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On- and Off-Field Impacts of Foreign Players on Peruvian Liga 1 Football Teams

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Abstract: Despite the growing globalisation of football, little research has examined how foreign players create competitive advantage in non-traditional leagues. Using the Resource-Based View (RBV), this study explores the on- and off-field impact of foreign players in Peruvian Liga 1 clubs. Semi-structured interviews with 12 sporting directors, commercial managers, scouts, and coaches were analysed thematically, revealing five themes: physical characteristics, leadership and mental strength, cultural barriers, competitive salaries, and commercial blindness. Findings suggest that although foreign players provide valuable physical and psychological attributes, these are rarely sufficient to create sustained competitive advantage. More notably, clubs fail to capitalize on foreign players' commercial potential through branding and fan engagement, while cultural and financial constraints further limit value creation. The study extends RBV by demonstrating that competitive advantage depends on how clubs leverage foreign talent rather than the talent itself. Practically, clubs should strengthen recruitment, player integration, and commercial strategies to maximize the value of foreign players.

Introduction

The beginning of the internationalisation of football and the migration of footballers has its origins in European football in the 1960s. Then, in the 1990s' the internationalisation was intensified with the Bosman ruling (1995), when the Court of Justice of the European Community (EC) allowed the free movement of players within the continent (Frick, 2009; McGovern, 2002; Poli, 2010). This generated an increase in the migratory flow of players in all European leagues, with most of them moving from Eastern Europe to Western Europe (notably to England, France, Germany, Italy, and Spain) generating impacts in the football performance of clubs both on- and off-field (Poli, 2010; Travlos et al., 2017). During the same period, European leagues also attracted large numbers of football players from Latin American countries, primarily by exploiting currency disparities to offer higher salaries (Poli, 2010).

In recent decades, the global migration of football players has undergone a profound transformation, evolving from a predominantly Europe-centric phenomenon to a truly worldwide marketplace for football talent. The contemporary landscape of football migration reveals an increasingly complex system, with emerging leagues across Asia, the Middle East, and North America actively recruiting foreign players to enhance their competitive standing and commercial appeal. Countries like China and Saudi Arabia, which traditionally do not represent powerhouses in football, have recently attracted many talented foreign players to their leagues based on high salaries. The Major League Soccer in the USA is another league with not much tradition that has recently attracted top players in the world, reinforcing the globalisation of football migration.

Latin America occupies a particularly intriguing position within this shifting paradigm. Traditionally characterised as a primary exporter of football talent to European clubs (Giulianotti & Robertson, 2009), several Latin American leagues have in the last decade transitioned into destinations for foreign players themselves. Leagues in Brazil, Mexico, and Argentina – and even less traditional leagues in Colombia, Chile, and Peru – now attract foreign players. Despite the fact that most foreign players in these leagues are Latin American players from neighbour countries, this still represents a significant departure from established migration patterns and signals the emergence of what might be termed "non-traditional" destination leagues within the global football economy.

The phenomenon of player migration is certainly not foreign to Peruvian football. The influx of foreign players into Peruvian clubs is primarily attributed to a lack of sporting infrastructure that would allow young players to develop (Valencia, 2025). Consequently, roster spots remain that must be filled by foreign players. However, to date, there is no research addressing the contribution of foreign players to club performance, both on and off the pitch, within the context of non-traditional football leagues, nor is there evidence regarding the efficiency of club investments in these players. Therefore, using the case of the Peruvian Liga 1, this article aims to explore and answer the research question: "What is the contribution of foreign players to on- and off-field performance for clubs in the context of non-traditional football leagues?"

Furthermore, the migration of footballers warrants detailed study within the Peruvian context for two key reasons. First, Peruvian clubs have long faced financial difficulties, high leverage, and low profits and liquidity (Belapatino, 2025; Valencia, 2025). According to the Peruvian Football Federation secretary, television rights account for 70% of total revenue for 11 of the 16 Peruvian clubs, while ticketing revenue represents less than 20% of the total for some clubs (Ec, 2018). Additionally, it has been determined that TV rights make up 51% of revenue in Liga 1, compared to just 17% in Colombia and 35% in Chile (Ubillús, 2023).

These figures suggest potential mismanagement by Peruvian clubs, stemming from a lack of revenue diversification.

The second reason is that despite this reality, more than 90% of Ligue 1 teams (a total of 19 teams in 2025) have reached their foreign player quotas, six players (Liga 1 2025 Foreigners, 2025). The inclusion of foreign players is expected to contribute to raising the league's standard, improving clubs' performance in international tournaments, and improving the performance of Peruvian players. However, the on-field international performance of Peru's men's football teams has been rather disappointing, with no success in continental cups.

In this regard, despite the growing prevalence of this phenomenon, the majority of empirical research on footballer migration focuses on developed countries with traditional football leagues (Giulianotti & Robertson, 2009; Magee & Sugden, 2002), whereas countries with non-traditional leagues have received limited research attention. In the absence of analyses specific to countries with non-traditional leagues, foreign players are often treated simply as a common resource within the team. However, such an assumption could lead to inappropriate strategies, whether on the pitch or off it. Therefore, the management of foreign players (as resources) in non-traditional leagues must be grounded in empirical evidence that reflects the specific context in which they operate.

Therefore, critical questions remain unanswered: How do clubs in non-traditional leagues leverage foreign talent to generate on-field competitive advantages? What commercial and marketing strategies do they employ to extract off-field benefits from international player recruitment? How do regulatory frameworks and institutional practices shape the integration of foreign players in these contexts?

In this context, the present study analysed foreign players as a form of human capital capable of providing Peruvian football clubs with a competitive advantage (CA) in terms of performance on and/or off the field. To capture this effect, the study employed the Resource-Based View (RBV) theoretical framework proposed by Barney (1991). The RBV is a strategic management approach that explains how internal resources, when managed efficiently can generate a CA over others, particularly when competitors lack such resources (Chahal et al., 2020). Furthermore, the RBV posits that resources can generate a sustainable CA when they meet the VRIN criteria: valuable, rare, imperfectly imitable, and non-substitutable (Barney, 1991; Chahal et al., 2020).

Therefore, this study addresses the gap in the literature by examining the management strategies employed by clubs in a non-traditional Latin American league, namely the Peruvian Liga 1, to maximise both sporting and commercial returns from foreign player migration. By analysing on- and off-field impacts of foreign players in a non-traditional league, this research contributes to broader debates about the globalisation of football labour markets (Poli, 2010; Elliott & Maguire, 2008) and the diversification of migration patterns beyond traditional European destinations.

