professional and playing in their respective national top-tier; d) the women's section receiving financial contributions from the club; e) the women's section operating either at a loss or at break-even. Representatives for both the women's and the men's sections of each selected club were invited to take part in the interview. However, for some clubs, representatives of the men's section were unable to participate. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 13 senior executives from 8 different clubs located in 6 nations. Each interview ranged from between 30 to 90 minutes. Participants answered questions pertaining to the rationale behind their club's involvement in women's football. Each interview was based on the second research question of the study: "Why do professional men's football clubs support the integration of a women's football section?" Interviewees were then further questioned concerning their club's decision to invest in women's football, their expectations and which stakeholders placed these expectations on them. Respondents were encouraged to discuss the benefits, challenges, and barriers that they perceived regarding the integration of a women's football section. In addition, the interviews allowed for in-depth understanding of the participants' perspectives concerning the development of women's football. The interviews were audiotaped, transcribed verbatim, reviewed by the author and finally checked by the participants themselves for accuracy and clarity.

### 6.2.6 Findings

This section presents results derived from the analysis of the survey responses and interview transcriptions. The final response rate for the questionnaire was 13.6%. Of those clubs that returned completed questionnaires, 75.3% compete in their respective women's national top division, while 24.7% play in the second tier. Over 75% of the surveys were completed by a member of the senior management of the club (general manager, 23.1%; chair or deputy chair, 21.7%; director, 14.5%; general secretary, 10.1%; administrative manager, 5.8%). The presentation of key findings is organised as follows: the next part traces profiles of organisational structure of all women's clubs. The attention is narrowed to integrated clubs in the subsequent section, where the different forms of integration and the reasons for support are presented. The final part focuses on some of the challenges and areas for development in women's football.

#### **1. What are the different forms and profiles of club organisation structure in European women's football?**

There are two common organisational forms in the European context, i.e. independent and integrated club. Table 6.1 presents a summary of clubs that participated in the survey based on their geographical location and club structure.

**Table 6.1.** Sample description based on geographical location and club structure.

<b>Country</b>	<b>Independent</b>	<b>Integrated</b>	<b>Total</b>
Albania (ALB)	1	2	3 (25%)
Austria (AUT)	1	0	1 (10%)
Belgium (BEL)	0	2	2 (33.3%)
Bosnia and Herzegovina (BIH)	0	1	1 (12.5%)
Croatia (CRO)	0	2	2 (25%)
Denmark (DEN)	2	2	4 (23.6%)
England (ENG)	0	2	2 (9%)
Estonia (EST)	0	1	1 (12.5%)
Faroe Islands (FRO)	0	2	2 (33.3%)
Finland (FIN)	1	0	1 (16.6%)
Germany (GER)	0	4	4 (18.2%)
Republic of Ireland (IRL)	1	2	3 (37.5%)
Israel (ISR)	1	0	1 (11.1%)
Italy (ITA)	3	5	8 (33.3%)
Kazakhstan (KAZ)	0	1	1 (20%)
Lithuania (LTU)	1	0	1 (20%)
Luxembourg (LUX)	0	1	1 (8.3%)
Malta (MLT)	0	1	1 (12.5%)
Netherlands (NED)	0	3	3 (33.3%)
Northern Ireland (NIR)	0	2	2 (28.6%)
Poland (POL)	1	0	1 (8.3%)
Portugal (POR)	0	2	2 (16.6%)
Scotland (SCO)	3	2	5 (35.7%)
Slovenia (SVN)	1	1	2 (25%)
Spain (ESP)	1	10	11 (9.2%)
Sweden (SWE)	2	0	2 (8.3%)
Switzerland (SUI)	1	0	1 (12.5%)
Wales (WAL)	1	0	1 (10%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>69</b>

*Note:* In parentheses the percentage of clubs covered for each individual country.

### **Human and financial resources**

Tables 6.2, 6.3, 6.4 and 6.5 offer a snapshot of the characteristics of those operating in women's football. These include descriptive statistics for women and men in playing and non-playing positions.

**Table 6.2.** Women's football first team players in numbers.

	<i>N</i>	<i>Per club</i>	<i>Mean age</i>	<i>% FT</i>	<i>% PT</i>	<i>% Volunt.</i>
<b>First team players</b>	<b>1,479</b>	<b>21.4</b>	<b>21.9</b>	<b>15.5</b>	<b>35.6</b>	<b>48.9</b>
<i>Independent</i>	451	21.4	21.4	15.3	35.3	49.4
<i>Integrated</i>	1,028	21.4	22.1	15.7	35.7	48.7

Note: Abbreviations: FT stands for Full time; PT stands for Part time; Volunt. stands for Volunteers.

Reflective of the often unstable financial conditions of the women's game, almost half of first team players are not paid by their clubs. This is in line with figures reported by FIFPro (2017) in their study about working conditions in women's football. Also, on average, clubs present 11.7% foreign players (10.4% in integrated clubs; 14.5% in independent clubs). This low percentage of foreign players might be due to the low level of revenues generated by women's football, which results in limited player mobility and few international transfers (FIFA, 2018).

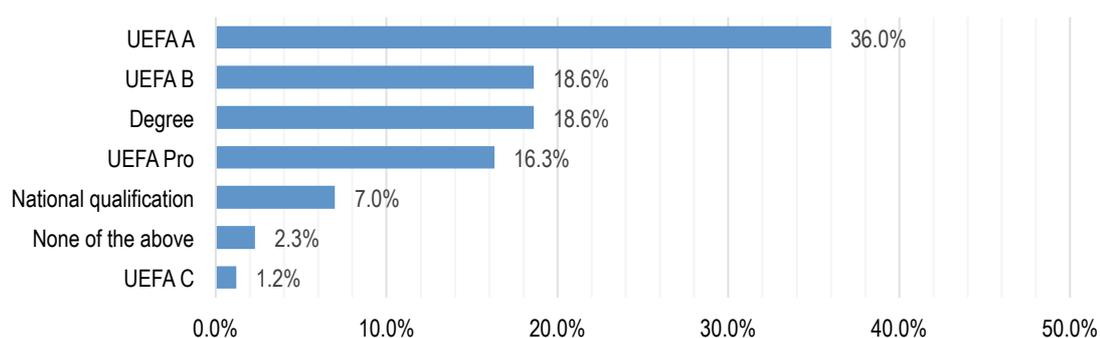
**Table 6.3.** Women's football technical staff in numbers.

	<i>N</i>	<i>Per club</i>	<i>Mean age</i>	<i>% Men</i>	<i>% Women</i>	<i>% FT</i>	<i>% PT</i>	<i>% Volunt.</i>
<b>Coaches:</b>	<b>255</b>	<b>3.7</b>	<b>37.6</b>	<b>76.1</b>	<b>23.9</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>52.2</b>	<b>18.8</b>
<b>Technical</b>								
<i>Independent</i>	79	3.7	37.7	71.4	28.6	18.6	63.2	18.1
<i>Integrated</i>	176	3.6	37.6	78.1	21.9	33.6	47.3	19.1
<b>Coaches: S &amp; Cond</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>33.3</b>	<b>79.4</b>	<b>20.6</b>	<b>21.5</b>	<b>63.8</b>	<b>14.7</b>
<i>Independent</i>	37	1.8	35.5	82.4	17.6	6.7	76.7	16.7
<i>Integrated</i>	62	1.3	32.4	78.3	21.7	27.6	58.5	13.9
<b>Scouts</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>0.6</b>	<b>35.8</b>	<b>70.2</b>	<b>29.8</b>	<b>13.3</b>	<b>58.6</b>	<b>28.1</b>
<i>Independent</i>	9	0.4	33.7	91.7	8.3	0.0	50.0	50.0
<i>Integrated</i>	37	0.7	36.6	61.7	38.3	17.7	61.5	20.8

Note: Abbreviations: FT stands for Full time; PT stands for Part time; Volunt. stands for Volunteers; S & Cond stands for Strength and conditioning coaches.

Although recent evidence shows that the gender of the coach is not a significant determinant of team performance in football (Gomez-Gonzalez, Dietl &

Nessler, 2018), women are underrepresented in technical positions with over 75% of coaches being men. Similarly, 70.2% of scouts are men. In terms of contracts, most coaches are either part-time or full-time, while the position of scouts is more unstable. Of note is the difference in percentage of full-time working technical staff between independent and integrated clubs. This might indicate that technical positions are more likely to be occupied by more professionalised individuals in integrated clubs (also due to their collaboration/sharing of coaches with professional men’s clubs). Figure 6.1 denotes that in 72% of cases the highest qualified coach holds a UEFA coaching badge.



**Figure 6.1.** Highest qualified coaches in women’s football.

**Table 6.4.** Women’s football medical staff in numbers.

	<i>N</i>	<i>Per club</i>	<i>Mean age</i>	<i>% Men</i>	<i>% Women</i>	<i>% FT</i>	<i>% PT</i>	<i>% Volunt.</i>
<b>Medical staff</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>35.9</b>	<b>54.3</b>	<b>45.7</b>	<b>26.7</b>	<b>56.5</b>	<b>16.9</b>
<i>Independent</i>	34	1.6	37.4	65.4	34.6	12.5	64.6	22.9
<i>Integrated</i>	80	1.6	35.4	49.9	50.1	32.3	53.2	14.4

Note: Abbreviations: FT stands for Full time; PT stands for Part time; Volunt. stands for Volunteers.

Similar to technical positions, medical staff of integrated clubs benefit from more stable working conditions. The gender ratio is more balanced for medical professionals, although the proportion of women in independent clubs is lower than

35%. Overall, 68.1% of women’s clubs have an in-house medical department. Of these, 72.3% are integrated clubs. Clubs that do not have an internal medical unit source medical support from local hospitals and private clinics.

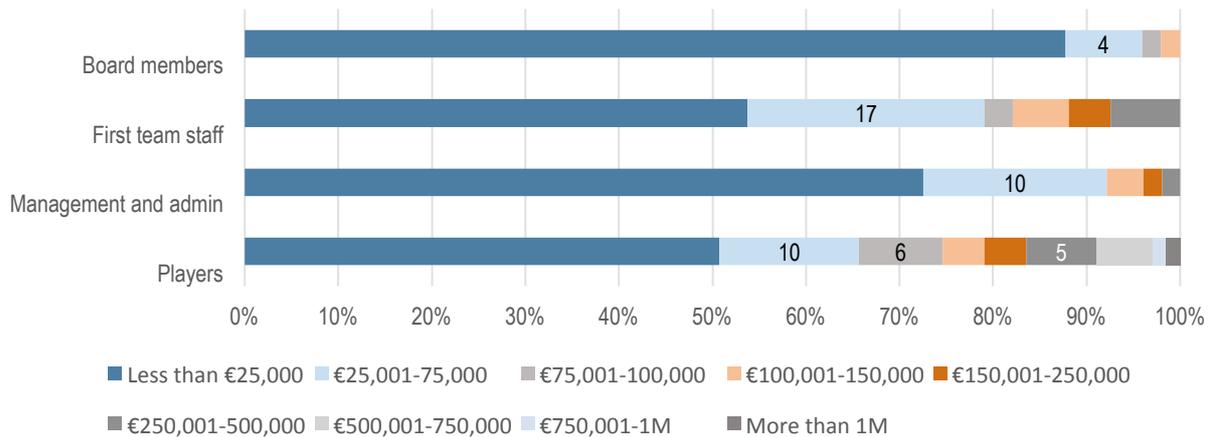
**Table 6.5.** Women’s football management and admin staff in numbers.

	<b>N</b>	<b>Per club</b>	<b>Mean age</b>	<b>% Men</b>	<b>% Women</b>	<b>% FT</b>	<b>% PT</b>	<b>% Volunt.</b>
<b>Board members</b>	<b>407</b>	<b>5.9</b>	<b>43.6</b>	<b>59.1</b>	<b>40.9</b>	<b>10.4</b>	<b>9.4</b>	<b>79.0</b>
<i>Independent</i>	163	7.7	43.8	51.2	48.8	6.3	13.7	80.0
<i>Integrated</i>	244	5.1	43.4	63.4	36.6	12.7	7.0	78.5
<b>Managers and admins</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>40.7</b>	<b>49.4</b>	<b>50.6</b>	<b>29.8</b>	<b>18.3</b>	<b>50.1</b>
<i>Independent</i>	68	3.2	43.6	42.7	57.3	10.2	12.5	71.8
<i>Integrated</i>	157	3.2	39.3	53.0	47.0	39.1	21.0	39.8

*Note:* Abbreviations: FT stands for Full time; PT stands for Part time; Volunt. stands for Volunteers.

