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Research paper

Sports redefined: The importance of sponsors in shaping the modern image of  
sport

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## **Abstract**

Sports hold an important place in every society and are consumed in a wide variety of ways. They inclusively carry noble values and contribute improving social cohesion. Sports today are considered as one of the main sources of entertainment and major sports events attract sponsors ready to offer colossal contracts for more exposure. Powerful brands inject billions of dollars in the sports industry every year and in return want to be seen, heard and liked. They are influential in different ways and might even be changing the way we look at sport. The objective of this paper is to study the ways in which sponsoring, precisely kit deals and stadium naming rights can influence the image of football.

**Keywords:** sports; sponsorship; club culture; football; kits; naming rights

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## *Introduction*

Competition is an innate trait of living things and for us humans it can come about in a whole variety of ways. Sports have been practised for thousands of years and have had different roles throughout history in different societies. Citizens of ancient civilizations seldom practised sports as a leisure activity or for their own sake. Physical activity was a component of a ritual, of entertainment routine, of a combat training or other activities that required physical force. In countries of the Far East physical activity was often linked to warfare but also with tradition, a way to maintain a healthy lifestyle. The Folkloric text from the Far East and in ancient civilizations in the Mediterranean region often narrate initiation rites and rituals marking special occasions and transitions to new periods. Most of these rites required exceptional body and mind coordination that we can find in sport as we know it today. What seems to be a commonality in ancient societies is that lower and middle classes took part in physical activities more as part of their occupation or occasional training routine whereas ruling classes enjoyed it as a recreational activity (Nigel B. Crowther).

Sports pass through various major historical periods and are crossed by the great transformations of society. This clarifies that sport is a social practice and that the values it carries are those cultivated in the society in which it is practiced. Sport with all the dimensions it involves is a microcosm of society so one can study a society by inspecting the physical activities practised in it. According to German sociologist Norbert Elias, the word sport has only been used since the industrial revolution. For the last couple of centuries sport has been synonymous with games and competition under strict rules while in ancient societies' physical activity contests did not have the same purpose and implications as today. As a matter of fact,

sport was not always fun as we tend to look at it today; it even meant death in some cases of loss as in the gladiator games. (Crowther, 2007).

The mission of sport has changed with time, with a drastic evolution of human activity, hobbies, clothing styles, areas of interest and consumption habits. Sport has always been considered as one of the best factors of social cohesion and a good way to inculcate high values and discipline. The close relationship between sport and the media has been a constant since the beginning of the twentieth century. Sport and media have contributed to each other's success as media have promoted sporting events across the world and sporting events have increased audiences for media outlets. As a matter of fact, events such as Le Tour de France and the football European Cup were respectively organized by the French Newspapers L'Auto and L'Équipe (Hanold, 2012). Step by step sport was able to conquer print and digital media. Today sport as an entertainment genre is omnipresent in the media in general and is especially popular on television. Television promotes sport and supports it with ever increasing broadcasting rights. In return, sport supports television channels by ensuring peak audiences that attract advertisers ready to pay costly rates for a few seconds of air time (Whannel, 2009).

Sport holds an important place in modern societies and so do mass communications. Modern societies are ruled through new media as they convey and instill messages that dictate how we should behave, how we should think and what we should think about. Social media have only enforced this influence with new practices and more incitement for people to share their tastes, echo their opinions and react to others'. Sports and the media have become inseparable with more sports events and marketing content being broadcast across mass media on a global scale. People are more exposed to sports and everything that comes with them. The biggest

sports events like the FIFA World Cup final, the UEFA Champions League final, the Cricket World Cup, Wimbledon, the Olympic Games' 100 metres final and the Super Bowl are a few examples of major events that captivate tens – or hundreds for the first three events - of millions of people and generate billions of dollars of revenue for broadcasters and official partners. The exorbitant fees sports fans have to pay to watch their favourite team play on TV testify to the importance of sports as a predominant form of entertainment. Media have increased the visibility of athletes and elevated them to status of stars.

Sports are global and people relate with brands through their favourite sportsmen and sportswomen. Fans have always cared for their local teams at least by attending games and providing emotional support for they represent the face of their town or city. In sports, media create and reinforce a sense of belonging, self-identification, create needs and stimulate consumption of content, services, and goods. A plethora of factors can contribute to the success of an athlete, of a sports event, of a team or a club. And since sports organizations and individuals – including sports agents and independent athletes – are always striving for more profit, having a guaranteed source of revenue paves the road for success. Sport, it seems, is becoming primarily synonymous with show, entertainment and business and only secondarily with actual exercise, honourable competition and fair play.

Sports marketing can be defined as the set of tools and methods that directly or indirectly use sport, its image and its actors (or agents) in order to create a need, to market a line of products or services (Fortunato, 2013). Sponsoring is a marketing tactic that complements other marketing tools. Simply put, sponsoring is a contract by which an organization supports an event, an individual or another organization financially or by providing material assets and

supplies in exchange for a positive promotion. Sponsorship is heavily used in sports to develop brand awareness, transferring the positive values of sport to brand values, or to promote an image the organization strives to embody. If a brand is seeking a more personalized exposure it will resort to endorsement deals that will channel the attention to an influential individual who accepted to become the face of the brand. Some brands have had sponsorship and endorsement deals so successful they have become directly associated with certain sports. Thus, when one hears Nike or Adidas, sports that come to mind are soccer or running, the same way Wilson, Head or Babolat evoke tennis, Speedo evokes swimming, Everlast evokes boxing or Titleist evokes golf. Sports and athletes attract sponsors by the values they stand for, but are sponsors ready endorse these values? Sponsors want admirable ambassadors for their brands but are they always suitable to be associated with sport? If not, can this change the image of sport?