Literature Review

Peruvian Football

The national team of Peru has been struggling to get positive international results. After a 36-year gap (last appearance was in Spain in 1982), Peru returned to a FIFA Men's World Cup finals in 2018. Since then, the country has not qualified to the finals. Even in the continent, Peru has not performed well in men's football. It has not won a "Copa América" since 1975 (Acuña, 2025; ESPN.com, 2024). At club level, Peru has also performed poorly in continental cups, such as "Copa Libertadores" and "Copa Sudamericana". In the last 10

years, only one Peruvian team has passed the group stage of the Copa Libertadores (the South American equivalent of the European Champions League). At player level, the number of players transferred to elite European football leagues is very small. No Peruvian player has played in the one of the world's top five football leagues – English, Spanish, German, Italian, and French leagues (Acuña, 2025; Grimaldi, 2025; Casimiro, 2025).

However, the focus of this study goes beyond the competitive achievements of Peruvian football teams. It aims to investigate the strategic use of foreign players by Peruvian professional clubs in the top football league in the country, known as "Liga 1". This league is composed of 18 teams (in 2025, due to administrative issues, it was composed of 19 teams), with a promotion and relegation system managed by the Peruvian Football Federation. The football season runs from February to November, with a championship divided into "Apertura" and "Clausura", two separate championship tournaments that divide the season, each with its own champion. The best team of the first half of the year (Apertura) and the best in the second half of the year (Clausura) advance to the playoffs along with the two other best teams in the table, to define the national champion of the year (Lozano, 2025).

Currently, Liga 1 allows teams to register up to six foreign players and field all of them in the starting line-up, with the possibility of replacing one of those players by another foreigner in the middle of the season (Lozano, 2025). Furthermore, over the years, the number of foreign players allowed has varied, which has not allowed teams to plan and implement medium and long-term strategies. For the 2025 season, more than 90% of teams have fully covered their quota of foreign players, which means that teams are trying to maximise the use of foreign players in their squad (Liga 1 2025 Foreigners, 2025). The inclusion of these players has been expected to contribute to improving the league's football performance, improving the clubs' performance at an international level and increasing the performance of Peruvian players when playing for the national team (Royuela & Gásquez, 2019). However, so far, very little has been investigated about the impact of such players on any of these performance indicators.

From an economic perspective, the main source of income for Peruvian teams is television rights, especially for smaller clubs (for whom it represents 70% of their income) and those that struggle to avoid the bottom spots in the table each year (Belapatino, 2025; Ec, 2018). For bigger, powerful clubs, such as Alianza Lima and Universitario (which concentrate the largest number of national titles and fans, and better infrastructure), generate approximately \$2 million annually in kit sponsorship and have around 6 million followers each. However, compared to regional teams like Argentina's Boca Juniors, this figure represents only 20% of what the latter might receive. Furthermore, in terms of social media presence, Peruvian teams have a following roughly half the size of a Colombian club like Atlético Nacional (11 million) (Poli et al., 2025; Inga, 2023).

Based on the foregoing, it can be argued that Peruvian football operates in a context where a lack of on-field success, combined with off-field sporting strategies, keeps the league trailing behind others in the region. Although more than 90% of clubs utilise their full quota of foreign players (Liga 1 2025 Foreigners, 2025), it is worth debating whether the inclusion of foreign players actually improves club performance, either on or off the pitch.

Resource Based View (RBV)

Barney's (1991) resource-based view (RBV) argues that an organisation's sustained CA stems from possessing and effectively deploying unique resources. These internal resources, such as capabilities, knowledge, or human resources enable organisations to create strategies that competitors cannot easily replicate. CA is a key factor in understanding the RBV (Ansoff, 1965; Andrews & David, 1987; Porter, 1985; Barney, 1991). Wernerfelt

(1984) was one of the first ones to propose that organisational effectiveness should be analysed based on resources rather than products or organisations. Barney (1991) proposed the RBV based on the idea that organisations are heterogeneous in terms of the strategic resources they manage and that these resources cannot be perfectly copied among them. Therefore, different resources may represent a source of sustained CA over time. The RBV model focuses on internal resources of organisations, proposing the resources are key indicators to obtain better performance. Based on this, Barney (1991) highlights that for resources to CA, they should be valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable resources (VRIN). In the context of the Peruvian Liga 1, a resource is considered valuable when it enables an organisation to implement strategies that enhance its effectiveness by capitalising on opportunities and mitigating market threats. For instance, if Peruvian clubs possess an international scouting team, they can identify superior talent and reduce the uncertainty associated with player recruitment. However, a valuable resource does not generate a CA if it is shared by all companies in the market; therefore, to create such an advantage, the resource must be rare. An example of a rare resource would be strikers arriving in Peruvian football who have previously been top scorers in higher-level leagues, such as Hernán Barcos at Alianza Lima. Furthermore, organisational resources must not be easily replicated by others; that is, they must be imperfectly imitable by market competitors. For example, clubs like Alianza and Universitario maintain relationships with regional teams, forged over years through history and tradition, that allow them to sign institutional agreements, share player information, and exchange talent. Finally, an organisation's resource must be non-substitutable, meaning there are no alternative resources or capabilities capable of performing the same function or delivering the same strategic benefit as the resource in question. For instance, a country's football culture is a non-substitutable resource that teams can leverage to achieve better results. Peru is characterised by a style of "short, beautiful passing," Brazil by the "Jogo Bonito" style (Rosa, 2010), and Uruguay by "Garra Charrúa" (Kolsrud, 2018). In other words, even if competitors cannot imitate the resource directly, they also cannot replace it with a different but equivalent one to achieve the same outcome (Lippman & Rumelt, 1982; Barney, 1991)

Likewise, the RBV theoretical background has become very popular in academic investigation not only in sport, but also in different industries such as finance, marketing, and banking (Clulow et al., 2003; Newbert, 2008; Smart et al., 2000; Costa et al., 2018; Fahy, 2000; Saa-Perez & Garcia-Falcon, 2002). In the sport industry, Smart et al. (2000) used the framework to analyse the sources of sustained CA of an intercollegiate athletic program in the United States. Through exploratory research, they found that relationships, trust and organisational culture are crucial resources as they create a sustained CA. They pointed out that human resources, such as the programme staff, are fundamental to produce such resources.