Management positions are more evenly split between men and women, despite only about a third of club board members in integrated clubs being women. This may be related to the pre-existence of these football clubs as organisations principally concentrated on men’s activities. While most club boards consist of volunteer members, a discrepancy in the percentage of full-time managers working for independent and integrated clubs can be noticed in favour of the latter.

In general, in terms of age diversity, all actors involved in women’s football tend to be relatively young. While the ratio between men and women occupying technical positions is skewed towards men, medical and managerial positions present a more balanced gender proportion. The chart below shows how much on average women’s football clubs dedicate to each of these components. More detailed information about women’s clubs’ finance is displayed in the next section.

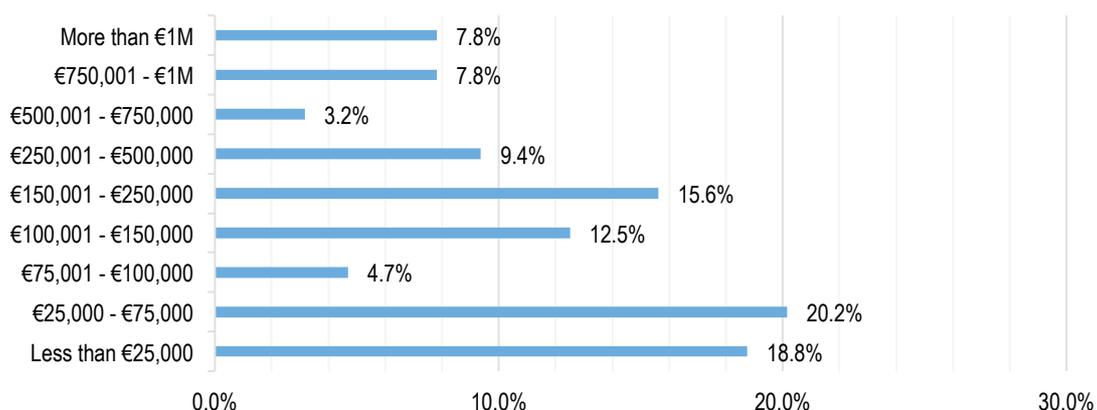


**Figure 6.2.** Breakdown of average per club expenditure for technical, medical and managerial resources.

*Note:* Data labels displayed only for percentages  $\geq 4$

### **Budget and finance**

Figure 6.3 displays the overall budget that clubs allocate per year. This shows heterogeneity amongst clubs with regards to their financial situation: 43.7% of the clubs spend less than €100,000 per year; 37.5% of the clubs have a budget ranging between €100,001–€500,000; while 18.8% have a budget that is greater than half a million Euros per year (of these, 83% are integrated).



**Figure 6.3.** Overall budget.

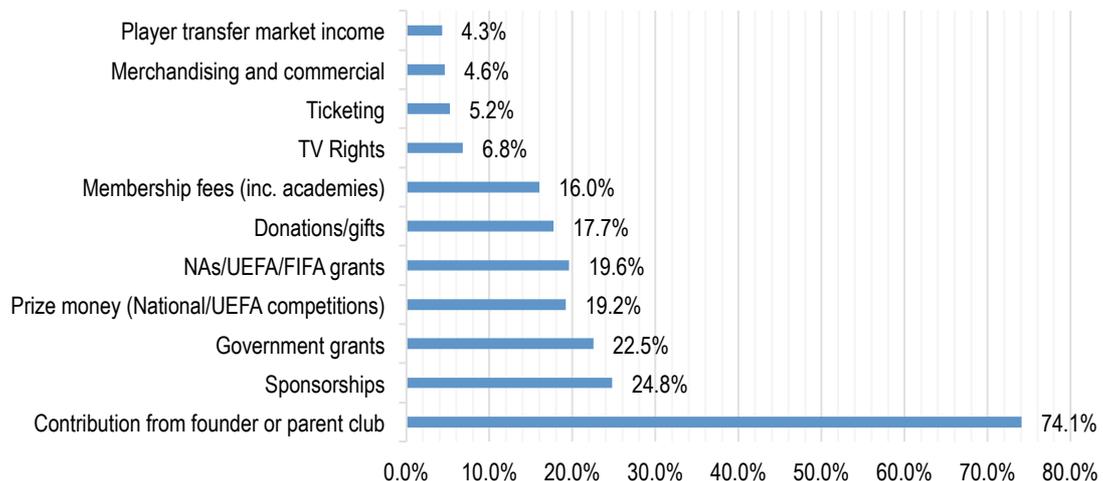
*Note:* information available for 64 of 69 clubs (2 N/A; 3 'Prefer not to say')



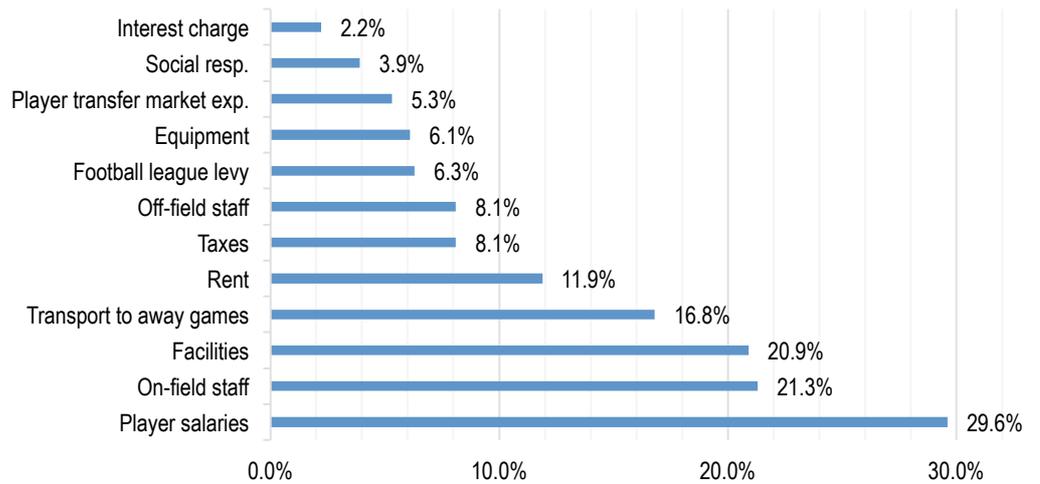
**Figure 6.4.** Financial statements at the end of previous season (2017/18).

*Note:* information available for 63 of 69 clubs (1 N/A; 5 ‘Prefer not to say’)

Figure 6.4 refers to the results of clubs’ financial statements for the previous season (2017/18). Over half of the clubs (52.4%) achieved a break-even position (of these, 75.8% are integrated), while more than a third of the clubs (34.9%) reported a loss (of these, 68.2% are integrated). A small number of clubs have generated a profit (12.7%, of these 37.5% are integrated). In addition, in light of the challenges of achieving financial sustainability in women’s football, only 13% of clubs expect their financial situation to become better in the next season (i.e. from loss to break-even position or from break-even position to profit).



**Figure 6.5.** Breakdown of average per club revenue by revenue stream.

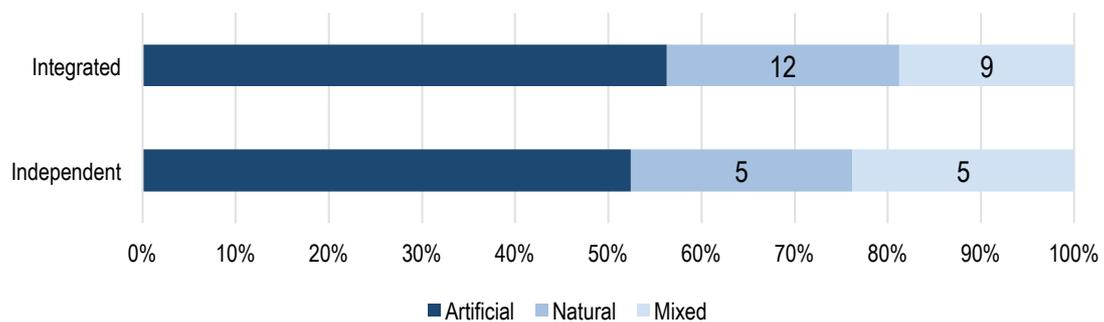


**Figure 6.6.** Breakdown of average per club expense by expense stream.

The two charts above portray the average financial situation of women's clubs. Starting with revenues, it is clear that women's football is some distance from reaching self-sustainability as most clubs rely on their respective owners or parent clubs to inject resources in order to support the team. The revenue mix is also affected by sponsorships, grants and subvention from various stakeholders and the team's sporting performance (via prize money). On the other side, a third of club expenditures is spent on players' and staff salaries, while facilities and transport to away games absorb another third of club costs.

### **Infrastructure and training facilities**

On average clubs' first teams train 4.3 times per week. Independent clubs have, on average, 1.3 pitches available for their first teams' training, while 1.6 pitches are accessible by integrated clubs. The most frequently used surface for trainings is artificial grass (55%).



**Figure 6.7.** Training pitch surface for first team training.

In addition to this, 49 out of the 69 training facilities have a refreshment area, of which 71% belong to integrated clubs. Of those clubs that have a women's football academy (see next section for more details), 74% share training facilities between the first team and the academy teams.

### **Women's football academy**

Out of the 69 clubs that took part in the survey, 47 have an academy for the development of young girls. Regardless of their club structure, fewer than 70% of women's clubs focus on the development of youth football.

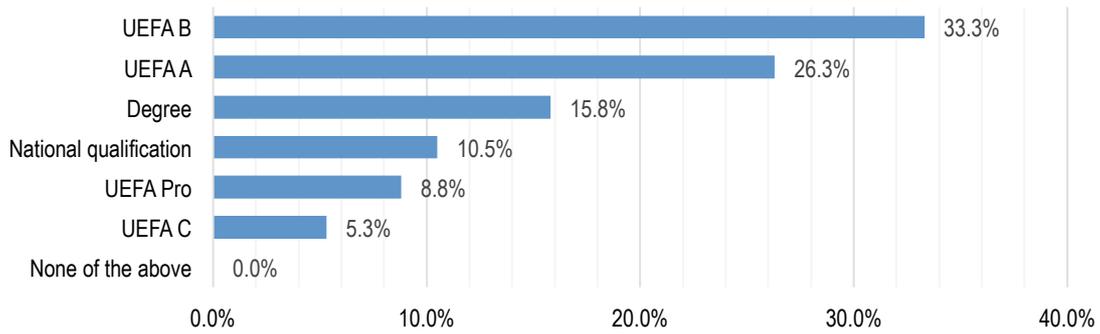
**Table 6.6.** Academy for independent and integrated clubs.

	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<i>Independent</i>	16	5
<i>Integrated</i>	31	17
<b>Total</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>22</b>

No major differences are observed between clubs with independent and integrated structures in relation to individuals working in the academy. In addition to what is presented in Table 6.7, information from surveys shows that there is a typical ratio of 1 coach per 9 players and that each age-specific team has about 16 girls.

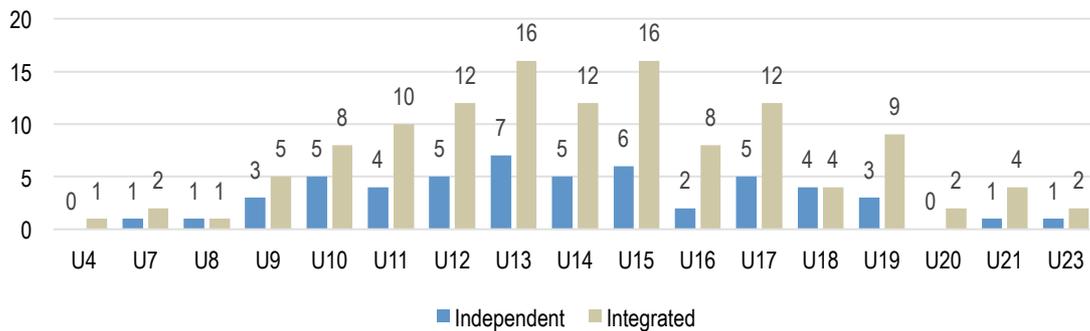
**Table 6.7.** Women's football academies in numbers.