Sport has given birth to a powerful industry through the democratization of the practice of physical activities during spare time among the general public. It has become a means of promotion for brands looking to improve their brand awareness among the public or looking to improve their brand personality. The expansion of sports advertising has given a prominent place to sponsorship in the sports sector. The eminence of sponsorship in sport will be the subject of this research paper.

### *Objective*

Sports and media are more interdependent than ever. This strong connection is changing the ways sports are viewed and consumed. The Objective of this research paper will be to study the direct and indirect influence external organizations have had on sport institutions, particularly football clubs and how this influence can change the image of sport. This study will be a

preliminary work to start understanding how sponsorship can shape the image of sport. Sports hold an important place in our cultures and are considered as a vector of a society's values. Analyzing the change in the way we look on sports is another way of analyzing the change in values in our society. The research question for this paper is: How do sponsorship deals influence the image of sport?

To start answering this question, the focus of this research will be on the most popular and most mediatised sport: football. A few sub-questions that will guide the argumentation are:

- Can sponsorship deals change the culture of a football club?
- Are team kit sponsorship deals always compatible with sport and the values it implies?
- Does the structure of a club have an effect on the stance a club will have in regards to kit deals and/or stadium naming rights?

### ***Research design and methodology***

Research often partially answered the question but never tackled the angle of how sports could be redefined by sponsorship. Previous research tangentially investigated the issue and provided important elements of an answer but only a handful of articles – out of 3625 articles – were found about the way sponsorship changes the image of sport. A substantial amount of the research done on sponsorship in sport was focused on the study of purchase intentions, brand image and brand affect's modification with partnerships. The paucity of research on how the image of sport might be changing altogether by marketing practices – and sponsorship in particular – is striking considering the amount of research done in regards to sport sponsorship.

A thorough literature review was completed to discover the most recurrent issues raised by sponsorship deals. The databases I used were accessed through the University of Ottawa library catalogue. I used 4 databases namely Scopus, ABI/INFORM Global, Business Source Complete, and SPORTDiscus. The articles retrieved in the review of literature were found by searching for articles or books containing the words sponsorship or sponsoring and sport or football or soccer. These queries generated 831 results on Scopus, 1367 on ABI/INFORM Global, 767 on Business Source Complete, and 660 SPORTDiscus.

The initial searches generated huge amounts of results. I filtered the results by type to limit the results to peer reviewed articles, books, book reviews, and theses. I selected the relevant articles by reading the title and abstracts. Only articles mentioning the keywords in the title and/or the abstract text were kept. Only results in English and French were kept. To sift through the thousands of articles found on the databases I used an open source database management software called Zotero. After skimming the results, 144 results were kept and inspected. The bibliography in the articles and book chapters selected was analysed too in an attempt to find additional articles that were not found on the databases searched. The bibliography included in the most relevant articles was inspected too, as were the articles that were often cited by other authors. The literature review revealed new elements to take into consideration. It also pinpointed the most recurring sub-topics in research about sponsorship and sport.

Examples were not recent so in light of recent developments in partnerships related to some of the subjects treated in the articles I found it compelling to include a number of examples that illustrate the evolution and reactions to a few sponsorship deals. Hence, I did a content analysis of the English Premier League and Spanish La Liga teams' jersey logos, stadia names, and ownership over the last 10 years in order to analyze the potential effects team partners can have

on them (and the club culture) and more generally on the image of football. These two leagues were chosen because they were ranked as the top leagues by the UEFA country index. Teams' main partners always go for a kit logo or stadium naming rights if that is an option and that is why I decided to focus on these two elements. Match highlights were viewed to record the logos appearing on team kits.

## *Literature review*

### I - SPORT-SPONSORSHIP TANDEM

#### 1. Modern sport

Sports evolve as societies evolve and therefore reflect the values and ideals of societies. Jean-Marie Brohm, a French anthropologist, defines sport in ancient societies as a system of generalized, universal, open-ended physical competition that extends into space – between nations and groups of individuals – or in time – comparison of records between past and present time – and whose objective is to measure and compare the performances of the human body as a constantly perfectible body. For centuries sport has been a central component of folk and war cultures and was referred to as physical activity or the name of a discipline. According to German Sociologist Norbert Elias, the word sport has only been used since the industrial revolution. Since then, sport has been synonymous with games and competition under definite rules as opposed to physical activity contests in ancient societies which did not have the same purpose and implications as today. As a matter of fact, sport was not always fun as most people

tend to look at it today; a loss in competition often meant rejection and humiliation – and death in the case of gladiator games – for failure to meet agility criteria. (Crowther, 2007).

Sport as redefined in England in the late nineteenth century is different from physical activities in ancient times. Before the industrial revolution sports were reserved to the elite of societies and were an essential instrument of distinction and cultural dominance. These elitist groups had a common culture they used to distinguish themselves from the rest of society. The industrial revolution reduced the command of the elite on several sports but football became the most popular amid the masses. “The working-class colonization of football in the last quarter of the nineteenth century coincided with the maturing of Britain’s long process of industrialization and urbanization” (Goldblatt, 2007). People had more free time and more income so they could afford spare time activities. As sociologist Joffre Dumazedier rightly points out, technological development reduced working time carving out spare time which is the sine qua non condition for amateur sport (Dumazedier, 1971). An increase in time reserved for sport resulted from this slow conquest pastime.

Sport and football in particular in England was accessible to everyone and a simple way to escape the arduous routine of factories for the proletariat; it was the birth of “industrial football” in England (Goldblatt, 2007). As supporters of football increased, there was a need for more organization and regulation of the game itself and its players. Football associations mushroomed and players dedicated more time to the game. Random game bystanders became followers with expectations from their favourite squad as football gained popularity. Football became increasingly popular in Europe during the last quarter of the nineteenth century with the first

league of professional football having been founded in 1888 in England with twelve member clubs.

Today in England there is a total of 92 professional clubs today divided in 4 league levels – all of which named after a sponsor. Lower league levels (5-11) are semi-professional or amateur and add up to over 5000 clubs and more than 100 divisions.