In football, Alkandi (2021) used the RBV framework to identify the main sources of sustained CA of Al-Hilal Football Club, from the Saudi Arabia league. The author found that managerial effectiveness, size of the fan base, trust, reputation, communication and cultural capabilities are the important sources of CA. In another example, Omondi-Ochieng (2019) used the RBV framework in the evaluation of football staff and its relationship with the qualification of national teams to the African Cup of Nations. They found that the national teams that have a greater number of professional football players (considering that some have amateurs) have a greater probability of qualifying for the tournament. Costa et al. (2018) determined that brand management and communication resources play an influential role in how football teams perceive their CA based on the RBV theory. Studies in football have shown that there is a variety of resources that can create both on- and off-field CA for teams.

In a football context, players are considered "human capital resources" (Becker, 1964). However, they are unstable resources exposed to variables that can affect their value as players, such as injuries, physical condition, cultural adaptation, or age. Furthermore, football players are highly mobile assets with most holding temporary contracts and frequently changing clubs. Yet, while the Resource-Based View (RBV) assumes that firms can retain and control resources (Barney, 1991), the volatile and unstable nature of the football industry makes it unlikely for clubs to sign players for long periods (Dietl et al., 2008). Another key figure in player recruitment is the football agent; agents represent players, influence transfers and salaries, and play an active role in negotiations with clubs (Demazière & Jouvenet, 2013). Consequently, it is crucial to recognise that, as an organisational resource, football players are unstable, difficult to control resources, modifying a little the RBV's assumption of resource stability. This suggests that, in the football labour market, CA stems from a club's dynamic capabilities rather than from static resources.

Foreign Football Players as Source of Competitive Advantage

Mobility of players has been analysed in the literature from different angles. A group of scholars have discussed whether a country's success in international competitions is somehow linked to the mobility of its football players. For instance, Baur and Lehmann (2007) investigated the national football teams that had qualified for the 2006 Germany FIFA World Cup and found that a country's success (i.e., on-field performance, winnings) did depend on national players playing abroad. However, they also found that the number of international players playing in local leagues had a positive impact on the results of the teams in that World Cup. Using a more robust, econometric methodology, Berlinschi et al. (2013) measured national team performance by using the FIFA world rankings and qualification for major tournaments, from 1994 to 2010. They found that the emigration of football talent ("brain drain") and the immigration of talent ("brain gain") can positively impact a country's football performance, but through different channels. Losing native-born players to foreign leagues improves national team performance. Naturalising foreign-born players also improves performance, directly by adding skilled players to the national team pool. Applying a similar methodology (FIFA ranking in 2010-2012), Allan and Moffat (2014) also found that having players playing in international, stronger leagues improves the performance of the national team. However, Allan and Moffat also found that having overseas managers (i.e., coaches) in a national league has a negative impact on nations' international performance; suggesting that national football teams are likely to be successful when they have domestic coaches.

Moving from national teams to clubs, we found some important studies about the impact of foreign players on different leagues and in different regions. Frick (2009) analysed how the 1995 Bosman Ruling, which freed player labour markets in European football, impacted player migration. Frick's main finding is that the ruling dramatically increased international mobility, particularly of medium-talented players from European Economic Area (EEA) nations. While top stars have always had space in major leagues, the removal of quotas allowed a new, broader wave of migration. Consequently, the composition of teams in major leagues in Europe shifted from a dominance of native players to a majority of foreign-born EEA players. This intensified competition for roster spots negatively affected the salaries and career opportunities of average domestic players (Frick, 2009). Ultimately, the Bosman Ruling is shown to be a pivotal force in creating the modern, globalised football labour market.

Analysing a not-so-strong league in Europe, Travlos et al. (2017) examined the performance of Greek football teams and indicated that there is a positive relationship between the investment that teams make in foreign players and their positions in the domestic and international championship, that is, it has allowed Greek clubs to improve their on-field performance. However, this sporting benefit comes at a significant financial cost. The research finds a strong negative relationship between the number of foreign players and the club's financial profitability. This suggests that the investment in foreign talent erodes financial performance, likely due to higher wage bills and transfer fees without a proportional increase in revenue. The study concludes that Greek clubs face a clear trade-off, using foreign players to achieve sporting objectives at the expense of financial stability, highlighting a potential conflict between athletic ambitions and sustainable business management. This is one of the few studies that take into consideration on- and off-field performance, like the one we propose to examine in our research.

Royuela and Gásquez (2019) compared a cross section of about 1,000 football clubs across many leagues around the world. They found that clubs in more international leagues (with more foreign players) usually are better ranked, in international rankings. However, within each league, having more foreign players has minimal or no effect at all. Findings indicate that the impact of foreign players is positive only when clubs have big budgets, allowing them to attract elite international talent rather than just mediocre imports. They concluded that a club's financial power is the primary driver of success; foreign players amplify this advantage but do not create it independently. Simply signing international players without the financial capacity to compete for the best ones does not, by itself, lead to improved performance. This is also an important finding for our context, because in the Peruvian Liga 1, there is a big discrepancy between top teams (the ones with larger budgets) and all others.

Analysing the today top football league in the world, the English Premier League (EPL), Bush et al. (2015) report that there are no significant differences in the performance of domestic (UK born) and foreign (non-UK born) players. Performance was measured in physical (e.g., total distance covered by players) and technical skills (e.g., success rates for passing). This contrasts with another study conducted in the Chinese Super League (CSL), where Gai et al. (2019) finds a considerable difference in match performance between domestic (Chinese) and foreign (non-Chinese) players, demonstrating a dependence of Chinese teams on having higher quality foreign players to boost their football success. Both studies were taken into consideration because the first demonstrates the impact of foreigners on the world elite football (England), while the second study has many similar characteristics to Peruvian football, as both are developing football industries.

Modern football has compelled clubs to evolve into complex business enterprises (Morrow & Howieson, 2014), engaging in commercial activities that enable them to offer spectacles and entertainment while generating financial profit (Relvas et al., 2010). Krabbenbos (2013) argues that long-term economic development within the football industry, driven by marketing strategies leads to organisational excellence. Similarly, Frick and Wallbrecht (2012) note that if financial resources relied solely on winning titles or qualifying for international tournaments, many smaller teams would cease to exist. Consequently, commercial revenue streams can today provide a CA.

In this commercial context, the presence of foreign players can drive revenue through channels such as ticket sales, broadcasting rights, merchandising, and sponsorships. Studies conducted by UEFA, Deloitte, and the Premier League show that 95% of revenue for elite European football clubs comes from broadcasting rights, commercial activities, and match-day income (Finlay, 2026).