	<b>N</b>	<b>Per club</b>
<b>Players</b>	<b>3,636</b>	<b>77.3</b>
<i>Independent</i>	1,102	78.7
<i>Integrated</i>	2,534	76.7
<b>Teams</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>4.7</b>
<i>Independent</i>	65	4.6
<i>Integrated</i>	160	4.8
<b>Coaches</b>	<b>406</b>	<b>8.6</b>
<i>Independent</i>	125	8.9
<i>Integrated</i>	281	8.5

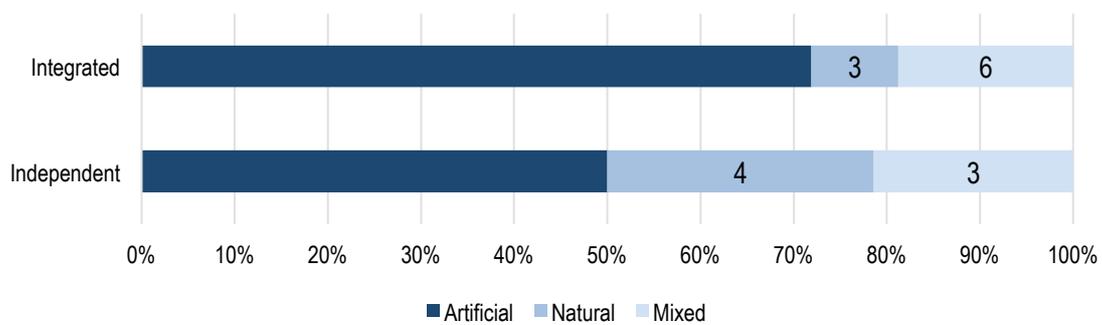


**Figure 6.8.** Highest qualified coaches in women's football academies.

Similar to coaches working with first teams, 73% of times the highest qualified academy coaches hold a UEFA badge. While clubs employ different paths to foster the development of their young girls, most clubs focus on the age range between U12 and U15.

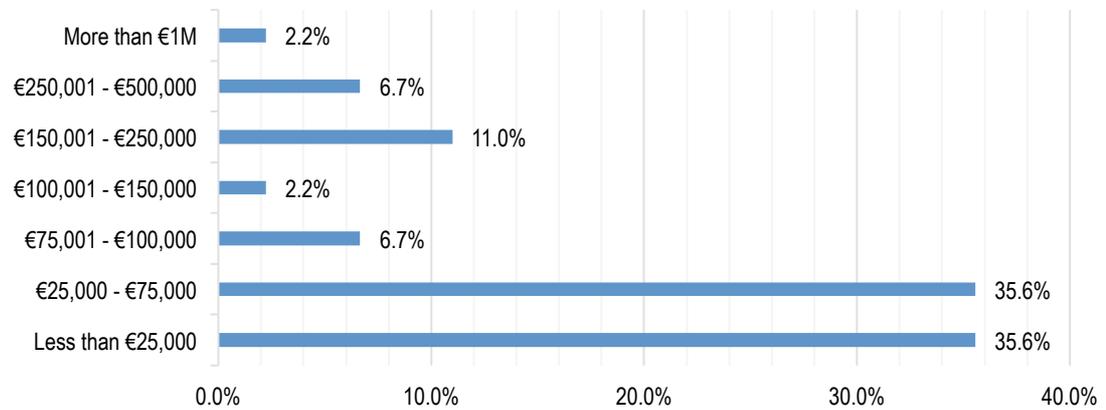


**Figure 6.9.** Number of academy teams per age range U4-U23.



**Figure 6.10.** Training pitch surface for academy teams.

On average, clubs dedicate 2 football pitches for the practice of their academy teams. Similar to first teams, the most commonly used surface in women's youth football is artificial grass (63%).



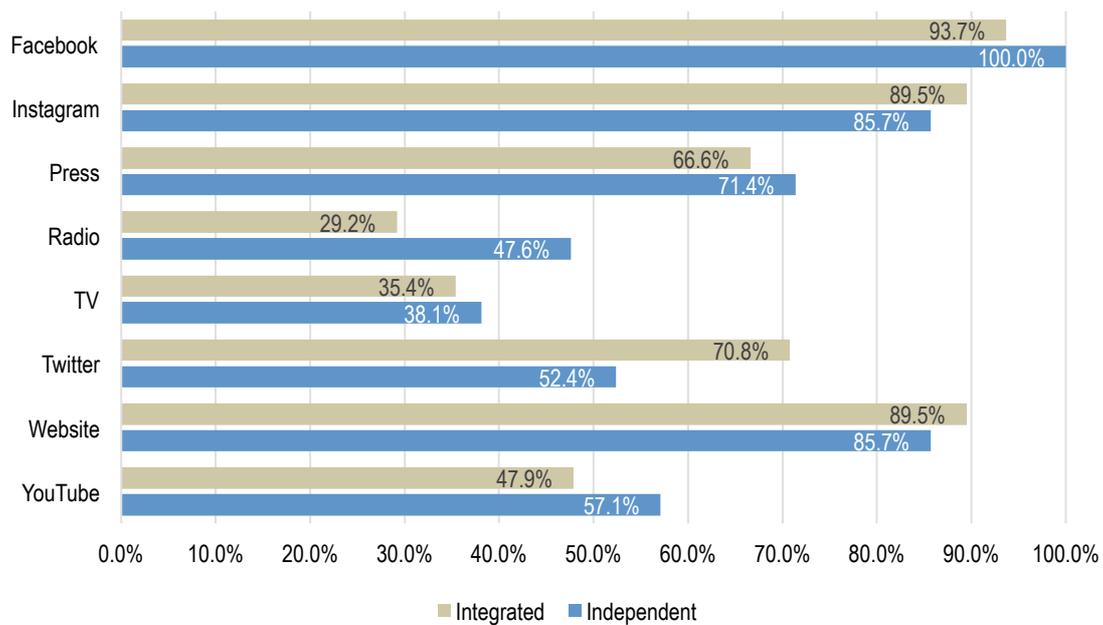
**Figure 6.11.** Academy budget.

*Note:* Information available for 45 of 69 clubs (22 do not have an Academy; 2 'Prefer not to say'). No clubs within €250,001 to 1M range.

Figure 6.11 presents how much on average clubs dedicate to their academy. More than two in three clubs invest €75,000 or less every year (of these, 62% are integrated clubs). Clubs that spend more than €100,000 on their academy (22.2%) are all integrated within the structure of a professional men's football club.

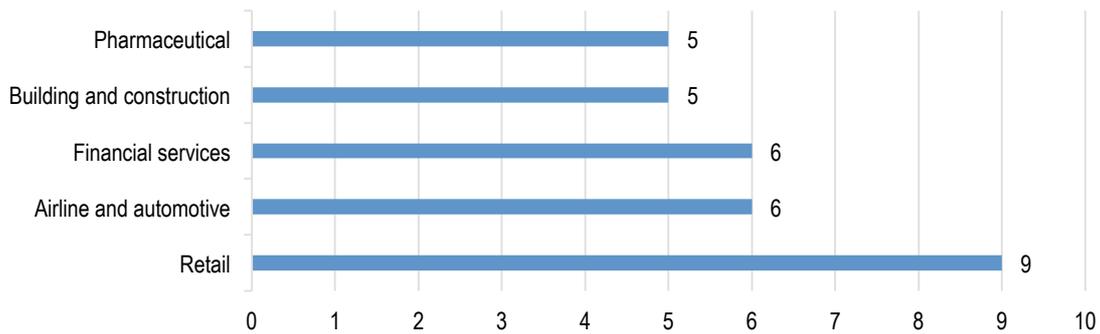
### Media, marketing and match day

Only 44 clubs have an individual dedicated to marketing (68% of these are integrated) and 20 have a marketing department (85% integrated). Figure 6.12 displays the platforms that women's clubs utilise to promote themselves.

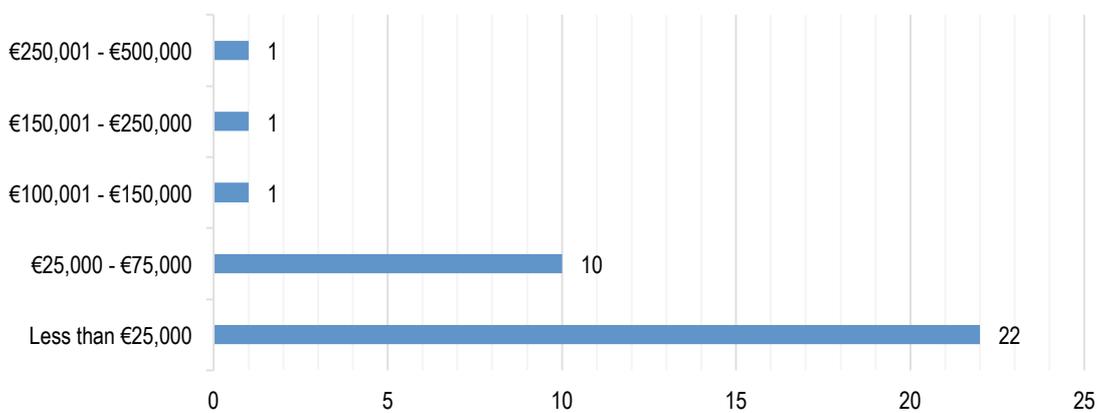


**Figure 6.12.** The most utilised platforms.

Almost all women's football clubs have a dedicated Facebook page. The second most utilised platforms are Instagram and the official website. An average audience of about 240,000 followers/subscribers to social media channels is found for integrated clubs, while 5,600 users on average engage with independent clubs on social networks. 44 out of 69 clubs have a jersey sponsor (of these, 75% are integrated clubs). The retail industry is the most widely represented jersey sponsor in women's football (Figure 6.13). On average jersey sponsorship contracts have a duration of 3 years. Average income from jersey sponsorships for most clubs (72.7%) is less than €75,000 per annum (Figure 6.14).



**Figure 6.13.** The most represented industries in jersey sponsors.

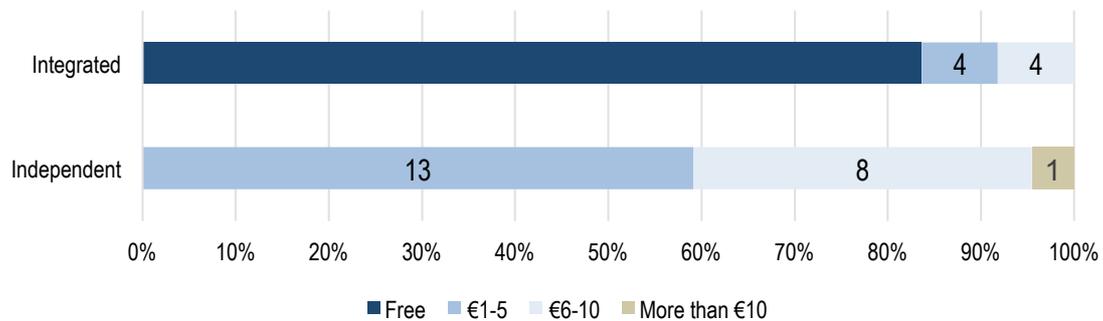


**Figure 6.14.** Income from jersey sponsorships.

*Note:* Information available for 35 of 69 clubs (17 do not have a jersey sponsor; 6 'Prefer not to say'; 11 N/A).

Women's football clubs play on average 26 competitive games each season. The average capacity of facilities (e.g. stadiums, training centres) where these games are played is 2,117. Integrated clubs play in slightly larger stadiums (average capacity: 2,401), while independent clubs have available facilities with an average capacity of 1,465. 19 out of 69 clubs (of these, 84% are integrated) own the facility where they play their competitive games. The average number of spectators attending the stadium for all clubs is 277. More specifically, integrated clubs report an average of 308 spectators, while typical attendance for independent clubs is of

about 206. An average stadium load percentage of over 20% is reported by both independent (21%) and integrated (22.8%) clubs.



**Figure 6.15.** Average ticket prices.

To attend their matches the majority of clubs apply a free-of-charge admission policy (59.4%), while 24% of clubs charge 5 Euros or less. 17.3% of clubs have an average ticket price ranging between €6-10. Only one club charges more than 10 Euros (Figure 6.15). Of note, all clubs that let supporters in for free are integrated. This highlights a substantial difference in the needs between independent and integrated clubs. On the one hand, independent clubs necessitate gate receipts in order to sustain their business. On the other hand, women’s clubs with an integrated structure can afford to let spectators attend their games without a direct financial payment in return. In addition to stadium attendance, 32 clubs (59.3% of these are integrated) indicate that their games are streamed either online or on TV. They report an average audience of 34,927 spectators. However, independent clubs have an audience of 4,511, while the average spectatorship for integrated clubs is 72,101. Overall, these figures contribute to provide interesting insights on the potential for clubs with integrated and independent structures to generate and enhance visibility for women’s football matches. In general, professional men’s football clubs with a

recognisable brand that invest in a women’s section seem likely to produce a spillover effect. In other words, it might be that an integrated club’s brand strength is ‘transferrable’ from the men’s to the women’s section as supporters might associate the brand of a men’s club with its integrated women’s side.

### **Club organisation and legal structure**

As noted in Table 6.8, the majority of women’s clubs are organised as associations. These include amateur and voluntary sport clubs as well as charities. More specifically, all but two independent clubs are organised as associations. The remaining two are limited companies. Most of those with an integrated structure are associations. However, 15 integrated clubs follow the same business structure as their men’s counterpart (8 limited companies; 5 joint stock companies; and 2 listed companies).