## 2. Change in sport consumption

Modern societies are stimulated by the media and sports are omnipresent on all media platforms. Sports are more accessible than ever with multiple communication platforms to follow sports events. The success of sport internationally, and football in particular, is largely due to the media. Local radio and TV stations were an alternative to those who could not attend their favourite teams' games. In the 1980's the spread of satellite dishes propagated the football fever all across the globe making millions of fans of major European football teams by introducing football to countries like the United States and China. Satellite TV did contribute to the rise of football as a global sport, but it also contributed to the shifting of spare time activities and leisure from outdoor to indoor, and from active to passive leisure, which confirmed the shift of sports consumers from doers to watchers (Raney and Bryant, 2006). Accessibility or sport shows in the comfort of a living room has contributed to changing the experience of sports consumption from a participating experience to a watching experience. Consumption of sport has gained a digital dimension making sport even more universal than it has ever been but changing the focus of the activity itself. Consuming sport does not only mean playing one's favourite sport but also following the main sporting events. A study conducted by Brice Lefevre in 2001 showed that in

France 69 per cent of male teenagers play sports outside of school and 90 per cent follow sports on TV or in print media (80 per cent on both). This study shows the evident involvement of youth in sports whether as passive or active consumers and also reveals that the number of teenagers who actually play sports is lower than the number of teenagers who choose to just support. The abundance of sports content on satellite TV channels helped the sport grow, and football in particular, by generating more revenues and establishing sports as a key type of entertainment that advertisers count on. (Whannel, 2009).

The omnipresence of sport on TV has been the creation of channels dedicated entirely to sport. The main effect of the existence of these specialized channels has been to accentuate the role of the media and television in high-level sport. The sport-media tandem transformed sport from a simple individual or collective social activity with a set of local values and meanings proper to each society (entertainment, corporal preparation for combat, group ritual, etc.) to become a product (not accessible to everyone but easily accessible to those who have the means).

Commodification and commercialization have introduced sport to capitalism by the main entrance. “Commodification refers to the process through which something, sport in this context, that is not normally regarded as a product comes to be bought and sold, primarily with the aim of making a financial profit” (Marjoribanks and Farquharson, 2011).

The commodification of sport was made possible by means of metrics. Modern sports are quantifiable and this aspect makes evaluating, managing, and forecasting easier. Teams and players are ranked depending on their performances so sponsors can choose who they want to be represented by. Best performers are offered hundreds of millions of dollars for image rights, which they can reinvest to maintain their dominance, while low performers are doomed to

struggle. Players have efficiency rates and keep chasing records. Beating records makes of them new legends and elevates their rank to superstars worthy of massive contracts with clubs and endorsement deals. All this legitimizes the expenses to attend games and spend on team products. All of a sudden, paying \$100 to attend a single sports event or a one month subscription to a sports channels TV package becomes reasonable, even if an event is stake less from a competition standpoint. Exhibition games without any stakes such as the NBA All Star weekend or the football legends exhibition games epitomize the prioritization of show over competition. The NBA All Star weekend is a game that takes place half-way through the season featuring the best players in the league. Its main event, the All Star Game, is a match opposing the best players from the East to the best players from the west. No title is in play so players dress up and play nonchalantly with the only purpose of entertaining the crowd with creative moves they can't make in regular games. The NBA All Star game draws more interest than some playoff games where fans have more reasons to support their team. Following the 2017 edition, Golden State Warriors' coach Steve Kerr criticized the quality of this event, he called the event "a joke" and added: "I think we could talk about gimmicks and talk about anything we want, whether it's the money or involves charity, it just comes down to the players taking it seriously."

### 3. Growth of sponsorship

Companies drawn by the lure of gain found their way to sporting events and team apparel on a global scale. Advertisers launched a conquest of the masses by targeting the "new opiate of the people" (Brohm, 1992). They needed a durable strategy that is more subtle than conventional advertising and appealing to all socioeconomic classes so they decided to sponsor teams. In

general sponsorship seems like a win-win relationship where a club can rely on substantial funds over a fairly long period of time compared to other marketing approaches (Meenaghan, 2001a). Jersey sponsorship appeared in semi-professional football in England when Kettering Town football club agreed to display logos on their shirts. Queens Park Rangers football club followed wearing logos for televised games only. Liverpool was the first major football club to ink a jersey deal in 1979 with electronics brand Hitachi. In 1981 London Arsenal football club signed a half-million-pound deal with the then electronics giant JVC. The corporate sponsorship machine was set in motion. The trend exported across Europe and became a customary across the globe a few decades later with a booming television industry. In 1970 French football clubs did not have gain any revenue from sponsorship. In 1990 the estimated revenue from sponsorship in the French football league was half a billion French Francs (Goldblatt, 2006). Sponsorship deals have reached vertiginous numbers since the 1990's and keep increasing every year in football and other mediatised sports.

The global reach of football today is such that clubs attract foreign sponsors seeking to increase awareness about their brand (Bridgewater, 2014). International commerce has eliminated borders for businesses and opened up sport clubs to new market making them new targets for investors. Brands aspiring to go global do not hesitate to sponsor foreign clubs to reach their local audiences who follow foreign championships. A couple of examples are those of Emirati phone service provider Etisalat which sponsors FC Barcelona to appear on the perimeter displays – even though it doesn't offer its services in Spain – and financial consulting firm GWFX which sponsored Swansea city to appear on its English Premier League with a logo in Mandarin. According to IEG, sponsoring revenues have surpassed regular advertising revenues. Sport

sponsorship is the most popular form of sponsorship with over \$51 Billion spent worldwide in 2013 (Lee & Bravo, 2014).