Sponsorships are valuable within the football ecosystem because they represent a sustainable revenue source, providing clubs with operational stability (Reilly et al., 2018; Athanasopoulou & Sarli, 2015). However, long-term sponsorship contracts are rare (Bailey, 2012). To secure such contracts, clubs must operate as formal organizations that adhere to rules, norms, and processes in line with rationalised institutional standards (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). For instance, in the context of non-traditional football leagues, such as in Costa Rica, public banks require football clubs to meet all government and football federation mandates. This encourages clubs to become formal organisations that are attractive to investors (sponsors) (Navarro-Picado, 2019). In Peru, Alianza Lima, Universitario, and Sporting Cristal account for 70% of national titles and 90% of the fan base (Poli et al., 2025; La Rosa, 2023). Discrepancies between the size of the fan base and actual stadium attendance are significant factors when signing commercial contracts (Borrisser & Solanellas, 2018; Cuoghi, 2017). Furthermore, possessing legitimacy among industry participants including regulatory bodies and the general public, means that long-term survival depends on that legitimacy (Danisman et al., 2006). Consequently, if clubs leverage their resources to build and strengthen their internal organisational structures, they can generate legitimacy; this, in turn, can become a resource that is valuable, rare, and difficult for competitors to imitate.

To the best of our knowledge, there is a gap in the literature regarding studies focusing on off-field impact of foreign players on non-traditional leagues. General marketing literature, not specifically about the impact of international players, has shown that players can influence an emotional connection between fans and sporting teams (Carlson & Donovan, 2013; Kerr & Gladden, 2008), therefore, creating a rationale to support that signing charismatic and effective international players might improve this connection. Giulianotti and Robertson (2009) have specifically mentioned the power of football to develop personal brands of players, which in theory could bring some commercial benefits for the organisations (clubs) they represent. However, despite some assumptions that make sense, nothing has been investigated on how international player can create off-field benefits for the clubs they represent. We argue that assuming that the benefits are the same from either national or international players overlooks the idiosyncratic nature of the relationship between clubs and international players.

The media portraits anecdotal examples of how foreign football stars can boost commercial revenues for clubs. For example, in 2003, Real Madrid signing Zidane, Ronaldo, Figo, and Beckham created a lot of discussion on how much revenue this could generate to the club, from gate revenues to increases in sponsorship contracts and merchandising selling (Kelso & Gremler, 2003). The commercial benefits did happen, but no systematic investigation was conducted to verify how much of those were related to international players and how much net profits stay for the club (after huge expenses with all those players). In another anecdotal story of commercial success, Paris Saint Germain signed the Brazilian player Neymar in 2017 (Faedo & Corrius, 2024). In a simplistic analysis, on the day of his presentation, without having played a single match, he had already generated more money in terms of merchandising than his new club had invested in him, and he had an impact on securing new sponsorships for the club, such as signing a multi-million-dollar contract with Fly Emirates (Faedo & Corrius, 2024). Once more, no systematic analysis was conducted to explore other impacts of signing an international star player.

While international star players might attract millions to their clubs and the impact of international players win a non-star status is still a topic to be explored. In not-so rich countries, hiring of foreign players is still seeing as a source of CA on the field only. For example, Poli et al. (2016) mention that in Latin America, foreign players have been recruited primarily with on-field results expectation, indicating that there is little preparation in the clubs to explore possibilities of how such players could create off-field CA.

In short, existing literature acknowledges that football players can generate off-field value for clubs through branding, fan engagement, and commercial activities (Carlson & Donovan, 2013; Kerr & Gladden, 2008). In particular, current research highlights the commercial impact of global star players, especially in top European leagues (England, Germany, Spain, Italy, and France) who have contributed to sponsorship, merchandising, and global brand expansion (Kelso & Gremler, 2003; Faedo & Corrius, 2024; Giulianotti & Robertson, 2009). However, this literature is skewed toward exceptional cases involving superstars in leagues with significant financial power. Consequently, there is limited understanding of whether and how non-star foreign players can contribute to the commercial performance of clubs operating in resource-constrained environments. This gap is particularly relevant in developing football markets, such as Peru, where clubs face financial limitations and may need to turn to alternative strategies to gain a CA.

Method

Participants

As part of this qualitative research, the goal was to obtain the different perspectives of football managers/directors regarding the impact of foreign players on Peruvian football teams. To identify potential participants, we mapped all teams in Liga 1 and their sport managers. We understand managers as those responsible for the administration of the club, not as coaches, who are responsible for on-field management of the clubs. We contacted those managers using the first author's personal network or public contacts in websites and LinkedIn. After the first five interviews, we applied a snowball sampling technique to expand the number of participants. Snowball sampling is a technique that facilitates access to small populations requiring a certain level of trust for participants to voluntarily join the study (Parker et al., 2019). Given that professional football is a hard-to-access sector, the authors needed to identify key individuals who could provide entry into that circle. The referral-based nature of the recruitment allowed the first author to secure interviews without facing significant scrutiny, while the informal tone of the conversations facilitated access to key information. However, it is important to acknowledge that, as a convenience sampling method, it may be subject to selection bias linked to the authors' professional network, potentially limiting generalisability and representativeness. Nevertheless, to mitigate this bias, the study included participants with experience across clubs of varying characteristics and conditions.

We interviewed a sample of 12 football managers, composed of sporting directors, commercial managers, scouts, and football coaches with at least five years of experience working for professional teams in Peruvian Liga 1. To decide when to stop requesting for new contacts, for new interviews, we applied the principle of data saturation and variability (Guest et al., 2006).

Interviews were conducted with five individuals with experience in the commercial sector, two sporting directors, a first-team football coach, and four technical secretaries. The interviewees represented the three tiers characterising Peruvian football: individuals with experience in financially powerful clubs aiming to contend for the national title and qualify for the Copa Libertadores; individuals from mid-table clubs aiming to qualify for an international tournament and/or avoid relegation; and, finally, individuals who worked for clubs whose primary objective is avoiding relegation and whose main characteristic is a weak organisational structure. The clubs included in this study comprise teams from the provinces and the capital (Lima).

The participants were all males, illustrating the lack of gender diversity among Peruvian football managers. We have not found females in position of leadership among those clubs that responded to our invitation to participate in the study.