**Table 6.8.** Women’s clubs’ legal structure

	<b>Association</b>	<b>Limited company</b>	<b>Joint stock company</b>	<b>Listed company</b>
<i>Independent</i>	16	2	0	0
<i>Integrated</i>	30	8	5	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>

*Note:* Information available for 63 of 69 clubs (6 N/A).

### **Connection(s) between women’s and men’s football**

The majority of clubs that participated in the survey are associated with a men’s football club (69.5%). However, there are different levels of involvement between men’s and women’s clubs. Following the club categorisation spectrum developed by Welford (2013), the results of the survey show that the connection that women’s clubs have developed with men’s clubs varies according to six distinct types of organisation structure (see Table 6.9).

**Table 6.9.** Forms of club organisation and integration in European women’s football.

<i>Club organisation structure</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
Completely independent	21	30.4
Two separate entities, very little connection or involvement with the men’s club	4	5.8
Collaboration with the men’s club but remain two separate entities	7	10.1
Strong involvement with the men’s club but remain two separate entities	9	13.1
Part of the same entity but independent organisational structures	9	13.1
Integrated at all levels, joint organisational structures, run as one club	19	27.5

Of the 48 clubs that are associated with a men’s club, 19 (39.5%) describe their organisation as being completely integrated with a men’s club (*“Integrated at all levels, joint organisational structures, run as one club”*). The remaining 60.5% of clubs display various degrees of involvement or integration with the men’s club. Table 6.10 presents the distribution of clubs for each type of integrated structure across countries.

**Table 6.10.** Number of clubs and level of integration across countries.

	ALB	BEL	BIH	CRO	DEN	ENG	ESP	EST	FRO	GER	IRL	ITA	KAZ	LUX	MLT	NED	NIR	POR	SCO	SVN	
(1)		1		1			1					1									
(2)		1				1				1				1	1				1	1	
(3)			1	1			2				1	2				1	1				
(4)					1	1	1			2	1	1				1	1				
(5)	2				1		6	1	2	1		1	1			1		2	1		

*Note:* (1) Two separate entities, very little connection or involvement with the men’s club; (2) Collaboration with the men’s club but remain two separate entities; (3) Strong involvement with the men’s club but remain two separate entities; (4) Part of the same entity but independent organisational structures; (5) Integrated at all levels, joint organisational structures, run as one club.

Collaborations in integrated clubs occur in at least one managerial/organisational area of the club. Table 6.11 outlines the areas that women’s and men’s clubs most frequently share with each other.

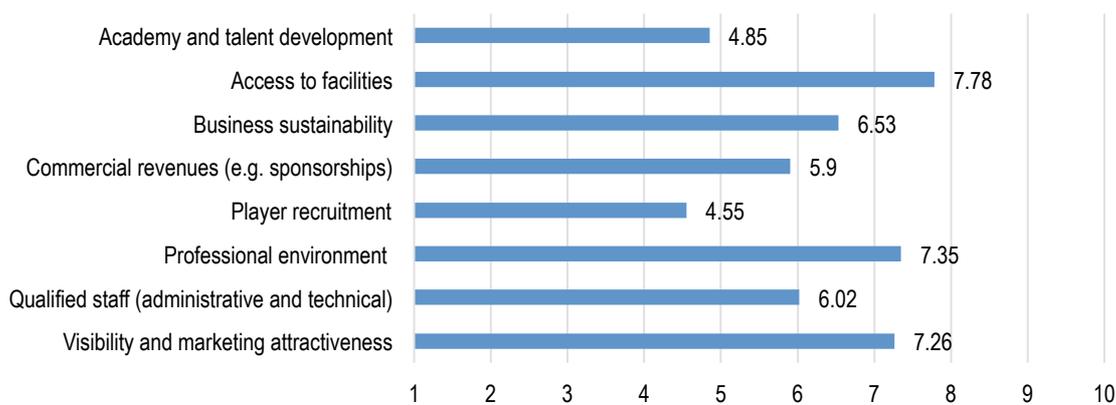
**Table 6.11.** Shared areas between women's and men's sections.

<i>Club area</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>%</i>
Identity (e.g. name, colour, crest)	42	87.5
Marketing/communication department	34	70.8
Training facilities	33	68.8
Executive club board (i.e. women's section represented)	32	66.7
Part of the same legal entity	31	64.6
Stadium (at least sometimes)	30	62.5
Financial contribution for the first team	29	60.4
Medical staff	27	56.3
Financial contribution for the academy	19	39.6
Scouting staff	9	18.8
Coaching staff	7	14.6

Most integrated clubs (87.5%) share the same identity and brand, and can therefore be recognised 'universally', regardless of whether their teams are competing in men's or women's football. Also, this is complemented by collaboration in marketing and communication areas (70.8%), which clubs can exploit to reinforce their brand across both sectors of the game. At the same time, this is an area which can potentially help the women's side increase its visibility and contribute to fertilisation between fans of the two sections within the same club (see Guest & Luijten, 2018, for a discussion). 62.5% of women's teams that are integrated within a professional men's club can benefit from accessing the same training and stadium facilities. Yet, a third of integrated clubs are not able to take strategic decisions in respect of the running of the women's section due to the fact that they are not represented in the executive board of the club. Based on this, women's teams that are integrated within a men's club structure might risk seeing their voice become undervalued in the decision-making process due to underrepresentation (Aoki et al., 2010; Welford, 2013). Financial contribution from the club to sustain the management of the women's first team occurs in 60.4% of the observed cases.

Related to this, on average 49.1% of the total budget of integrated women’s sections is covered by resources of the parent club. Other areas where men’s and women’s football teams collaborate include the medical staff (56.3%), financial contributions for the academy (39.6%), the scouting department (18.8%) and the coaching staff (14.6%).

The great majority (89.5%) of women’s integrated teams stated that their collaboration with a men’s club is ‘advantageous’. In particular, on a 1-10 scale, they rated ‘access to facilities’ (mean = 7.78, SD = 2.45), ‘professional environment’ (mean = 7.35, SD = 2.65) and ‘visibility and marketing attractiveness’ (mean = 7.26, SD = 2.43) as the most important advantages which can be derived from integration with a professional men’s club (Figure 6.16).



**Figure 6.16.** Advantages derived from club integration (women’s section perspective).

These findings are in line with the works of Aoki et al. (2010) and Welford (2013). However, this research also aims to explore the counterparts’ point of view regarding the process of club integration. This aspect of football club management was previously unexplored. Therefore, results of this research are new to the

literature and contribute to expand understanding about the management of women's football clubs.

## **2. Why do professional men's football clubs support the integration of a women's football section?**

This pivotal question, along with follow-up probes, facilitated the development of an understanding of the integration of a women's section in the structure of professional men's football clubs. The responses tended to fit into two main categories: one related to the decision to start a women's section (i.e. predictors); and one related to the perceived outcomes resulting from integration. Tables 6.12 and 6.13 present these two major themes, their sub-levels and representative quotations from the interviews with executives of integrated clubs.

As displayed in Table 6.12, the decision of professional men's football clubs to start a women's section is influenced by institutional pressures. According to Freeman (1984), organisations have to be attentive to groups that affect them or groups that could affect them. This aligns to the view that modern football clubs are complex entities which extend their influence beyond the direct stakeholders such as supporters to encompass other groups of interest such as local municipalities and governments. Other institutional-level predictors include the need to comply with regulations, standards and certifications demands. This highlights a debate around the effects of top-down policies which seek to foster the development of women's football in specific countries. In particular, in 2015 FIGC started to include a criterion in their Club Licensing regulations for men's professional clubs to either open a women's section or create a formal relationship with an already existing women's club. Identifying this as a predictor is important for future studies that are concerned

with the strategic actions that organisations take in response to institutional pressures. For instance, on the one hand, Tenbrunsel et al. (2000) found that organisations might reduce their engagement with initiatives that do not produce a financial return and become principally concerned with symbolic activities that serve to comply minimally with requirements. On the other hand, Pedersen and Gwozdz (2014) argue that while conformance remains the dominant response to institutional pressures, increasing pressures stimulate organisations' opportunity-seeking behaviour at the expense of compliance. This has implications on the way NAs should address their policy actions for the development of women's club football. However, while this study offers information on how clubs have reacted to this type of requirements in the short-term, the effect of such policies and the clubs' actions in relation to regulations and other institutional pressures would benefit from being explored over a longer timeframe.

**Table 6.12.** Predictors for the creation of a women's section in professional men's football clubs: Levels, sub-themes and sample quotes.

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Sub-theme</b>	<b>Sample quotes</b>
Predictors	Institutional	Institutional and stakeholder pressures	The men's team was building a new stadium and they needed some help from the city and the city was keen on having a women's team. So, after some political discussion, it was decided to start a women's team.
		Regulations, standards and certification demands	At the time the club was struggling to make ends meet and couldn't afford the stadium anymore. So, what the local government said 'Okay, we'll buy this ground, but you have to start up a women's football team in return.' It was just top-down, 'You have to start it.' They said, 'Yes, we're going to do this.' To participate in the new women's national competition we had to be a member of a men's team which played at the highest level. So, we had to search for a companion to make it possible and so we were bought by the men's team.
		Instrumental motives	We started to work with women's football when the NA imposed an obligation to have a women's section in the men's club licensing criteria. The club has a legal structure which gets fiscal benefits because there is a social part in the vision. Each year the club has to prove that it is still responding to that vision and the women's team contributes to achieve that. The club believes that women's football has the potential to become a commercial product.
		Normative motives	What really helped us is that we had the women's national team in our stadium last year and it was sold out. That let some club board members think, 'Hey, we can actually make money out of it' or, 'We can actually have spectators come to the stadium and get data.' The board of our club now sees that also women's football could be attractive on the business level. The role of women in society is changing. This is clear in many situations of life, not only in sports – in politics, economics. It is the principle. It is almost a moral obligation. We do invest because it is the right thing to do. Football is increasingly supported by women at all levels. There is a shifting socio-cultural trend in our country and we wanted to embrace that. The club wants to make a point. football is for all.

(continued)

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Sub-theme</b>	<b>Sample quotes</b>
		Internal resources and organisational values	<p>The club thinks that having a women's section is possible because we have a good structure, we have good infrastructures and we have the financial capacity to improve it. Our club is one of the best in the country at the moment.</p>
		External context and other competitors	<p>Our club has in its own DNA the willingness of being a pioneer. I believe that our club has this duty and feels like a forerunner in the country and in Europe. It has the opportunity to set the standards. We try to experiment philosophical structural situations that can generate growth for the whole system. The initial investments have been made with the aim to excel also in the women's sector from both managerial and sporting aspects.</p> <p>I believe that due to the fact that the top European football clubs have started to include a women's section, others will follow in an attempt to generate better competitions.</p> <p>One of the best publicity we had was when the men's team played the Champions League. I think it was two years ago. We were in a competition with one of the best European women's football club and their President invited the club managers to visit the women's part of their club. He showed off all the possibilities they have, how they invest and how it became important. So, that moment was a very lucky thing in our life as it helped us a lot. We were not aware of it, but we learned afterwards that that moment – I think a meeting of one or two hours – helped us more than the ten years of work.</p> <p>My boss, who is also on the board of the men's national league, says that they're talking to each other, they are saying to the other clubs, 'Start up a women's team, it's important, you have to do this and do your job within the community.' So, they are pushing like peer pressure between clubs.</p>

At the organisational level, there are indications to suggest that clubs invest in women's football instrumentally as they foresee an opportunity which is good for their business and likely to lead to increased non-financial performances (e.g. return on image and attractiveness to investors) (Bansal & Roth, 2000). Moreover, influenced by wider ethical considerations, senior executives of integrated clubs identify normative reasons to open a women's section such as the sense of responsibility and duty. This is in line with the argument put forward by Gammelsæter and Senaux (2011) that the recent development of women's football is due to the general shift towards a more 'gender neutral' society. Accordingly, football clubs are adopting an investment that contributes to align their mission and values with the current political and social sentiment about gender equality and the position of women in society, while, at the same time, seeking to benefit from their association with an increasingly popular sport like women's football. In this regard, it can be argued that stakeholders working to foster women's football should put emphasis on the social impact that the inception of a women's team can determine.