## II - IMPERIOUS SPONSORING

Sport had different roles throughout history in different societies but it has always been extension and a reflection of societies. The scheduling of events, the chants, the names of teams, the political affiliation or partisanship, the style of play and level of physicality, and other elements mirror the values of people a club or a team represents. To this date football clubs still carry social associations with certain classes. In England for example certain clubs have been associated with certain profession guilds such as Stoke city potters or Fulham cottagers. In Spain football clubs have been more famous for their political affiliation; Real Madrid for example being the club of the royal family and the rival FC Barcelona the club of the independence-striving Catalans. But club cultures and identities have endured changes over the years to adapt to new management practices in sports. Even the most patriotic and nationalist clubs like Athletic Bilbao which has a strict policy against recruiting a non-Basque player or a player who hasn't joined its training center at an early age are pressured to rethink their strategies to cope with the competition. Athletic Bilbao is one of the last major clubs in Europe to have remained without a sponsor bowed to pressure in 2005 for the Basque Bank (Castillo, 2008). Athletic Bilbao is an isolated case today because all other clubs yielded to the temptation of recruiting inexpensive players from overseas and multimillion deals. But to cope with its environment it had to review its strategy and progressively adapt its identity. Thus, it can be argued that due to external pressure from the competition Athletic Bilbao was forced to renounce on a part of its

club culture which fans consider as sacred. The commercialization of football has imposed sponsorship and forced clubs to adapt their culture to new market trends.

## 1. Naming rights

The sponsorship mania in professional sports started with jersey deals but soon afterwards competitions, stadia and even teams became directly associated with brands. Stadia names are very important for football fans as they constitute an important part of their team's identity. Fans can refuse to call a stadium by a name that they don't feel represents their team. In Milan, the two local teams happen to play in the same stadium but the fans of each team refer to the stadium by different names (Giuseppe Meazza for AC Milan and San Siro for Inter Milan), and so do the commentators to differentiate to specify the hosting team. Naming rights constitute a major sponsorship strategy in football and in other sports for it links a brand to a well or better established brand (the club) with thousands, sometimes millions of followers. For that reason sponsors battle to obtain naming rights of a stadium or at least a prominent stand in the stadium. Football stadia such as the Etihad stadium and the Emirates stadium, BET365 Stadium, King Power Stadium are a few examples of Premier League stadia bearing the name of the main sponsor of the home team. According to an official report published by the UEFA, 25% of stadiums in the top 16 European leagues have commercial naming rights. Fans often express a resistance to naming rights keep referring to their sanctuary stadium by the original that carries the glorious past of the club. The change of a stadium's name is seen as a threat by fans, a threat on their place of ritual which they feel may no longer belong to them, which in several cases resulted in negative feelings about the club ownership and the brand it is associated with. They see the sponsor as an intruder especially if the sponsor-sponsee relationship is a misfit. In similar

situations, negative insight spreads rapidly amongst fans unless the sponsor shows concrete signs of consideration to the fans (plans to improve fan experience in the stadium or outside of it) (Woisetschläger et al., 2013).

Fans have a voice and make it known when they disagree with a decision that affects the identity of their club or even their sport. Protests can be organized by fans to object against a decision taken by their club or a rival club as Borussia Dortmund fans did to show their discontentment with the newly promoted club owned by Redbull. Dortmund protesters said Leipzig, the most hated club in German football plays “plays football in order to sell a product and a lifestyle” as opposed to other teams that play for competition and representation of their fans. In comparison to other schools of football, the German school has been considered as one the most traditional in Europe. A school characterized by an aversion to mass marketing practices in attempt to protect amateur sport and prevent professional sport from favouring commercial benefits over competition. In 1972 the German Football Association sued Braunschweig football club for accepting to replace its lion emblem by liqueur maker Jägermeister’s deer in exchange for money. The German Football Association’s ideological position was deemed as a protective measure against commercialization of football. Modern football management schemes have created a gap between clubs and their fans (Merkel, 2012), even Germany where several clubs are owned by companies that initially did not have any connection with football such as Red Bull, Bayer, Volkswagen and others. Skidmore (cited in Jensen, Weston and Wang, 2008) declares that if big corporate names follow Red Bull there will come a time when fans will be cheering for the ‘Verizons’ or the ‘Colgates’. Keeping the name of a team intact is an important illusion for fans as it makes them hope that their team is not a mere business (Burn, in Jensen, Weston and Wang, 2008).

Football fans often consider a renaming of their team's stadium as the start of a loss of identity for the club. Nevertheless, clubs have to accept the harsh reality to stay relevant in a highly competitive environment.

Naming rights can be bought for competitions too. The Barclays Premier League, formerly known as the FA Carling Premiership (1993-2001), and BarclayCard Premiership (2001-2004) is an example of a competition that has borne the name of a sponsor for decades. The Premier league has not been the only football league named by sponsors. In Spain the local football league known as La Liga Santander, formerly known as the Liga BBVA (2008-2016). This trend is not exclusive to football; other team sports such as basketball (Easy Credit Basketball Bundesliga in Germany), handball (Lidl star ligue in France), sailing (Transat Jaques Vabre), or individual ones such as skiing (Audi FIS Ski World Cup), golf (RBC Canadian Open), cliff diving (created and sponsored by Red Bull), snooker (Betway UK Championship) and several others also have tournaments named after a major sponsor.