Procedures

In the present study, a qualitative descriptive methodology was applied, with semi-structured interviews as the primary source of data collection. This methodology offered flexibility to analyse the data obtained in depth, allowing for taking into consideration the context and objectives of the research. The semi-structured interviews were guided by a set of pre-established questions, which had a flexible format and allowed for modification during the interviews to gather detailed information and understand participants' perceptions and perspectives (O'Donnell et al., 2022), through an informal conversation between the researcher and the interviewee. The questions included in these semi-structured interviews included introductory icebreakers, transition questions, and open-ended questions where participants could add important information and insights. The interviews were conducted online using Microsoft Teams, at times suggested by the participants. Interviews lasted 45 minutes on average, ranging from 38 to 52 minutes. We used Teams' automatic transcriptions, which were thoroughly reviewed by the author to generate the final transcript of each interview. Notes were also taken during the interviews to highlight key points from the responses. To keep the anonymity of respondents, managers were letters (e.g., manager A, manager B, etc.), we dropped any piece of information that might help to identify the respondent and did not use any club name (Gibson & Brown, 2009).

Data Analysis

Each of the 12 interviews was analysed using reflective thematic analysis (TA) following the six stages: familiarisation, code generation, theme identification and review, definition, and labelling of themes, as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2019). Given the study's theoretical orientation, the analysis was primarily deductive, guided by the RBV theoretical framework (Barney, 1991), which served as the basis for the initial coding structure. While remaining open to inductive insights emerging from the data, it allowed for the explanation of themes not fully captured by RBV alone. It is important to note that, while reflective TA is usually used in inductive, data-driven approaches, Braun and Clarke (2019) highlight its theoretical flexibility, which allows for both inductive and deductive applications.

In the first phase, the transcripts, along with the notes taken, were read multiple times to achieve familiarisation. Second, the coding was conducted deductively, guided by the RBV framework, with particular attention to how participants described foreign players in terms of VRIN. Simultaneously, the analysis remained open to uncover new patterns emerging from the data that were not explained by the RBV framework. This allowed for the identification of additional codes that emerged directly from the participants' narratives. Third, the codes were grouped into broad categories, which were iteratively organised into potential themes. In developing the themes, both RBV-based and inductively generated codes were considered. Fourth, these identified themes were reviewed and compared with the data obtained and the RBV framework, enabling a theoretically grounded understanding of how foreign players do or do not contribute to the CA of Peruvian clubs. Finally, in the fifth and sixth steps, the themes were defined and labelled based on the conceptual relevance of the RBV framework and the research objectives. In this final phase, we ensured that the themes obtained reflected not only the perceived value of foreign players, but also the strategic and structural limitations that restrict their use.

To improve analytical rigor, the transcripts were iteratively reviewed to guarantee consistency in coding and interpretation. Furthermore, the themes obtained were compared across participants to identify convergences and divergences in their perspectives. This allowed us to conclude that the findings are based on the data obtained and theoretically grounded in the RBV framework.

Five themes were identified and compared with the selected theoretical framework to explore new findings and generate new knowledge. Specifically, we sought to identify contradictory and corroborating findings regarding the impact of foreign players on Peruvian teams and existing literature.

Results and Discussion

The analysis of the data obtained from the interviews highlighted attributes, characteristics, and factors that differentiate foreign players from domestic players, as well as the purpose and impact of foreign players on each team based on their suitability and seasonal objectives. Various ideas and concepts were coded, and themes were identified as key resources and their relationship to CA. The collected data was categorised into codes, yielding five key themes: physical characteristics of international players, leadership and mental strength of international players, cultural barriers, competitive salaries, and commercial blindness. The first three themes identified are related to players' on-field performance, and the remaining two, to their off-field performance. Each of the identified themes is presented below, along with a discussion based on the literature described above.

While the results are presented by distinguishing between impacts on and off the field of play, it is important to acknowledge that this distinction is not always clear-cut. Various issues, particularly those related to cultural adaptation, demonstrate that factors external to the field can directly influence athletic performance. Therefore, the classification adopted here is analytical rather than absolute, aiming to structure the findings while recognising the interconnectedness of these dimensions.

Physical Characteristics of Players

Peruvian players are characterised by their technical skills in short passing and dribbling, especially in tight spaces. This is furthered by their physical characteristics, which include a short average height, a slim build (Caso-Mauricio et al., 2025), and a mix of diverse races (Oriental, African, and European). As confirmed by manager I, “Most Peruvian players are short and thin”. Likewise, the interviewed managers talked about how they look for players with different physical characteristics when they go to the international market to hire. For example, manager K mentioned: “Players from countries such as Ecuador and Colombia have high top speed... whose power and speed can outperform their opponents, especially in wide positions. Similarly, players from Argentina and Uruguay were described as physically competitive and accustomed to high-intensity play”.

These perceptions suggest that foreign players are valued for their ability to enhance the physical performance of teams and, in some cases, elevate the overall standard of domestic players. Considering the geographic proximity and the foreign player market in Peru, it is common to find players from South and Central America in Liga 1. Some managers focus on phenotypic characteristics of players to call attention to specific physical characteristics of players from those regions. Manager J highlights the following: “In Peru, it is harder to find Black players these days, they tend to have fast fibres, which contribute to their speed. The opposite is true in Ecuador and Colombia”.

In line with existing literature, physical capacity is considered a fundamental requirement in modern football, where players are expected to contribute both offensively and defensively regardless of position (Bradley et al., 2014; Clemente et al., 2019). In this sense, Peruvian football managers have common characteristics expected from all players, and physical characteristics (strength, speed, or somatotype) the easiest ones to be spotted.

However, while managers emphasised the importance of physical traits, the findings also reveal limitations in how these attributes are conceptualised within a strategic framework. Recruitment decisions were often described as unsystematic, relying on limited scouting tools or informal networks. For example, manager E mentions: “Sport managers often make signing decisions based solely on hour-long videos of the player”. In support of this premise and highlighting the reality of small Peruvian football clubs, which represent more than 70% of professional clubs, manager L mentions: “The owners of clubs in Peruvian football, see their club as a recreational activity and hiring criteria are based on the demands of the coach and the recommendations of player agents”.

From a RBV perspective, although physical characteristics are clearly valuable, they do not constitute a sustained source of CA, given that players with similar physical characteristics are not rare in the football market (Alkandi, 2021). Particularly given the high presence of foreign players with similar profiles across Liga 1. However, identifying which unique player characteristics that represent a CA for football teams are likely to help managers to look for rarer resources in the market. Because most teams in the league have international players who are faster and stronger than the local ones, this does not represent a CA anymore. While physical characteristics of players will always be important for elite sport performance, they are insufficient on their own to generate long-term CA (Barney, 1991). We suggest that a more thorough analysis of what makes the resources, international players, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable is necessary. This is unlikely to be dependable on physical characteristics of the players only.