Furthermore, internal resources and organisational values are indicated here as factors that influence the decision of clubs to invest in women's football. Clubs that describe themselves as 'pioneers' and 'forerunners' take the path of developing a women's football section. This is also due to their ability to recognise and become aware of an increasing phenomenon as well as the opportunity to exploit available internal resources. Related to this, past literature identified slack resources (Bansal, 2003; Waddock & Graves, 1997) as a moderator of the relationship between organisations' CSR initiatives and outcomes. In a market such as women's football that offers few tangible financial returns, the behaviour of professional men's football clubs in respect of the creation of a women's section resembles that of organisations

operating in other industries in respect of CSR initiatives. Based on this, it is likely that, due to the fragile financial set-up of the women's game, only professional men's clubs with larger (financial) capabilities (i.e. slack resources) have the chance to maintain their investments in the long run. From a financial point of view, the appearance of top European integrated clubs, coupled with the consequent rising costs associated with their participation, risks the women's game becoming a sport that is dominated by clubs that have the means to report continuous losses without any threat to their financial sustainability.

Among the outcomes (Table 6.13) that clubs perceive as positive results of their investment in women's football, there are intangible returns such as improved image and reputation and enhanced attractiveness to new investors. In essence, by associating their club brand to women's football, senior executives expect to leverage corporate reputation and market opportunities. This is consistent with the idea that brand image is a predominant concern for European football teams (Richelieu et al., 2008). In addition, it follows the argument of Blumrodt et al. (2013) that spectators expect football clubs to be involved in activities that go beyond sporting performance such as community engagement and social commitment. At the same time, clubs report that integration of a women's section provides them with the opportunity to interact with a new audience. More specifically, senior executives identify increases in the fan base and the possibility to initiate relationships with new sponsors which otherwise would not be involved with the men's game. According to interviewees, there might be overlaps between supporters of the men's and women's sections.

**Table 6.13.** Perceived outcomes on the creation of a women's section in professional men's football clubs: Levels, sub-themes and sample quotes.

Theme	Level	Sub-theme	Sample quotes
Outcomes	Institutional	Reputation and image	<p>The return is not in money, it's in image and positioning the club differently.</p> <p>It's not direct euros but it is exposure of saying, "Hey, it's good that you have a women's team because we know the club is doing its job." So, the club is feeling it's not just bad or a waste of time and money, it's something that brings it to the table. So, now it's valued, and it's more and more.</p> <p>I think it's the image of the club. The associates in the city like the women's team, they support the women's team. They like the women's team and I think that results in a more communicable part of the club.</p> <p>It is the image. It's about showing we do think that women's football matters.</p> <p>It is always a good "publicity" for the club. You show that you are not anchored to certain preconceived stereotypes that are present in football.</p>
	Organisational	Attractiveness to new audience / investors / market	<p>With women's football, the club can speak to a series of players on the commercial market who, with such a masculine and gendered approach, would probably not be able to attract. So, companies that have female-type products are a world that is being looked at with curiosity. The fan base increases and a new market for the sponsors has opened up.</p> <p>Supporting an all-women entity was so important for our club, as it opens completely new potential investment scenarios.</p> <p>It brings new figures and new people, who might not have come close to men's football. It increases the fan base of the club overall for sure.</p> <p>There are different fans, different people that want to see women's football instead of the men's football.</p>

(continued)

Theme	Level	Sub-theme	Sample quotes
	Organisational	Attractiveness to new audience / investors / market	<p>We attract different stakeholders like kids, families etc. Our fan base in regards to social media is incredible. We have almost 6 million followers on our own channels who are interested in our women's team.</p> <p>We attract a number of girls who then maybe won't be able to play in the club but they are still fans and they are girls who will buy our products</p> <p>The market on the men's side is a little saturated, so we need to find new ways of having people coming to the stadium or having sponsorship. If we can provide the sponsors, saying, 'Hey, we have this big database, you can use this as well if you give us money.'</p>
		Club's internal capabilities	<p>Three years ago I knew absolutely nothing about this world. Now I must say that I know women's football in a fairly thorough manner, both from a sporting and management point of view.</p> <p>I believe that initially this was certainly an activity that intrigued many even within the club. It is an activity that has given great energy to this environment.</p> <p>Our coaches expand their knowledge about men's and women's football. This is a positive aspect for the club.</p>
		Reduced risk	<p>The club suspects that eventually UEFA and FIFA will make it mandatory for everybody to have a women's side so we want to start earlier.</p> <p>The club is taking a step ahead because I think it will be mandatory to have women's football in the future.</p>
	Individual	Citizenship behaviour	<p>Having an integrated structure makes the boys in the academy to see the girls playing. This is great to overcome cultural barriers in the future.</p> <p>I believe that seeing women's football as an integral part of our club is also an educational element towards our boys in the academy. In my opinion, on a cultural level and at an educational level, to follow this path certainly helps.</p>

However, incorporating a women's team that plays under the same name and with the same colours as the parent club offers these integrated clubs the opportunity to attract individuals that are not interested in men's football. Therefore, integrated clubs have the possibility to promote their products to an audience that encompasses consumers with various interests, thus extending their reach and the possibility of becoming truly 'universal' brands. In line with this key finding, NAs and UEFA might approach men's clubs that have not yet invested in the women's game indicating that acting in the interest of women's football should not only be seen as a means to tackling issues of gender equality but also as a way of opening opportunities up which can reap further benefits for the entire football industry.

As a result of club integration, senior executives indicate improvements in the club's organisational capabilities and individual employees' development. Positive outcomes relate to the opportunity for both coaches and managers to discover and expand their knowledge about a part of the football industry which was previously ignored or overlooked. Knowledge transfer from the men's to the women's sector and vice versa permits sharing best practices and protocols within the club. In the opinion of senior executives, this can contribute to produce a stimulant and challenging environment for the members of the club.

Another important aspect that emerged from interviews was the opportunity for the integrated clubs to anticipate possible changes in the requirements to participate in international competitions. More precisely, clubs that have started a process of integration consider their initiative as a strategy to minimise risks in case

in future international football governing bodies impose the integration of a women's football team as a necessary condition to partake in their competitions<sup>22</sup>.

Finally, football itself represents a platform for the social construction and presentation of hegemonic masculinities (Pfister, 2015). This has historically ostracised the trajectory of development of women's football and contributed to the depiction of the women's game as a sport that is inherently linked with cultural barriers and gender inequality. As such, it is important to highlight that senior executives believe that introducing a women's football section in an organisation whose traditional purpose has been to manage a men's team acts to raise awareness among both playing and non-playing members about gender issues. In theory, working for an organisation that is socially responsible is associated with enhanced organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) which, as a consequence, should positively influence overall organisational performance (Jones, 2010; Lin et al., 2010). Club integrations might therefore be viewed as a tactic to optimise this in the football setting.

### ***Club integration as a form of strategic philanthropy: measuring the impact***

Given the context, the overall positioning of women's football and the elements underpinning the decision-making process surrounding the integration of a women's section within the ownership structure of a professional men's football club, it can be argued that club integration in football has similar attributes and characteristics to those identified by Walker et al. (2012) for WNBA franchises. In line with this proposition, it has been observed that the strategic approach adopted

---

<sup>22</sup> On this matter, some of the interviewed senior executives expressed their opinion in favour of making women's football mandatory for clubs that participate in UEFA competitions. This was supported in order for the movement to gain visibility and continue its advancement worldwide.

by professional men's football clubs is guided by factors that are linked with organisational responsiveness and engagement that are typical of CSR initiatives. For instance, similar to what was discussed in this study, these include economic, institutional and managerial factors (Belliveau et al., 1994) and can be synthesised according to institutional, organisational and individual levels (Aguinis & Glavas, 2012).

However, taking into consideration the social and cultural impact that these clubs expect to have as a result of the integration of a women's section, it is also important that they adopt a concrete strategic approach to ensure these initiatives are effective in achieving the proposed aims (here referred as predictors). Bruch and Walter (2005) identify four typical mistakes in managing corporate philanthropy: (1) failure to implement an effective monitoring system; (2) undefined exit options; (3) unprofessional approach to running CSR initiatives; and (4) weak philanthropy-related communication. From the interviews with managers of the integrated clubs, it was possible to recognise two of these as additional themes that are associated with the strategic management of an integrated women's football section: one related to (the absence of) monitoring systems to track the impact of the women's section initiative; and one related to the possibility of the club continuing to invest in the future (i.e. defining exit options) (Table 6.14).

**Table 6.14.** Track the impact and Exit options: Themes and sample quotes.

Theme	Sample quotes
Track the impact	<p>The club is telling me, 'Hey, we want this to become more beneficial', so one of my targets is to make it more beneficial. That's one of the tasks that I do have, but it can also be in terms of not just getting cash but also getting a psychologist, getting a lift room that we can use.</p> <p>We do get some money but it's still just a small part. We expect that it will increase because there are more businesses that are interested. A couple of years ago there were no businesses interested, and now we can talk to these businesses, there is an increase.</p> <p>There is such a great change with women's football that we cannot give ourselves long-term objectives.</p> <p>It's about building a community. One of my targets was to get a second team, so now I'm getting a second team, making sure that's going to work, be more integrated within the club, so those kind of targets. I had this meeting with the entire board to ask for money for this under 19 team, and of course that's one of my arguments that I'm using, it's about giving back to the community, it's about making sure that talent is going to the first team and that we can eventually sell players.</p> <p>We do not use objective metrics to track the impact of our women's section.</p> <p>Rather than setting numbers as final goals, we expect to see at least a straight line that grows. Specifically we have no metrics. They fall into the sensibilities of colleagues who then have the various surveys at the global level of the brand. So within a screening there is no isolated value of the women's section within a total.</p> <p>Our indicator to measure the impact of the women's club is mainly the number of spectators.</p>
Exit options	<p>I don't have the feeling that within the club they are thinking, 'Oh, we're going to get rid of the women's section,' but you never know. If we're not going to become champion a couple of times or we're not going to qualify for Champions League and things are going bad, yes this can always happen. There is always this big thunder cloud above your head that you never know what's going to happen. But in a way it makes sense, because you're not making money.</p> <p>A lot depends on how much the club believes that women's football has possibilities to start generating revenues.</p>

Tracking the impact of the initiative and specifying concrete strategic objectives for CSR activities are important steps to purposefully manage such actions. Interest in measuring their initiatives is largely based on the assumption that greater accountability enhances the overall performance and stature of the organisation (Clarkson, 1995). For instance, clubs need to have an evaluation system in place that helps to answer questions such as: How well does our women's football initiative meet our initial intentions to satisfy the expectations of core stakeholders? To what extent does our initiative advance the club's business? How does the women's football initiative contribute to our social responsibilities? In fact, football clubs arguably do not treat their investment in women's football as an asset that has the potential to generate an immediate financial surplus. Instead, they refer to benefits that are related to cultural and social capitals. In this regard, UEFA has included a criterion in the Club Licensing and Financial Fair Play regulations that permits the exclusion of expenditure on women's football from the calculation of the break-even result, underlining the importance of promoting the women's game as a vehicle to improve the 'football family' as a whole (UEFA, 2018). In view of this, understanding more about the approaches taken by football clubs to monitor and evaluate the impact of their women's football section remains central. However, literature on the evaluation of CSR actions demonstrates a lack of standardisation across different industries (e.g. Aguinis & Glavas, 2012; Walzel et al., 2018). In practice, interviews with senior executives of integrated football clubs reflect this limited understanding about the use of holistic approaches to evaluate CSR. For instance, some clubs referred to increases in the number of spectators at the stadium or in the number of sponsors approaching the club, while others acknowledged the complete absence of objective metrics to track the impact of the

women's section. Vague expressions such as 'building a community' or 'being beneficial' remained common place.