## 2. Ownership and management

Naming rights create a direct link between a sport and a brand and help companies increase their market share by improving their image amid the public. Sponsors are the engine of the new football economy and attract investors for who can buy the club and redirect all its marketing tactics to serve the club and the new owner-brand. In this case the sponsor and the owner become one and the club is prey to them. Such undertaking took place in 2010 when Leicester City FC was sold to King Power following a three-year sponsorship deal – including naming rights of the stadium. Numerous companies have invested in sports clubs for the positive image they have and

their closeness to the public. In the last few years several sport management conglomerates have appeared. City Football Group, Fenway Sports Group, Madison Square Garden Company, or Monumental Sports & Entertainment are a few names that surface when exploring sport ownership. According to Forbes, in 2016 63 billionaires owned a franchise in a major sports league. These transnational companies own teams in several countries and manage their resources and brand as a multinational company would. In football these conglomerates are famous for having changed the fortune of several clubs. Red Bull owns several football clubs (RB Leipzig in Germany, FC Red Bull Salzburg in Austria, Red Bull Brasil, and New York Red Bulls) and is constantly looking to acquire more. The City Football Group (which owns Manchester City FC in England, New York City FC in the United States, Melbourne City FC in Australia, Club Atlético Torque in Uruguay, partially owns Yokohama F. Marinos in Japan, and is on the verge of acquiring Spanish club Girona FC) is following the same strategy with the goal of owning a club in country. These conglomerates employ their financial and human resources as any other company would, so trades of players like Frank Lampard and Patrick Vieira from Manchester City to New York City FC could be considered as relocation of an employee from one site to another. It is interesting to note that The City Football Group is owned by the Al Nahyan Family, as is Emirates Airways which sponsors and has stadium naming rights for Manchester City FC and Melbourne City FC, and has a kit sponsorship deal with New York City FC. Management of sports football clubs has taken a new form.

In global football clubs are managed like companies with various departments; they buy and sell players, often trade for them, invest in training facilities and stadia to host their clientele of fans, sell goods, and publish activity reports and value stakeholders. It is the rise of global football as Miller et al. call it. Sports have become primarily about profit and not primarily about

transmitting values through competition. The business models implemented in the management of sports clubs have transformed them into companies. These companies have developed a culture and a brand used to appeal to the masses. Big football clubs such as Manchester United, Juventus, Borussia Dortmund and Olympique Lyonnais are listed on stock exchange markets and are worth billions of dollars. Being in the stock market is highly symbolic since the fate of the club is in the hands of people who think business only. In this context of fierce competition clubs welcome new investments even if that means giving up the ownership to another company. Management of football clubs has changed and adapted to market trends but whether fans are ready to accept the business decisions of their favourite club remains to be seen. “There is a difference between a fan and a customer. A fan cannot take his business elsewhere”. (Flynn, Harrison and Marsden, 1999) Or can they? A good example to illustrate the discontentment of supporters with the new cultures promoted by football clubs is that of original Manchester United fans who decided to found a new club that is in accord with their vision of what a football club should be. Inspired and supported by another group of disgruntled fans from Wimbledon, they established the Football Club United of Manchester in 2005, a modest club that currently plays in the 6<sup>th</sup> division and vows to always be a not for profit organization.

Rebranding is often one of the first strategies following a club purchase. Cardiff city blue birds’ new owner Vincent Tan decided to change the club’s kit colors, its badge and considered changing the club’s name to Cardiff City Dragons. The team’s supporters were not happy with that decision and protested for months until he accepted to give revert to the original team’s colors. Red Bull adopted the same approach when it bought and rebranded Austrian club SV Salzburg as it replaced the purple and white kits by red and white ones that match the drink’s colors (Kennedy and Kennedy, 2017). Roman Abramovich brought changes to Chelsea as well

when he acquired Chelsea in 2003. He introduced a few changes such as playing a popular Russian song called Kalinka before and/or after important games even though this song has nothing to do with the club's culture.

### 3. Acquisitive sponsors

As shown above, partner brands and new investors can be intrusive on teams and sports as a whole creating new cultures and ways of doing. Club partners invest heavily and can impose their will on clubs even when it comes to team composition. Ledman, the main sponsor of the Segunda Liga (the second division of football in Portugal) included in the sponsoring contract a special clause to integrate 10 players and 3 assistant coaches from China in the 10 best clubs of the league. Such a clause shows that the span of action of sponsors keeps increasing and is not limited to off the pitch feats anymore. In a similar situation another Chinese firm managed to influence the recruitment decisions of one of its partners, this time Spain. Qbao, the main partner of Rayo Vallecano intervened in the transfer of a Chinese player to Spain and organized matches between the clubs it sponsors. A statement on Qbao's official website reads: "Zhang Chengdong arrived in Nanjing to meet other members of Rayo Vallecano and appeared in the news conference on the same day of the conference, and he is expected to appear in the "Qbao Cup" match the next day. [...] Indeed we began to prepare for Zhang Chengdong's settling down in Spanish Primera Division at the beginning of this year. We kept secret because the details of the contract need repeated negotiations to be finalized, and we were afraid that it would affect Zhang Chengdong's match status if we had released the news too early. The negotiations lasting more than half a year between Qbao, Guoan and Rayo Vallecano were finally settled in July, so Zhang Chengdong got the opportunity to participate in summer training, which is the most important for

European football teams, to make adequate preparation for the match season 2015/16, and also make the coach know more about him before the matches.” This statement uncovers the influence a wealthy sponsor can have on a team in need of financial resources. The above-mentioned Qbao cup featured two Spanish teams sponsored by the Chinese firm namely Rayo Vallecano and Real Sociedad. Qbao could serve as a facilitator in transfers of Chinese players to Real Sociedad as it did with Rayo Vallecano as following the completion of their partnership deal a statement published on its website confirmed its plans to “carry out cooperation with Real Sociedad in terms of cultivating young football players”. Football clubs’ privileged partners have never had as much influence sports decisions. Bouchet et Al. (2015) found that international football games increases creates shareholder value for the sponsoring firm which explains why some sponsors can go as far organizing events to increase their visibility. Superbrands like Nike do not settle for a logo on a team’s jersey, they often can include clauses that require endorsers to make room for events or reconsider their career decisions. Nike world tour is a tournament is an example of such events wherein Nike selected national teams amongst the ones it sponsors, to play against the Brazilian *Seleção* – for which eight players were picked by Nike. Nike chose the place and time of the match to ensure positive marketing fallout when it needs it (Kittleson, 2014).