Leadership and Mental Strength of International Players

Managers also mentioned that foreign players who come to Peruvian football possess certain psychological traits that differ from local players. In this regard, manager J mentions:

Leadership and adaptability are qualities that make a foreigner stand out in Peruvian clubs. This is especially evident on the field and in the locker room, where these players are typically the ones who take the initiative to lead the group, convey the coach's ideas, and guide the younger members of the group.

Affirming what the previous manager mentioned, manager K adds: “The culture of overexertion and competitiveness in other countries like Argentina and Uruguay encourages foreign players to bring these qualities to Peru and take the lead of the team”. Therefore, managers note that when foreign players come to Peruvian football, they already have an established character that allows them to manage groups and adapt to the different difficulties involved in playing in the country, such as the weather, altitude, long-distance travel, and poor pitches. Managers also perceive that many Argentinian and Uruguayan players are influenced by a Western European culture, characterised by shared leadership, which leads players to disagree on hierarchical power roles (which are common in Peru) and assume some leadership roles (even informally) in the team (Hofstede, 1980).

The same manager K says that the differences are not physical or technical:

Argentinian players instil confidence in other players on the team, and even though they often do not have better technical quality than the Peruvian players, they have a winning mentality that allows them to believe that they are better players than the others, to leverage their strengths and hide their weaknesses.

Peruvian football managers seem quite aware of the mental strength and leadership skills that foreign players (especially those from Argentina and Uruguay) possess. They noted that CA can be gained by the atmosphere in the locker room, depending on who takes on the leadership role and who can convey the coach's ideas during the match (Maderer et al., 2014). Managers acknowledged foreign players for assuming leadership roles that can empower other players. Such qualities have represented a valuable and rare resource, becoming a source of CA, given the lack of players with these characteristics in the domestic market.

Cultural Barriers

Although classified within the on-field dimension, cultural barriers extend beyond purely sporting considerations and highlight the interconnected nature of on- and off-field factors. In that sense, managers consistently identified cultural adaptation as a critical factor influencing the success of foreign players. These included language barriers, lifestyle differences, and family context. While these factors are usually analysed in relation to player integration, the results suggest they play a key role in determining whether or not the foreign player's potential value is realised.

Considering the proximity and number of players in Brazilian football, the author wondered why Peruvian teams do not focus on searching and signing players from this market. In the 2025/26 season, there are only three Brazilian players in Liga 1, according to Transfermarkt (Liga 1 2025 Foreigners, 2025). Manager J mentioned: "First, due to tradition, as the same thing has been done for the last 20 years in Peruvian football, and second, because Argentinian and Uruguayan players have a greater capacity for cultural adaptation compared to the rest of South American". Likewise, manager K stated: "Brazilian players feel comfortable playing in their country because they share the same culture and language". In Peru, the language spoken is Spanish, a language shared with most South American countries, which makes player adaptations easier and faster. However, in Brazil, the language spoken is Portuguese, which creates a communication gap between the two countries. If a foreign player does not speak the local language, a new hindrance exists in the adaptation process that any player needs to go through when moving to a foreign league (Da Rosa, 2025). Therefore, their adaptation process can take longer than normal and generate high costs for the team (Zhu, 2022), which directly influences their performance on the field.

Peruvian football managers should recognise that a player's skills in their local league must be extrapolated to the conditions and limitations offered by the host league. In this case, they indicated that language has been a factor they consider when signing a player. Managers understand that if a player is not provided with necessary tools that facilitate adaptation, they may not reach their full potential and end up being an invaluable asset to the team (Brandes et al., 2009). For example, manager F said:

Foreign players are given the opportunity to live in Lima, the capital of Peru, a cosmopolitan city at sea level, which facilitates their adaptation. They are placed in areas where safety, transportation, and a good quality of life for their families are guaranteed. A clear example of this was when one of our players was about to be signed by another team. The salary between the new team and the player had been agreed, as well as the transfer fee. However, due to a family matter involving his wife,

he decided to stay in the club, as his family had already settled into a family-like environment provided by our club, which ultimately influenced his decision.

Importantly, cultural adaptation cannot be understood as an inherent attribute of the player alone, but rather as a process shaped by both individual and organisational factors. Clubs that provide support structures, such as assistance with housing, language, or family relocation, are better positioned to facilitate successful integration. However, the findings indicate that such support is often limited or informal within the Peruvian context, leaving adaptation largely dependent on the player's personal resilience and prior international experience.

From a RBV perspective, cultural adaptation functions as a contingent mechanism that enables or constrains the realisation of resource value. While foreign players may possess valuable and potentially distinctive attributes, their ability to generate CA is highly dependent on contextual conditions that are not fully controlled by the club. This challenges the assumption of resource stability within RBV, suggesting that value is not inherent but realised through interaction between the resource and its environment. As such, cultural adaptation represents a critical, yet often under-managed, dimension of how clubs convert player potential into sustained performance outcomes.

The first three themes demonstrate that Peruvian football managers are able to identify physical, technical, psychological, or cultural characteristics of foreign players that can create CA for their teams. Football managers framed their answer based on the current economic scenario of the league. That is, they are totally aware that they cannot hire whoever they want. Therefore, hiring players who have the characteristics the team needs is operationalised according to the budget (Grass et al., 2002). In the search for valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable resources (Barney, 1991), Peruvian managers have focused on players' skills, but they have shown a broader understanding of skills, considering not only physical and technical skills, but also mental and cultural skills.

Commercial Blindness

Moving from on-field to off-field impacts foreign players have had on Peruvian Liga 1, the managers had much less to say. Despite the fact that in modern football, the commercial impact of players is of utmost importance for clubs (Kelso & Gremler, 2003), Peruvian managers seem to still adopt a short-sighted view of the internationalisation of their rosters. In Peru, the commercial aspect is a niche that is largely unexplored and underutilised by clubs, as evidenced in the comments of different managers. For instance, manager C says, "Most provincial clubs, which represent 70-80% of professional clubs, do not have commercial areas, so if they do not have a vision to create such an area, imagine if they had the idea of signing a player with commercial interests". Manager D complements by saying that, "When signing a foreign player, the fundamental factor in evaluation is [on-field] performance and the commercial issue is not taken into consideration".

Other managers shared similar opinions, indicating that in Peruvian football, the commercial structure of teams is still developing, and commercial potential is not taken into consideration when signing a foreign player. The findings demonstrate a situation in which the Peruvian football teams have not yet fully explored this sector as an alternative source of income. Despite the lack of attention to off-field impacts when recruiting and hiring foreign players, many managers agreed that the commercial aspect is a niche to be developed in Peruvian football. A clear example of this is what Manager B mentioned in his professional experience in Peruvian football: "In 2013, when the most popular clubs in Peruvian football were beginning to launch licensed products, Alianza Lima and Universitario had marketing

teams consisting of only one person. Today, these clubs have marketing teams of at least 10 people”.