As outlined in the introduction, professional men's football clubs often struggle to cope with their multifaceted nature, one that requires them to combine business activities with their social roles (Morrow, 2003). Results of this study confirm the challenge for managers of football clubs to distinguish and evaluate the impacts of initiatives that are not directly related to sporting or financial dimensions. For this reason, it is important that clubs are provided with practical instruments which can be used to objectively measure the effects of their social and community initiatives. For instance, Breitbarth, Hoverman and Walzel (2011) developed a model for measuring CSR in the context of professional football. This identifies both organisational and economic quantifiable factors, while also taking into account integrative-political and ethical-emotional measurements. However, as discussed by Blumrodt et al. (2010), sport managers might underrate the importance of measuring achievements that are based on objectives other than those related to financial and sporting results. Another example that football stakeholders might consider to help clubs measure these factors would be the formulation of an index similar to UEFA GROW. Related to this, the theme 'Exit option' further strengthens the need to systematically measure how football and football clubs can impact society, given that most senior executives explicitly identified the lack of financial returns as the greatest risk to continuing their women's football initiative. In addition to this, it is also necessary that women's football stakeholders open discussions about the approaches to foster women's club football in terms of its business models. While fan interest and media attention are growing, the current financial set-up of women's football demonstrates that the traditional model based on commercial revenues and TV rights might need

some time before it becomes sustainable. An alternative route to follow might be to strengthen inter-connections with social and governmental institutions that work to improve aspects of society on which women's football clubs can also contribute. For example, encouraging higher participation of women in sport can be one of the common goals for both football clubs and governing bodies (European Commission, 2018). One of the interviewed executives puts this into perspective more clearly:

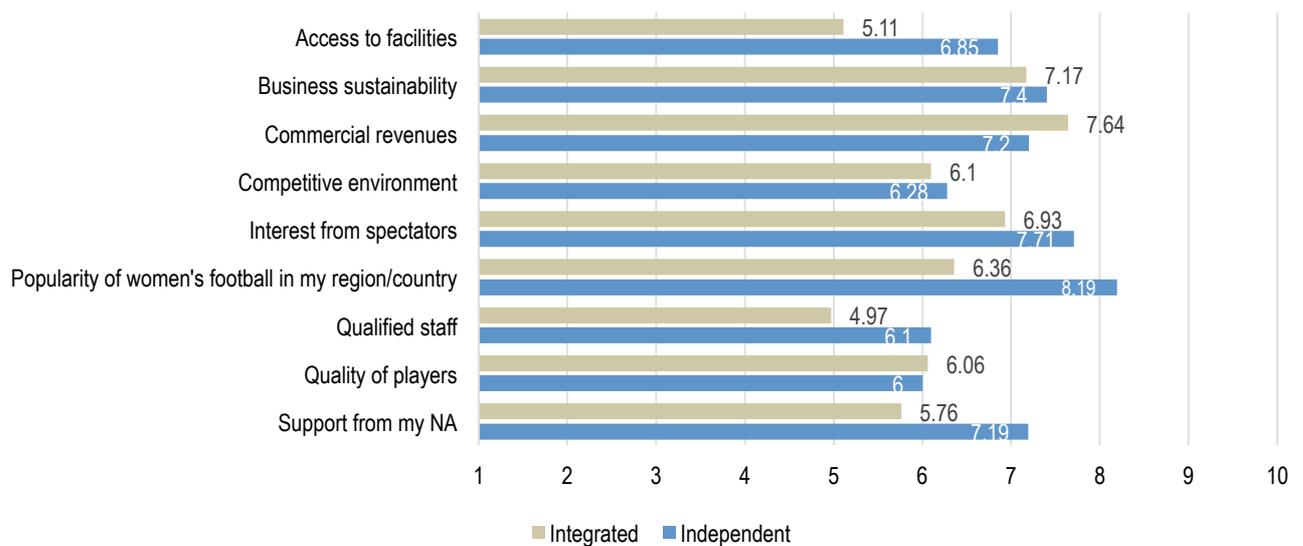
*'We have the community to send out this message, and it's about creating an image, and we want to create this image, and that's what also probably the Government is trying to do. So, why not help each other out in that? I think that women's football is a great platform to show cooperation, to send out this message of equality. Together we're going to expose our work to the community saying, "Hey, we have a very interesting region within this country and we are working together and we're both interesting brand names".'*

### ***Women's football development and challenges***

The consultation with women's football clubs has enabled a comprehensive picture about the perspectives of executives and managers on the development and challenges that European women's club football faces. Information about these areas were collected via the survey. However, more specific issues were also discussed during interviews. Here the most prominent themes are elaborated.

When surveyed about the challenges faced in running their businesses, all clubs highlighted the lack of 'commercial revenues' (mean = 7.51, SD = 2.19), 'business sustainability' (mean = 7.25, SD = 2.57) and 'interest from spectators' (mean = 7.18, SD = 2.15) as the three major obstacles for future developments (Figure 6.17). In general, the importance of challenges to run a women's club are analogous between independent and integrated clubs. However, independent clubs tend to rate these items as more challenging than integrated clubs do. For instance, the greatest differences in perception between independent and integrated clubs are

about the ‘popularity of women’s football in their country/region’, ‘access to facilities’ and ‘support from NA’. These differences in perception might be related to the fact that integrated clubs draw on the capabilities of a professional men’s club. In particular, they might benefit from accessing state-of-the-art training facilities and exploit the visibility of their parent club’s brand which perhaps let them perceive the problems of facilities and popularity of women’s football as less prominent.



**Figure 6.17.** Challenges to run a women's club

With regards to ‘support from NA’, it was discussed with senior executives of integrated clubs that being part of a professional men’s club can help the women’s section to have a stronger voice. Here a sample quote exemplifies this:

*‘Having a men’s team behind helps because they hear you more.’*

This is also confirmed when comparing clubs’ responses about their relationship with their NA and league organisers. On a scale 1-5 (5 indicating a strong relationship), independent clubs average 2.8 for NA and 2.7 for league organisers, while integrated clubs perceive a relatively healthier relationship with these two stakeholders: 3.4 for NA and 3.6 for league organisers.

More specific issues were indicated during interviews with senior executives of integrated clubs. Table 6.15 presents the most frequently discussed problems. These are intrinsically related with some of the challenges presented in Figure 6.17. For instance, interviewees explained in more details the issue of attracting spectators. At the same time, they discussed the potential for a spillover effect - due to their club's brand strength – as an opportunity to face this challenge. In addition, they observed other obstacles that hinder business sustainability, particularly for smaller clubs such as the lack of training compensation and solidarity mechanisms. Related to the problem of revenues, clubs exposed their opinions on national and UEFA competitions. This is in line with the recent discussions between ECA and UEFA about the reformulation of club competitions (ECA, 2018). Further, the overlaps between international and domestic calendars emerged as an issue that affects both the organisation of league matches and players' ability to train with the team.

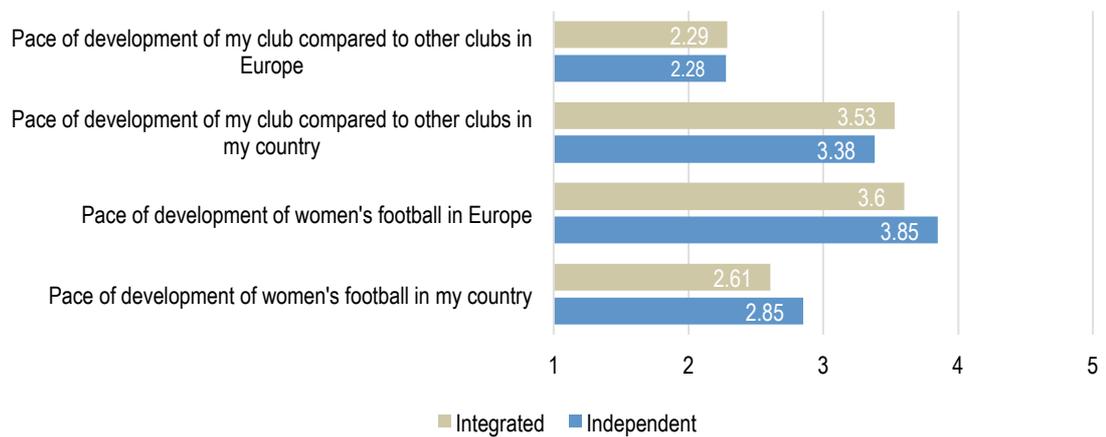
**Table 6.15.** Development and challenges in women's football: Themes, sub-themes and sample quotes.

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Sub-theme</b>	<b>Sample quotes</b>
Fan demand	Lack of interest	<p>We are in a limbo where we must have patience because we are not that big to fill a stadium but we are no longer even for a small field. In the middle there is a grey area where you try to find the solution that stands numerically. The theme of fan demand is very complicated at this time.</p> <p>We're up top, that hasn't happened since we've started the league, and still we're not attracting more spectators, and we're thinking, 'Why is this?' It's very frustrating.</p> <p>We are struggling to get fans into the stadium. It takes a lot of effort on game day to attract the fans.</p> <p>At our away games, we attract a lot of fans. It's not about men's and women's football. It's about the brand.</p> <p>In the past years we haven't done as well as we are doing right now, but it was always, even when we were fifth last year it was always our club playing the biggest opponent: that was the big game. And it's because of the men's, that's how we are perceived. We haven't performed well but we were perceived as a top club because of the brand.</p> <p>We attract more fans when we play away. I think that this is due to the fans who are not able to attend our men's team's games. So, they come to see the women's playing.</p>
International calendar		<p>The NA is working on having a good national team but this means that there are a lot of breaks during the season. Weeks before and weeks after they break up the competition. This is not good on the level of image to our sponsors or even the fans and supporters. It's difficult because they have a calendar and we play four matches in three weeks or in two weeks and then it stops for two or three weeks and then starts again. So, that's also a very, very difficult thing.</p> <p>The international calendar today is still very much thought for national teams and little about clubs. In other words, our girls go 91 days with the national team. Males go for 56. In the past, when there were no professionals, the girls trained better with the national team. However, today the scenario has changed. You can probably start taking some days off of the international calendar. For 91 days, I don't have the girls. It means that we train less, it means that I also have three months less to use their image rights. If at that time I have an event, I can't send them to represent the club.</p>

*(continued)*

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Sub-theme</b>	<b>Sample quotes</b>
Competition format		<p>Now in our league the first two make to the Champions League, then there's nothing left. Perhaps, it would be good to see that the next two compete for something like the Europa League as in the men's.</p> <p>If more teams, who are placed on 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> places had the chance to qualify for Champions League or another European competition, as a smaller club, you directly have more visibility.</p> <p>The Champions League competition needs to be renewed: group stages, more teams qualifying for the competition. Playing a group stages would let even smaller teams having more games on a high level.</p> <p>In my opinion, UEFA should renew the Champions League format. A Champions League group stage clearly doubles the revenues of anyone who participates. Also, centralized TV rights could lead to extra money.</p>
Training compensation		<p>I'm very upset with the fact that we are educating all these players and at one point they say, 'I don't want to extend the contract,' and they go abroad, and we're not going to get any fee for the development.</p> <p>Small clubs will stop developing players because those professional clubs can take them away in one afternoon. So the theme is training compensation. Clubs must be compensated if we want to continue the development of players.</p> <p>What's worrying me and what bothers me is that in the men's world you have somewhere the possibility to sell the education that you gave to youngsters. For the moment with women's football that is not possible, meaning that my youngsters will leave. I'm sure I have at the moment two or three youngsters in my team will end up in a higher competition, but I have to contract them year after year. So it's an amateur level and I can lose them very, very easily.</p>

Finally, opinions of executives regarding the general development of women's football were surveyed (Figure 6.18). Overall, independent and integrated clubs have similar feelings about the pace at which women's football is progressing.



**Figure 6.18.** Perceived pace of development of women's football and clubs.

### *6.2.7 Limitations*

In the current study, there are two main limitations. First, despite the fact that clubs from all UEFA member countries were invited to participate in the study, the recruitment of participants proved challenging. For this reason, the final sample does not fully cover individual countries and does not provide information for clubs that are based in all UEFA countries. Thus, it is important to understand that while this research sheds some useful light on women's club football and its development, it is limited to the contexts of those clubs that decided to voluntarily take part in the survey / interviews. Second, given the exploratory nature of this research and the inherent limitations of this approach, the final goal here is less oriented to generalizability and more to propositions that can help enhance knowledge and understanding of club organisation and club management in women's football. One such proposition is that one of the factors underpinning integration between men's and women's clubs in football is its role as part of CSR and strategic philanthropy. To that end, this study provides a platform for the process of theory building rather than an attempt to confirm or verify an already existing model that conceptualises club management in women's football.

### *6.2.8 Contributions and Recommendations*

This study contributes to advancing knowledge about forms of club organisation and management practices adopted in European elite women's football. Also, this research provides important and novel information about the views that decision-makers working at men's and women's clubs have around club integration. Integrated clubs require careful evaluation due to these potentially being considered as an example of solidarity and cooperation between men's and women's football. In line with that, this study provides supplementary evidence in support of the development of the women's game as an area that helps promote the social and equity values of football. In more practical terms, findings of this research can help UEFA, NAs and leagues comprehend the benefits, obstacles and challenges encountered by women's football clubs, as well as providing baseline information for future measurements and comparison in respect of specific areas of women's football.