Sponsors can also influence a team’s decisions indirectly as Puma did with the Italian national team. In summer 2014 when Antonio Conte was appointed as the head coach of the Squadra Azzura, the team’s official sponsor Puma offered to pay half of his salary. This decision was criticized for the conflict of interest that could cause certain players to become more selectable than others based on their endorsement deals. Puma is believed to be at the centre of another

debatable transfer. In summer of 2016, French rising star Ousmane Dembele was transferred from Stade Rennais to Borussia Dortmund, two teams sponsored by Puma. François-Henri Pinault, owner of Stade Rennais and chairman of Kering group – which owns sportswear manufacturer Puma – swayed him to Dortmund although Dembele’s representatives were in negotiations with other major European clubs, most notably FC Barcelona. Ousmane Dembele has recently been transferred to his dream club FC Barcelona. This one season stint in Borussia Dortmund will guarantee an additional bonus for Pinault as massive contracts like Dembele’s – estimated around 105 million euros – usually include bonuses for former clubs, and this is exactly what François-Henri Pinault had in mind by sending the french prodigy to another club of his. Dembele's value has profited to François-Henri Pinault through two clubs and a brand. In more serious situations sponsors can push for sanctions to be applied by clubs on fans, staff or players who misrepresent the club and the brand. They can threaten to end the relationship if they feel threatened by the attitude of a player or a club member. In England West Bromwich Albion official sponsor Zoopla threatened not to renew its deal with the club if the team’s controversial striker Nicolas Anelka is not immediately removed from the squad. Anelka had a controversial goal celebration that many considered anti-semitic. He was ultimately kept in the team, partly because he was the only healthy striker left and Zoopla decided not to renew the deal with West Bromwich Albion at the end of the season (Gardiner, 2015).

### III - RULING OF TELEVISION

By being involved in the organization and broadcasting of sports, television has also led to major changes in the very structure of widely diffused sports. One of the main consequences of mediating a sport is the need to adapt to extra-sporting constraints. The control television has

developed on sport has given rise to a new balance of power that forces sporting institutions to adapt to the wishes of broadcasters and their partners.

The economy of professional football has become more complex as sponsorship became common practice. Andreff digests this transformation as the advancement from a Spectators-Subsidies-Sponsors-Local (SSSL) scheme common in 1970s, to a Media-Magnates-Merchandising-Markets-Global ('MMMMG') scheme since the 1980's. In this new scheme, television is a vital link that subjects sport to financial logic. Since the 1980's sport has been accessible to millions of viewers worldwide and not only local fans (Bourg and Gouguet, 2010). Sponsors and advertisers invest and expect a return on their investments by reaching wide audiences and TV rights' holders have to satisfy their requests. In the past sporting events were organized taking into consideration parameters pertaining to the setting of the game and its actors, and if interested, broadcasters made room for the event. Sponsors and TV rights holders pay exorbitant prices to support an international sporting event and put the pressure on the organizers to ensure a maximum exposure. The "triangle of mutual benefit" – as called by Milne in *The Transformation of Television Sport: New Methods, New Rules* – composed by the broadcasters, the sponsors and the body that oversees the organization of a competition (Milne, 2016). In this relationship broadcasters want exclusive content they can capitalize on, sponsors want maximum attention, while the organizer wants revenues, a small part of which will be shared among participants in the event. Thus, it is imperative to find compromise for all parties.

Whether it is the choice of the venue for hosting competitions, the scheduling of events, the transformation of the rules of the game and the creation of sporting events or new disciplines, the

organization and evolution of sport now follow a pure logic of conquest of audience (Andreff, 1999). The eighties marked a new era in sporting events broadcasting as two major international events namely the FIFA World Cup in Mexico in 1986 and the summer Olympic Games in Seoul in 1988 symbolized the shift to an epoch where events are adapted to TV audiences and not the opposite. During the FIFA World Cup in Mexico games kicked off at noon so European audiences can watch the games live. Players would have preferred to compete at night when the temperatures are lower but had to brave the midday scorching temperatures to accommodate to a wider audience following the games live on satellite channels. Since the nineties, the scheduling of sporting events has gradually been adapted to the audience ratings to make the most profitable for TV channels owning events' rights (Glanville, 2010). Nowadays the sport competition's scheduling takes more into account the financial revenues than the optimization of the competition's conditions. In the UEFA champions league for example Real Madrid and FC Barcelona which are the two most popular teams in Spain cannot both play on the same day to guarantee the maximum audience for broadcasters and their sponsors. Champions League games are played on Tuesdays and Wednesdays whereas the Spanish league games are usually played during the weekend (as are most domestic leagues in Europe). This means that teams have less time to rest between games just to comply with broadcasting schedules (Macario, 2003). Domestic leagues and tournaments are also subject to such constraints. For the 2009-2010 season of the French Ligue 1 TV rights were split between several broadcasters, one of which is a local cell phone service provider called Orange. Orange became in 2009 the Official sponsor of the Ligue 1 and acquired the exclusive rights to the 9:00 PM game on Saturday, a time slot during which no other broadcaster could air a game of the competition. Another broadcaster, Canal+ was co-sponsor of the Ligue 1 and had a similar TV rights deal for Sunday. Thus, the scheduling

of a game day could only be determined after Orange and Canal+ had picked the games for that game day. These adjustments were made to promote the broadcasts and the channels' sports package offering and not competition. Exhausting schedules due to participation to other conditions or an inconvenient weather becomes a less important factor to take into account in the scheduling (Tribou and Augé, 2009). Scheduling has a big effect on how teams perform but also revenues for broadcasters. In the English Premier league and in the Spanish La Liga, over the last few years broadcasters have pressured the leagues to stretch the match days and have a longer weekend that includes Friday nights and occasionally Monday night, on which low audience games have been scheduled. This way fans tune in to watch a game that very few would have watched if they had the choice.