There is a clear intention in the managers’ answers to explore further the commercial potential of foreign players. However, it seems fundamental that clubs develop a commercial plan that goes hand in hand with the signings they make. As Bullough et al. (2016) mention, football is a commercial product that attracts millions of people around the world, and this should be leveraged as a source of CA for Peruvian teams. Peruvian football teams still have a long journey to start exploring the commercial potential of the league and the impact that foreign players can have on this. Some managers briefly mentioned that this is a source of additional economic income that Peruvian teams can leverage, based on the personal brand and emotional connection that the foreign players can generate with local fans and supporters (Carlson & Donovan, 2013).

Teams like Real Madrid or Paris Saint-Germain in Europe, Flamengo in South America, or Al-Hilal in Asia, have in common a strong brand image and high revenues from player images (Alkandi, 2021; Carvalho et al., 2025; Faedo & Corrius, 2024; Marín & Cámara, 2014). Much of their strong brand image is associated with the image of foreign footballers they have in their rosters. They have used foreign players as a strategy to attract more fans and reach new markets. Therefore, foreign players have become rare and hard to substitute resources in those teams. They managed to use such resources to increase their fan base worldwide. Additionally, as mentioned by Grass et al. (2002), the size of the fan base can become a rare and very difficult resource to imitate because it involves years of success in connecting with (old and new) fans. Based on the results of the current investigation, this is still a venue to be explored in Peruvian football. We are totally aware that the financial power of the Peruvian teams is not the same as those in Europe and even in Brazil. However, even considering budget limitations, as Peruvian teams are hiring international players, they have room to explore the commercial impacts of such hires. Those teams that do this first will create a CA over other teams.

To further support the notion of “commercial blindness”, available industry data highlights structural weaknesses in the commercial development of Peruvian football. For many clubs, up to 70% of total income is derived from television rights, while matchday revenues account for less than 20%, indicating a limited capacity to monetise fan engagement (Ec, 2018). Additionally, commercial activity appears highly concentrated, with leading clubs such as Universitario and Alianza Lima accounting for the majority of social media engagement and securing up to 14 sponsorship deals, including agreements of 10 million dollars each with betting houses (Inga, 2025). In contrast, most Liga 1 clubs operate at significantly lower commercial levels, suggesting that the ability to generate and capture off-field value remains uneven across the league. A clear example of this is the disparity in the value of a front-of-shirt sponsorship, which can range from \$250,000 to \$1.2 million annually (Martinez, 2025). These patterns reinforce the qualitative findings, indicating that while commercial opportunities linked to foreign players exist, they are not systematically identified or exploited by the majority of clubs.

Competitive Salaries

Despite their commercial blindness, the managers reported that Liga 1 pays competitive salaries able to attract good foreign players, mainly from Argentina and Uruguay (Liga 1 2025 Foreigners, 2025). There seems to be an additional factor that justify the large number of players from these two countries in Liga 1: market saturation. Although they do have competitive leagues, the number of professional players is very high, creating an offer

of players that is higher than the demand. Therefore, the salaries tend to decrease. In that regard, Manager A explains that:

Peruvian teams typically seek immediate results with low budgets; therefore, sport managers look for players from the Argentinian second division or those who do not have much playing time with the first team. Because, ultimately, it is no secret that the level of Argentinian football is very high, but salaries are low. However, even though Peruvian teams' budgets are considered low by the national market, they are attractive to the Argentinian market.

Other managers also mentioned the same fact. For example, Manager H mentions:

The average salary of a Peruvian player is much higher than that of a Uruguayan player, excluding Peñarol and Nacional. Peruvian players earn significantly more than Paraguayan, Venezuelan, and Bolivian players, and also more than Colombian or Argentinian second-division players. So, analysing whether Peruvian players justify such high salaries compared to these other leagues, from my point of view, they do not. Because I am absolutely certain that the average Uruguayan player, who earns less, is much better and provides greater performance in the short, medium, and long term than the average Peruvian player, who can earn twice as much.

In this sense, it has been very attractive for Peruvian teams to sign players from these two countries with a very good price-quality ratio. However, these financial constraints also contribute to a high degree of homogeneity in the types of players recruited. Managers reported that many clubs target similar markets, particularly Argentina and Uruguay, due to the perceived balance between cost and performance. As a result, the pool of available players is relatively standardised, reducing the likelihood of acquiring truly distinctive or rare talent. This suggests that Peruvian clubs compete within an environment of limited resources where parity is reinforced rather than broken.

Managers were not able to elaborate on how skilled Argentinian and Uruguayan players are rare and hard to substitute (by other foreigners) resources in the market. The opposite happened, as they acknowledged that the teams in the league have economic power to attract good talents.

We have considered this an off-field impact that foreign players have on Peruvian Liga 1 because they have become an alternative source of income for the teams. Player sales have become an important source of revenue for Peruvian teams, as manager G explains:

Lately, Peruvian clubs have shifted their focus from short-term to long-term contracts. Sport Managers aim to sell foreign players to teams abroad, but also to the top teams in Peruvian football. However, the business model of investing in players and then selling them is still growing and requires the Peruvian league to become more attractive in order for this model to become established.

On the other hand, manager H mentioned that they have already implemented this business model at the club, with a clear success story:

The club's new approach to signing foreign players is based on two pillars: firstly, to improve the team's performance on the field, and secondly, to generate financial returns. This means acquiring players with low to mid-range salaries, whose addition will improve the team's performance and provide an expected financial return. A clear

example of this occurred with a Brazilian player who had been playing in Brazil's Serie B. We signed him for free and his performance was outstanding. This then allowed us to sell him to a major Brazilian club.

In a smaller scale, this emulates what European teams have done for years. For example, teams like Ajax, Benfica, and Porto are well known for recruiting, developing, and selling talents at high prices (Eraslan, 2024). In this sense, Peruvian football managers seem to be following a similar strategy to generate a positive transfer balance at the end of the season (Andreff, 2021). However, the interviews showed that this has happened based more on a market situation (saturation of neighbour market and a large number of football players looking for clubs to play) than a strategy developed by Peruvian managers. This is an interesting case of resources that have created economic value for Peruvian teams without being actually rare. We can argue that probably the process applied by the clubs to develop the foreign talents further is what makes them rare and difficult to imitate.