From the findings of this research, it can be concluded that:

(a) there is a considerable gender imbalance in favour of men occupying technical positions. As such, UEFA and NAs should continue in their attempts to encourage higher participation of women in football coaching and qualification courses;

(b) the entrance of integrated clubs in women's football contributes to enhanced visibility and professionalization of the women's game but, at the same time, this risks creating considerable disparities with independent clubs thus eventually leading to unbalances both from a financial and a sporting point of view;

(c) the decision adopted by professional men's football clubs to integrate a women's section is mainly guided by factors that are linked with organisational responsiveness and engagement that are typical of CSR initiatives. Therefore, NAs need to design programmes that target and incentivise investment in the women's game taking into account the fact that men's football clubs do not treat their investment as an asset to generate an immediate financial surplus. Instead, they refer to benefits that are related to cultural and social capitals. However, clubs need assistance to evaluate the impacts of their initiatives beyond sporting and financial dimensions;

(d) financial sustainability remains central to the long-term commitment of men's clubs and the overall development of the game. If the objective of women's football stakeholders is to encourage the entrance of these clubs in the women's game in order to facilitate marketing and visibility, a discussion should also be opened on the suitability for women's football clubs to rely on the traditional business model based on commercial revenues and TV rights;

(e) UEFA and NAs can draw upon the outcomes identified by clubs that have already integrated a women's section to encourage those that have not been involved in the women's game yet to initiate a collaboration with a women's side;

(f) alongside expressing general worries about financial sustainability and lack of commercial revenues, women's clubs also identify some practical solutions such as the implementation of solidarity mechanisms and revamped competition formats to gradually resolve some of the issues in women's football. Closer discussions with the different stakeholders operating in the women's game might determine further advancements in European women's football.

### 6.3 References

- Aguinis, H., & Glavas, A. 2012. What we know and don't know about corporate social responsibility: A review and research agenda. *Journal of Management*, Vol. 38 No. 4, pp. 932-968.
- Allison, R. 2016. Business or cause? Gendered institutional logics in women's professional soccer. *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, Vol. 40 No. 3, pp. 237-262.
- Anthony, A., Caudil, S. B., & Mixon, F. G. 2012. The political economy of women's professional basketball in the United States: A structure-conduct-performance approach. *Theoretical and Applied Economics*, Vol. 19 No 11, pp. 107-126.
- Aoki, K., Crumbach, S., Naicker, C., Schmitter, S., & Smith, N. 2010. Identifying best practice in women's football: Case study in the European context. FIFA Master 10th Edition, unpublished thesis, available at: [http://www.cies-uni.org/sites/default/files/identifying\\_best\\_practices\\_in\\_women\\_football.pdf](http://www.cies-uni.org/sites/default/files/identifying_best_practices_in_women_football.pdf). (accessed 18 August 2016).
- Babiak, K., & Wolfe, R. 2009. Determinants of corporate social responsibility in professional sport: Internal and external factors. *Journal of Sport Management*, Vol. 23, pp. 717-742.
- Bansal, P. 2003. From issues to actions: The importance of individual concerns and organizational values in responding to natural environmental issues. *Organization Science*, Vol. 14, pp. 510-527.
- Bansal, P., & Roth, K. 2000. Why companies go green: A model of ecological responsiveness. *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol. 43, pp. 717-736.
- Beliveau, B., Cottrill, M., & O'Neill, H. M. 1994. Predicting corporate social responsiveness: A model drawn from three perspectives. *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 13, pp. 731-738.
- Blumrodt, J., Desbordes, M., & Bodin, D. 2010. The sport entertainment industry and corporate social responsibility. *Journal of Management & Organization*, Vol. 14 No. 6, pp. 514-529.
- Blumrodt, J., Desbordes, M., & Bodin, D. 2013. Professional football clubs and corporate social responsibility. *Sport, Business and Management: An International Journal*, Vol. 3 No. 3, pp. 205-225.
- Breitbarth, T., Hovemann, G., & Walzel, S. 2011. Scoring strategy goals: Measuring corporate social responsibility in professional European football. *Thunderbird International Business Review*, Vol. 53 No. 6, pp. 721-737.

- Carroll, A. 1979. A three dimensional conceptual model of corporate social performance. *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 4, pp. 497–505.
- Clarkson, M. B. E. 1995. A stakeholder framework for analyzing and evaluating corporate social performance. *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 20 No. 1, pp. 92–117.
- ECA. 2014. *European Clubs' Association - Women's Football Committee - Women's Club Football Analysis* (Report), available at: [http://www.ecaeurope.com/PageFiles/7585/ECA\\_Womens%20Club%20Football%20Analysis\\_double%20pages.pdf](http://www.ecaeurope.com/PageFiles/7585/ECA_Womens%20Club%20Football%20Analysis_double%20pages.pdf) (accessed 22 November 2016).
- ECA. 2018. ECA Chairman informs General Assembly of start of discussions on UEFA club competitions post-2024, available at: <https://www.ecaeurope.com/news/eca-chairman-informs-general-assembly-of-start-of-discussions-on-uefa-club-competitions-post-2024/> (accessed 27 March 2019).
- Edelman, M., & Harrison, S. K. 2010. Analyzing the WNBA's mandatory age/education policy landscape, in *The Business of Professional Sports*, Edited by S. Rosner and K. L. Shropshire. Burlington, MA: Jones & Bartlett Learning, pp. 123-127.
- Edelman, M., & Masterson, E. 2009. Could the new women's professional soccer league survive in America? How adopting a traditional legal structure may save more than just a game. *Seton Hall Journal of Sports and Entertainment Law*, Vol. 19 No. 2, pp. 283-309.
- European Commission. 2018. *Special Eurobarometer 472 – Sport and physical activity* (Report), available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/Survey/getSurveyDetail/search/sport/surveyKy/2164> (accessed 14 March 2019).
- FIFPro. 2017. *FIFPro Global employment report: Working conditions in professional women's football*, available at: <https://fifpro.org/attachments/article/6986/2017%20FIFPro%20Women%20Football%20Global%20Employment%20Report-Final.pdf> (accessed 22 November 2016).
- Gammelsæter, H., & Senaux, B. 2011. Understanding the governance of football across Europe, in Gammelsæter, H. and Senaux, B., *The organisation and governance of top football across Europe. An Institutional Perspective*, Routledge: New York, pp. 268-291.
- Gomez-Gonzalez, C., Dietl, H., & Nessler, C. 2018. Does performance justify the underrepresentation of women coaches? Evidence from professional

women's soccer. *Sport Management Review*, available online: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2018.09.008>.

- Guest, A. M., & Luijten, A. 2018. Fan culture and motivation in the context of successful women's professional team sports: A mixed-methods case study of Portland Thorns fandom. *Sport in Society*, Vol. 21 No 7, pp. 1013-1030.
- Hellborg, A. M. 2013. The challenges of sustaining a professional soccer league for women. Paper presented at Football Research in an Enlarged Europe conference, June, Copenhagen, Denmark, available at: <http://www.free-project.eu/documents/free/Working%20Papers/Hellborg%20The%20challenges%20of%20sustaining%20a%20professional%20soccer%20league%20for%20women.pdf> (accessed 14 September 2016).
- Hamil, S., & Morrow, S. 2011. Corporate social responsibility in the Scottish Premier League: Context and motivation. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, Vol. 11 No. 2, pp. 143-170.
- Hess, D., Rogovsky, N., & Dunfee, T. W. 2002. The next wave of corporate community investment: Corporate social initiatives. *California Management Review*, Vol. 44, pp. 110–125.
- Jones, D. A. 2010. Does serving the community also serve the company? Using organizational identification and social exchange theories to understand employee responses to a volunteerism programme. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, Vol. 83, pp. 857-878.
- Lin, C., Lyau, N., Tsai, Y., Chen, W., & Chiu, C. 2010. Modeling corporate citizenship and its relationship with organizational citizenship behaviors. *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 95, pp. 357-372.
- Margolis, J.D., & Walsh, J. P. 2003. Misery loves companies: Rethinking social initiatives by business. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol. 48 No. 2, pp. 268–305.
- McWilliams, A., & Siegel, D. 2000. Corporate social responsibility and financial performance: Correlation or misspecification? *Strategic Management Journal*, Vol. 21 No. 5, pp. 603–609.
- Morrow, S. 2003. *The People's Game? Football, Finance and Society*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Pedersen, E. R. G., & Gwozdz, W. 2014. From resistance to opportunity-seeking: Strategic responses to institutional pressures for corporate social responsibility in the Nordic fashion industry. *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 119, pp. 245–264.

- Pfister, G. 2015. Assessing the sociology of sport: On women and football. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, Vol. 50 No. 4-5, pp. 563-569.
- Richelieu, A., Lopez, S. & Desbordes, M. 2008. The internationalization of sports team brand: The case of European soccer teams. *International Journal of Sport Marketing and Sponsorship*, Vol. 10 No. 1, pp. 29-44.
- Southall, R. M., Nagel, M. S., & LeGrande, D. J. 2005. Build it and they will come? The Women's United Soccer Association: A collision of exchange theory and strategic Philanthropy. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, Vol. 14 No. 3, pp. 158-167.
- Stebbins, R. 2001. *Exploratory research in the social sciences*. Sage University Papers Series on Qualitative Research Methods, Vol. 48. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Tenbrunsel, A. E., Wade-Benzoni, K. A., Messick, D. M., & Bazerman, M. H. 2000. Understanding the influence of environmental standards on judgments and choices. *Academy of Management Journal*, Vol. 4, pp. 854-866.
- UEFA. 2017. *Women's Football across the National Associations 2016-2017*, available at: [https://www.uefa.com/MultimediaFiles/Download/OfficialDocument/uefaorg/Women'sfootball/02/43/13/56/2431356\\_DOWNLOAD.pdf](https://www.uefa.com/MultimediaFiles/Download/OfficialDocument/uefaorg/Women'sfootball/02/43/13/56/2431356_DOWNLOAD.pdf) (accessed 15 November 2017).
- UEFA. 2018. *UEFA Club Licensing and Financial Fair Play Regulations*, available at: [https://www.uefa.com/MultimediaFiles/Download/Tech/uefaorg/General/02/56/20/15/2562015\\_DOWNLOAD.pdf](https://www.uefa.com/MultimediaFiles/Download/Tech/uefaorg/General/02/56/20/15/2562015_DOWNLOAD.pdf) (accessed 14 March 2019).
- Valenti, M., Scelles, N. & Morrow, S. 2018. Women's football studies: An integrative review. *Sport, Business and Management: An International Journal*, Vol.8 No. 5, pp. 511-528.
- Waddock, S. A., & Graves, S. B. 1997. The corporate social performance–financial performance link. *Strategic Management Journal*, Vol. 18, pp. 303-319.
- Walker, M., Sartorie, M., & MacIntosh, E. 2012. Beyond the “business case” for the WNBA: A strategic perspectives approach for league sustainability. *Journal of Contemporary Athletics*, Vol. 6 No. 1, pp. 1-18.
- Walzel, S., Robertson, J., & Anagnostopoulos, C. 2018. Corporate social responsibility in professional team sports organizations: An integrative review. *Journal of Sport Management*, Vol. 32 No. 6, pp. 511-530.
- Welford, J. 2013. Outsiders on the inside: Integrating female and male football clubs in the UK. Paper presented at Football Research in an Enlarged Europe conference, June, Copenhagen, Denmark.

Wood, D.J. 1991. Corporate social performance revisited. *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 16, pp. 691-671.

#### **6.4 Summary of these studies' contribution to the overall research**

Taking into account the concept of competitive balance and exploring women's football club organisation structures, the two conference papers and the research project contribute in many aspects to the overall research. First, these additional research outputs contribute to filling some of the documented knowledge gaps within the literature on women's football. Specifically, they examine how profit redistribution at club-level affects the process of development of European women's football. In addition, the effect of profit redistribution at club-level is examined in relation to professionalisation, players' performance, competitive balance, game attractiveness and fan interest.

Second, they offer detailed descriptions of recent developments in European women's football. For instance, from *Studies 4 and 5* it appears clear that clubs with an independent structure suffer from the entrance of professional men's clubs in the women's football market. This is especially prominent in football nations where the men's game generates consistent amounts of revenues (e.g. Big-5). Also, the power of these integrated 'superclubs' is evident when observing the sporting results in the UEFA Women's Champions League. Findings of *Studies 4 and 5* indicate that there is a high concentration of sporting success for women's clubs with an integrated structure. This might be due to women's clubs with an integrated structure being able to leverage on the business functions available from the pre-existing men's football

clubs. Importantly, results of *Study 5* underline how competitive balance is affected by the presence of superclubs, showing that, when these play against each other, matches are significantly more balanced.

Third, these two studies suggest some interesting implications to consider. On the one hand, results of *Studies 4 and 5* follow the argument that higher financial resources can help athletes produce more entertaining and attractive games. Also, in line with the results of *Study 3*, *Study 6* shows that the entrance of clubs with an integrated structure facilitates higher visibility, potentially enhancing the commercial value of women's football. Therefore, investment from clubs with higher reputation should be encouraged in order for the sport to become more attractive overall. However, on the other hand, this posits a crucial issue for women's football stakeholders as the entrance of integrated clubs (especially from the Big-5 nations) seem to polarise sporting success as a consequence of the larger financial capacity that is available to these clubs.