More recently UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin told the Associated Press the UEFA Champions League could be played outside of Europe in the future. He shared his thoughts with the Associated Press saying "China is financially interesting and the US is not just financially interesting, but football is growing there". The contrast here is that football and other popular sports are guided by financial interests that make them more accessible to some than others.

In other sports events are scheduled to suit TV audiences as well. Take the example of the Singapore Grand Prix in Formula 1. It is a race that takes place at night so it can be followed in Europe where the largest Formula audience is. In addition to having an influence on the scheduling of events, TV channels' demands resulted in modifying some rules in several sports. Requiring predictable durations of competitions, television imposed to sport competitions not bound by a time limit to introduce rule modifications that shorten events to keep them interesting. The Proposals made by the President of the International Tennis Federation Francesco Ricci Bitti in 2014 to reduce the number of games per set from 6 to 4 and to eliminate

the second serve in order to shorten the matches to attract more spectators – and more advertisers by the same occasion – are a few of the recent suggestions to adapt sports to TV broadcasting. Some of these suggestions come into effect but others don't, depending on the sources of revenue in the competition and its format. In the NBA for example, referees have to call a commercial timeout if not timeout has been called by a coach during the first quarter of a game. Television timeouts exist in other North American sport leagues like the NFL and the NHL. It appears that in the near future sponsors, through television, could be in a position to make more direct decisions about the execution of events.

#### IV - INCONGRUENT SPONSORSHIP

##### 1. Alcohol

The sponsor sponsee relationship is so strong sometimes that an event can become inseparable from a brand. Several brands have come to be associated with major sporting even though the nature of their activity is in contradiction with sports as a whole. Sponsorship deals may seem like natural associations when the involved parties have the same aspirations and collaborate towards the same goal. A good example of a natural sponsorship fit would be sporting goods manufacturers or any brand that contributes to the improvement or the successful completion of an event as Firestone did with the first Indianapolis 500 race in 1911 (Masterman, 2007). The wide reach of television has attracted sponsors ever since sporting competitions have been broadcast by mass media, with a peak in the last quarter of the twentieth century with the development of TV and satellite channels, and until the early 2000's the highest bidders had the privilege of boasting their brand for the time of a world widely followed event.

Globally, sponsorship is one of the fastest growing forms of marketing, increasing from US\$2 billion worldwide in 1984 to US\$28 billion in 2004. An estimated 75% of all sponsorship arrangements are for sport. This sponsorship funding, including for high in fat, sugar and/or salt and beverages, alcohol and tobacco products, is distributed across a large a range of sports (Kelly et al., 2011). One of the earliest and greatest users of sponsorship is the tobacco industry. It has been very closely associated with motorsports (Formula 1, NASCAR, cross-country rallying and others) but also for snooker and cricket, there was a fear that the gap would never be filled. In 2003 the estimated spending by the tobacco industry on international motorsport alone was £222 million. Tobacco companies have thrived in sport sponsorship but have started been declining since 2005 due to preventive measures adopted by most countries. The connection of tobacco brands and sport is incompatible for obvious reasons but the immoderate financial support provided by tobacco companies had sports' higher authorities overlook the disharmony.

The advantages sport can have on the human body have been well proven as have been the negative effects alcohol can have on it. Sport is the symbol of a healthy lifestyle while alcohol is often the cause of health issues but that did not discourage clubs from accepting offers from alcoholic beverages companies. A sponsorship deal linking an alcoholised drink company with a major sport event should sound like a forced marriage yet several major sports events such as the UEFA Champions league, the English Football League Cup and the FIFA World Cup have been sponsored by companies like Heineken, Carling and Budweiser.

The English Football Association has signed multiple deals with alcoholic beverages companies such as Carling – eminent with the Carling cup during the 2013-2014 season –, Budweiser and Carlsberg. Alcoholic drinks are subject to strict consumption rules during Premier League games

even though football tournaments have been sponsored by beer companies for decades in the United Kingdom. As per the Sporting Events Act of 1985 published by the queen's stationery office, spectators can't consume alcoholic drinks (referred to as intoxicating liquor in the script) during game time or on public transportation used to carry passengers to and from sporting events. There is here a clear contradiction between what a football game should promote and the potential image it might reflect.

Alcohol brands are a non-negligible part of the sponsorship revenue for the Premier League and other competitions, especially for promoted teams that need to compete with far more financially stable clubs. The reasons for these prohibitions are multiple and whether this code of conduct is respected is another issue, but the fact is that alcohol consumption is incongruous with the practise of sport particularly at the professional level where athletes need to avoid any performance diminishing substance.

Another prohibition on alcohol is that of children's replica kits that cannot bear alcohol brands' labels; just another indication of the paradox in this relationship of alcohol and sport. Marketing alcoholic drinks undermines the health benefits inherent in sport participation. A study conducted by Graham and Adams show that in England for example during professional football broadcasts, for every hour of professional football an average of 111.3 visual cues pertaining to an alcohol brand appeared on the screen. (Graham and Adams, 2013). Football icons are idolized by the youth; therefore it is essential to ensure the coverage of football games will not entice children to consumption of any harmful substances or create an illusion that alcohol is a component of football. Pettigrew et al. expressed concern regarding the ability of children to associate a sport with a brand especially fast food chains and alcohol brands. In their study more than three quarters of the sample composed of children aged between 5 and 12 could recognize at

least one sponsor for one sport with fast food chains being the most recognized of brands. They recommend “limiting children’s exposure to the sponsorship messages of companies promoting unhealthy foods and beverages [...] to reduce child obesity and enhance child health” (Pettigrew et al. 2014). Snyder et al. (as cited in Jones, 2010) advance that an increase of \$1 of spending on alcohol advertising results in a 4% increase in the amount of alcohol consumed by teenagers. The correlation between sponsorship and consumption should be an argument potent enough to push federations to review their stance on sponsorship deals with alcoholic drinks manufacturers. The English football association seems to be well aware of the unhealthy sponsorship deals it approved and is involved in, and the potential repercussions these can have on football but yields to temptation when offered profitable contracts. Interestingly, other sports are subject to different regulations so the right to drink or not in a stadium will be determined by the sport played.