From a RBV perspective, these findings highlight a structural limitation in the ability of clubs to secure resources that are rare or inimitable. While foreign players may provide short-term value, their acquisition is largely shaped by market conditions rather than by the development of unique organisational capabilities. Consequently, CA is difficult to sustain, as rival clubs can access similar profiles under comparable financial constraints. Moreover, the reliance on short-term contracts and external intermediaries further limits clubs' ability to fully appropriate the value generated by these players. This reinforces the notion that, within the Peruvian context, recruitment strategies are primarily driven by economic necessity rather than by a systematic pursuit of strategically valuable resources.

Conclusions

This article aims to explore and answer the research question: "What is the contribution of foreign players to on- and off-field performance for clubs in the context of non-traditional football leagues?" Answering this question addresses a gap in the academic literature regarding foreign players and their impact on non-traditional football leagues. The study focuses on examining how Peruvian Liga 1 football managers have used foreign players as strategic resources to gain CA, applying the RBV framework (Barney, 1991). The results reveal that these players contribute to CA in complex yet uneven ways; that is, they assist teams, but not always in the same manner or with consistent success.

Peruvian teams have limited budget and resources. In this scenario, managers need creative strategies to create CA. The findings reveal a complex picture of both sophisticated understanding and significant blind spots in how managers approach the internationalisation of their rosters. Peruvian football managers demonstrate a nuanced appreciation of the multidimensional value that foreign players bring to their teams. They recognise that CA extends beyond physical attributes, such as speed, strength, and body type, to encompass psychological characteristics like leadership, mental resilience, and adaptability. Managers particularly value players from Argentina and Uruguay for their winning mentality and ability to assume informal leadership roles that empower domestic players. Additionally, they show awareness of cultural factors, specifically language barriers, that can hinder or facilitate player adaptation and performance. This broader conceptualisation of player skills represents a more holistic approach to talent evaluation than focusing solely on technical and physical capabilities.

However, several limitations emerged in how managers operationalise the RBV. First, while managers acknowledge the importance of physical characteristics as a valuable resource, they fail to recognise that such attributes are neither rare nor difficult to imitate in

the current market, where most teams employ foreign players with similar profiles. This suggests that physical advantages alone cannot sustain CA in Liga 1. Second, and perhaps most critically, managers exhibit what we term "commercial blindness" a near-complete disregard for the off-field commercial potential of foreign players. Despite evidence from elite clubs worldwide that foreign players can expand fan bases, strengthen brand image, and open new revenue streams, Peruvian managers focus almost exclusively on on-field performance. This represents a significant missed opportunity, particularly since commercial capabilities and fan connections are precisely the type of rare, difficult-to-imitate resources that the resource-based view identifies as sources of sustainable CA.

The study also reveals that Peruvian teams benefit from favourable market conditions, particularly the saturation of Argentinian and Uruguayan player markets, which allows them to attract quality talent at competitive salaries and subsequently develop and sell these players for profit. However, this advantage appears more opportunistic than strategic, arising from external market dynamics rather than deliberate organisational capabilities. The question remains whether Peruvian clubs have developed unique processes for developing foreign talent that could constitute a true CA, or whether they are simply capitalising on temporary market inefficiencies.

From a theoretical perspective, these findings contribute to the RBV literature by illustrating the challenges of applying this framework in dynamic labour markets with limited resources. Contrary to the assumption that firms can secure and control valuable resources, football clubs operate in environments characterised by player mobility, financial constraints, and reliance on external intermediaries. Therefore, CA depends not only on player attributes but also on the organisational capabilities required to effectively identify, integrate, and exploit these resources. This suggests that, in this context, the RBV should be understood as contingent and process-dependent, rather than based solely on resources.

In conclusion, the findings reveal various concrete actions for managers of clubs in non-traditional leagues. While Peruvian football managers have moved beyond simplistic evaluations of foreign players to consider psychological and cultural dimensions, they have not yet fully embraced a strategic approach to internationalisation that would maximise CA. To do so, they must develop more systematic recruitment processes based on clearly defined player profiles, recognise that sustainable CA comes from rare and inimitable resources rather than widely available physical attributes. Secondly, investing in integration mechanisms, such as language support, family assistance, and cultural adaptation, is essential to enable players to reach their full potential on the field. Finally, and most critically, clubs must incorporate commercial considerations into their recruitment strategies, recognising that foreign players can contribute not only to on-field performance but also to brand development and commercial revenue generation.

Therefore, the results suggest that CA remains constrained by structural limitations and underdeveloped organisational capabilities. Addressing these shortcomings will be crucial for clubs seeking to move beyond parity and develop more sustainable sources of CA.

Limitations and Future Studies

This study has some limitations that need to be acknowledged. First, despite the use of data saturation, we interviewed only 12 football managers, based on snowball sampling initiated through the first author's professional network. While this approach facilitated access to experienced Liga 1 managers, it may have introduced selection bias, as some participants may share similar perspectives. Although commercial results of clubs whose managers have not participated are not different, it might be that other clubs in Liga 1 have

had a different approach on how to use foreign players to generate CA. Budget allowing, future research should interview managers from all clubs involved in Liga 1.

Second, there is a single perspective bias. While football managers are the stakeholders most likely to hold the information we were looking for, not hearing other stakeholders who have influences on foreign player recruitment may create a bias. Future studies can benefit from triangulation through interviews with foreign players themselves (regarding their adaptation experiences), domestic players (concerning the actual impact of foreign teammates), club owners (regarding commercial and financial considerations), and fans (about their engagement with foreign players).

Third, while the qualitative design provides in-depth insights into the Peruvian context, the findings are not intended to be statistically generalisable. However, they may offer analytical relevance for other non-traditional football leagues (Latin America leagues, Smaller European leagues, African Leagues and Asian emerging leagues) that operate under similar structural conditions, including limited financial resources, high player mobility, and reliance on foreign talent markets. In such contexts, issues such as the lack of resource differentiation, challenges in player integration, and the under exploitation of commercial opportunities may be particularly salient.

Future research can explore other sources of CA in Peruvian clubs, such as the club's history, reputation or image, and organisational structure. It was beyond the scope of this research to investigate how Peruvian managers might have worked to develop the talents and, then later, sell them to a higher price to wealthier markets. However, we suggest that future research should explore how clubs can systematically develop foreign talent and leverage their commercial potential, transforming opportunistic hiring into strategic resource management. Additionally, future research could extend this work by conducting comparative studies across multiple leagues to examine whether similar patterns emerge, particularly in relation to recruitment strategies and the commercial use of foreign players.

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