In the fragile financial context in which women's football is located, it is important that football stakeholders consider the positioning of both integrated and independent clubs. Importantly, this can affect the entire process of development of European women's football as football clubs represent a major stakeholder of the game. On this, *Study 6* contributes to improving understanding of such clubs, concluding that the entrance of integrated clubs in women's football enhance the visibility (e.g. potential to engage with a higher number of fans) and professionalisation (e.g. more stable working conditions) of the women's game. But, at the same time, this risks creating considerable disparities with independent clubs thus eventually leading to imbalance both from a financial and a sporting point of view. Finally, from the results of these additional research outputs, it can be

suggested that, in absence of solidarity mechanisms (e.g. revenue redistribution, training compensation), the development of women's football risks being undermined due to the challenges seeking to ensure balanced competitions and consequent interest from fans, media and sponsors.

# Chapter 7

## Summary and conclusions

While detailed explanations of findings and conclusions can be drawn from the individual studies presented in this PhD, this concluding chapter evaluates how the research objectives have been broadly addressed and highlights what the thesis brings to existing knowledge. It also outlines the main limitations of the study and suggests directions for future research.

In summary, the set of articles and the additional research outputs that are presented in this thesis intersect different areas of sport management, sport policy and sport economics. Critically reflecting on women's football, this thesis has mainly sought to: map and organise previous literature on women's football; fill some of the documented knowledge gaps within the existing literature; and enhance understanding of women's football from managerial and economic perspectives. More precisely, this thesis contributed to advancing knowledge on three areas of the women's game. First, it examined national football associations' sport policies and the effect that these have on international success. The analysis provided empirical evidence on the impact of programmes that European football associations have implemented to encourage women's football development. Second, this thesis provided an extension to previous literature with regard to the level of competitive balance and its effect on spectator demand. For the first time in the academic literature, an objective measure of uncertainty of outcome was tested as one of the determinants of women's football stadium attendance. Third, this study explored

organisational practices in women's football, providing important insights into the management and operations of clubs with integrated and independent structures.

In addition, the thesis presented an integrated theoretical model which proposes to shed light on (some of) the mechanisms underpinning the development of women's football and to synthesise how they relate to one another. Providing an exact definition of the term development within the sport setting remains challenging. However, following a debate about the conceptualisation of 'development of sport' in sport management disciplines, a number of inter-related factors that can be associated with it have emerged. The lack of a strict definition of 'development' stimulated intellectual propositions as to how it can be studied and understood from a sport management perspective. As a result, elements such as growth in participation, performance, image, fan engagement and revenue have been utilised to describe this complex process through a rationalist approach. The importance of these factors has been acknowledged both in research and practice, embracing the view that the evolution of sports is inherently complex as it depends on the stakeholders' ability to create and effectively exploit opportunities that are beneficial for their 'ecosystem'.

Overall, this study has sought to answer different research enquiries and address individual problems that are related to the development of women's football. As a result of this, findings that are relevant to both academics and practitioners can be drawn from this PhD. The most important findings arising from this thesis are summarised in the next section

## **7.1 Key findings**

1. From an academic perspective, this study found that the attention towards the topic of women's football has been increasing in the last two decades. Scholars have looked at women's football mainly from sociological and historical perspectives, while articles investigating economic, managerial and marketing areas of the women's game appeared with less frequency and only in more recent times. Overall, the gradual process of structural expansion of women's football and the position it starts to occupy in the professional sports environment would suggest that scholarly inquiry will potentially follow this trend, focusing more closely on the business aspects of the game and producing more quantitative-based studies.
2. Football governing institutions are setting up plans and guidelines for the development of women's football worldwide. In particular, European football associations were urged to implement programmes and policies to foster women's football within their respective countries. However, one of the main findings of this PhD is that it remains largely unclear how exactly each national association can facilitate development of women's football through their policy initiatives. International sporting performance in women's football is mainly predicted by factors that are beyond the control of football associations such as their respective country's economic development, talent pool, climate and men's football legacy.

3. In this PhD, it is discussed that one of the most prominent obstacles for the development of women's football is the lack of consistent interest from fans, media and sponsors. Results of this research highlight that stadium attendance in the top European club competition (UEFA Women's Champions League) has not substantially changed in the last nine seasons. However, empirical evidence drawn from this research suggests that higher outcome uncertainty is positively associated with the number of spectators. Thus, in this study, football stakeholders are provided with indications to implement policy mechanisms to ensure a high degree of outcome uncertainty is maintained in order to increase the number of spectators attending women's football matches. Also, stadium attendance in women's football is driven by clubs' reputation. Therefore, clubs with well-known brands in the world of football should be encouraged to enter the women's football market.
  
4. The evolution of women's clubs is at the forefront of the rapidly changing scenario of European women's football. In particular, as the promotion of women's football has become a key priority in the agenda of international football governing bodies, two common forms of organisation structure have emerged in the European context: (1) independent clubs; and (2) integrated clubs. In this PhD, it is argued that the entrance of integrated clubs in women's football has affected a number of aspects of the women's game. These include enhanced levels of professionalisation and media visibility. At the same time, however, clubs with an integrated

structure risk creating negative impacts on competitive balance and, therefore, game attractiveness.

5. Focusing on competitive balance as one of the crucial factors for the growth of European women's football, this study found that the process of development in women's football risks being undermined by the entrance of women's clubs with an integrated structure. This is especially the case for those markets where men's football is financially lucrative such as the so-called 'Big-5' nations. The financial strength of these clubs is likely to produce financial and sporting disparities with those clubs that have an independent structure. Practical solutions to such challenges would be the implementation of solidarity mechanisms, rebranded competition formats and enhanced revenue distribution.

## ***7.2 Contribution***

In line with the proposed objectives, this PhD has advanced knowledge about women's football and its development in the European context. First, the contribution of this research is relevant from an academic viewpoint, as it has portrayed a comprehensive picture of past literature in women's football and identified research avenues for future studies into aspects of this sport. This is of particular interest for scholars investigating women's football because it both informs academics working in this area and provides a platform from which it is possible to start future research.

Second, practitioners and stakeholders can benefit from this research due its focus on elite policies, stadium attendance and organisational practices. Practical

implications were derived from the analysis of both primary and secondary data. This enabled discussions on the development of women's football from managerial, policy and economic perspectives, contributing to the development of women's football and providing insights into the most appropriate approaches to support the growth of this sport. With the idea that the business sustainability of women's football is one of the ultimate objectives for international governing bodies, this study equipped different stakeholders such as club managers and league organisers with evidence-based instruments to advocate for initiatives in support of women's football. Such initiatives range from changes to competition formats to improvements in promotion and marketing activities. Furthermore, this PhD offered the possibility to depict current and future scenarios in women's football by taking into account the perspective of executives and senior managers operating in women's football.

Third, the contribution of this PhD is relevant from a theoretical viewpoint, as it extended the literature on the comparative analysis of elite sport policies. More precisely, *Study 2* critically reflected on the suitability of utilising a predominantly rationalist approach to compare sporting nations through the SPLISS model. Furthermore, *Study 3* enhanced understanding of fans' behaviour in relation to competitive balance, competitive intensity and uncertainty of outcome within the context of a developing sport. From a theoretical perspective, *Study 6* advanced knowledge in relation to drivers and expected outcomes of CSR in sport. Finally, this PhD puts forward a theoretical proposition to describe more generally the elements involved in the commercial development of sports. By formulating the integrated theoretical model, this study contributes to the already well-established discussion on the development of sport.

### **7.3 Limitations and future studies**

Each study presented in this PhD has its own limitations that are explained in more details within the dedicated chapters. However, similar to Section 7.1, this part serves to briefly outline broader critical considerations relating to the current research, and to propose avenues to address these in future studies. First, this research is about women's football, which inherently limits applicability of findings of this thesis to other sports. In addition, findings of this research are limited to the European context and cannot be generalised to other (football) regions of the world. Conducting similar studies in contexts where women's football has traditionally been accepted or benefit from higher popularity than the men's game could lead to different considerations and implications (see e.g., Markovits, 1990)<sup>23</sup>. As mentioned in this PhD, European football's key social aspects are largely gendered and continue to leave marginal space to women, who are still often considered as 'outsiders'. In view of that, it is paramount that future research explore other (women's) sports and examine countries more specifically to extend external validity of this study's findings or to challenge their generalisability. Second, it is acknowledged that women's football development is profoundly linked with gender issues. Some aspects of the development of women's football, such as media exposure and representation, are, in fact, highly gendered. Yet, this research dedicates less attention to feminist literature on football. Future studies are needed to expand understanding on the characteristics of women's football as a feminist manifestation to politically challenge patriarchal power.

---

<sup>23</sup> Markovits, A. (1990). The other 'American exceptionalism': why is there no soccer in the United States? *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 7(2), pp. 230-264.

## Appendix 1: Journals standing

### *Study 1: Women's football studies: an integrative review*

This study was conceived for the European Academy of Management (EURAM) conference – Track: 'Managing Sport'. The submitted study was presented at the conference in 2017 and eventually invited for publication in the Special Issue 'Advances in sport management – best papers from EURAM 2017' of the journal *Sport, Business and Management: An International Journal*. The publication process involved two rounds of peer-review before official acceptance of final version in May 2018.

#### Sport, Business and Management: An International Journal

- Ranking in the Academy Journal Guide 2018 of the Chartered Association of Business Schools: 1 star
- Journal Citation Report Impact Factor 2017: Emerging
- Ranking in the Association for Information System 2017: not available
- SCImago Journal Rank Impact Factor 2018: 0.278
- Source Normalized Impact per Paper 2018: 0.342

*Study 2: Elite sport policies and international sporting success: a panel data analysis of European women's national football performance*

This manuscript was presented at the 9<sup>th</sup> European Sport Economics Association (ESEA) conference in August 2017. After the conference, the candidate and the supervisory team submitted it for publication in the journal *European Sport Management Quarterly* (ESMQ) in April 2018. The article was accepted and made available online in April 2019.

European Sport Management Quarterly

- Ranking in the Academy Journal Guide 2018 of the Chartered Association of Business Schools: 3 stars
- Journal Citation Report Impact Factor 2017: 1.966
- Ranking in the Association for Information System 2017: 0.304
- SCImago Journal Rank Impact Factor 2018: 1.28
- Source Normalized Impact per Paper 2018: 1.413

*Study 3: The determinants of stadium attendance in elite women's football: Evidence from the UEFA Women's Champions League*

This article was submitted for publication in the journal *Sport Management Review* in September 2018. After a round of review, the article was accepted in its revised version and made available online in April 2019.

Sport Management Review

- Ranking in the Academy Journal Guide 2018 of the Chartered Association of Business Schools: 2 stars
- Journal Citation Report Impact Factor 2017: 3.516
- Ranking in the Association for Information System 2017: 0.450
- SCImago Journal Rank Impact Factor 2018: 1.769
- Source Normalized Impact per Paper 2018: 1.568

## Appendix 2: Non-significant panel regression tests for predictors of women's football performance

**Table 5.6.** Non-significant panel regression tests for predictors of women's football performance.

	Model 4		Model 5		Model 6		Model 7		Model 8	
	Coeff. (SE)	Sign.								
Financial support	-.90 (4.32)		.57 (3.84)		1.58 (3.22)		1.47 (3.23)		-2.18 (5.08)	
Human resources	.21 (.47)		.37 (.51)		-.10 (.47)		-.54 (.50)		-1.57 (.92)	
Coaching provision	8.24 (5.23)		5.15 (6.09)		6.24 (5.68)		9.86 (6.42)		9.91 (9.85)	
Foundation phase									15.28 (7.70)	*
Economic dev.	50.11 (22.42)	**	39.41 (23.05)	*	15.44 (21.86)		-18.02 (36.84)		-10.58 (64.85)	
Talent pool	-3.96 (4.54)		-.73 (5.52)		-3.12 (4.33)		.54 (5.56)		3.25 (6.73)	
Climate	Omitted									
Democracy	-28.63 (12.83)	**	-26.82 (13.84)	*	-3.01 (13.64)		1.36 (16.37)		Omitted	
Gender equality	.38 (1.08)		.17 (1.04)		Omitted		Omitted		Omitted	
Men's football legacy	.02 (.01)		.01 (.01)		-.01 (.01)		-.02 (.02)		-.00 (.03)	
Constant	1277.83 (251.58)	***	1341.63 (267.72)	***	1438.89 (244.43)	***	1712.61 (382.24)	***	1660.92 (598.52)	**
Observations	235		201		166		124		80	
	48		48		46		46		45	

---

<b>Model 4</b>	<b>Model 5</b>	<b>Model 6</b>	<b>Model 7</b>	<b>Model 8</b>
.08	.05	.02	.05	.25
.04	.04	.00	.43	.17
.05	.07	.00	.45	.13
.98	.99	.99	.99	.99

---

End of the document