Laws against consumption of alcoholic drinks and tobacco in public spaces exist in several countries and some of these laws prohibit or at least restrict advertisements of alcohol and tobacco. Major sporting events are a magnet for sponsors of all kind and The FIFA world cup is arguably the awaited sporting event par excellence: it is organized once every four years and features teams from all continents playing the most popular sport on the planet. Deep pocketed multinationals will do whatever it takes to fix their image even if it costs millions of dollars. Advertising and sponsoring of tobacco brands has been banned by FIFA for over two decades and consumption of tobacco in world cup competition has been forbidden since the 2002 World Cup. Nevertheless, FIFA maintains very close and incompatible connections with companies emblematic of unhealthy food such as McDonald’s and Coca Cola. Some multinationals put such a huge pressure on FIFA that it needs to make derogations to previously established rules that

aiming at preserving the integrity of the game and the running of matches. As a matter of fact, FIFA managed to negotiate with the Brazilian government an exemption from taxes on the products sold by the partners during the 2014 World Cup. These negotiations entail a loss of profit of around 312 million pounds for the Brazilian state. FIFA also negotiated a special dispensation allowing the selling consumption of beers during games, which is ordinarily prohibited in Brazil as alcoholic drinks are believed to increase the risk of misbehavior (Gornall, 2014). Brazilian health minister and other members of the Congress did all to uphold the beer ban but FIFA General Secretary Jerome Valcke made it clear that for FIFA won't make any financial concessions, not even to the country of football. Valcke said: "Alcoholic drinks are part of the FIFA World Cup, so we're going to have them. Excuse me if I sound a bit arrogant but that's something we won't negotiate" (BBC).

The alcohol sale ban controversy was revived in the UEFA Euro 2016 that took place in France when a drunken supporter deceased after falling from a sea cliff. The sale of alcohol was partially banned from the Euro 2016 to avoid clashes between fans but the event was sponsored by the Danish beer producer Carlsberg. Other noteworthy sponsors are McDonald's and Coca-Cola. Alcohol sale was banned in "sensitive" areas on match days of the Euro 2016 but Carlsberg had "fan zones" around stadia where alcohol could freely be consumed. Like in the UK laws exist in France to regulate consumption and advertising of intoxicating substances. The Evin Law (Loi Évin) was passed in 1991 to reduce advertising of alcohol and ban smoking in public spaces. It is supposed to dissociate sporting events from the consumption of alcohol by limiting the reach of marketing campaigns launched by alcoholic beverages companies. According to Bernard Basset, vice president of the National Association of Prevention of Alcohol and Addictology, giving sponsoring rights of an event as big as the Euro 2016 to a beer

company is nothing but an incitement to consume alcohol. To respect the law, Carlsberg plays it with finesse. Sponsoring a European event taking place in France (but followed worldwide) without launching campaigns in France. Former Minister Of Health Claude Évin – after whom the law was named – commented on the strategies implemented Carlsberg and said these should not be allowed as the fan zones are still considered French territory and the presence of Carlsberg is in incompatible with the legislation.

Advertisements for alcohol and tobacco are strictly regulated due to the health issues these substances can cause. The marketing restrictions express a clear contradiction between the practice of sports and the consumption of alcohol and tobacco and yet, major sports federations and sports governing bodies accept to have their names coupled with companies that manufacture performance restraining products. In fact, Anheuser-Busch InBev extended its partnership with FIFA until 2022 making Budweiser the official beer of the FIFA World Cup even though Qatar stands firm on its rules banning alcoholic drinks in public spaces, a ban that FIFA is said to be respecting for now.

## 2. Soft Drinks and fast food chains

Soft drink companies and fast food chains McDonald's has been an official partner of FIFA, the International Olympic Committee (CIO), and the English Football Association for years even though it has been criticized for its unhealthy meals. The “it's what I eat and what I do” campaign launched by McDonalds reflects the company's endeavour to erase connection to unhealthy food and lifestyle and why it would seek to become a long-time partner of international sporting associations (Collin and MacKenzie, 2006).

The association of major sporting events with fast food chains and soft drink manufacturers creates confusion among children as they are inclined to link the two and wrongly identify healthy lifestyle habits. This is especially true when a fast food chain as popular as McDonald's includes toys supposed to motivate physical activity as it did during the London Olympic when it included stepometers in its happy meals (Pettigrew, 2012). McDonald's has been present alongside the Olympic movement since the 1976 edition of the Olympic Games in Montreal and had a partnership until the Tokyo edition in 2020. The International Olympic Committee announced in June 2017 in a press release, that both parties agreed mutually to terminate the partnership.

Coca-Cola is another distinguished sponsor that has associated its name with international sporting events for decades. Coca-Cola is a privileged partner of the Olympic games, the FIFA World Cup, Its products are not necessarily good for the health, often criticized, symbol of the rise of the obesity especially amongst teenagers and young adults. Coca-Cola organizes and supports many initiatives encouraging the practice of physical activity but its products are unhealthy and being at the forefront of events such as the FIFA World Cup and the Olympic games is contradictory. In fact when preparing for these competitions athletes are encouraged not to consume soft drinks during the months preceding these events to stay in top shape.

### 3. Gambling and betting

In a society marked by the development of the sport, healthy lifestyles and well-being, the association between sport, tobacco, and alcohol is surprising but sponsors manage to legitimize any association by means of generous cheques. Online casinos and betting websites embody

sponsorship incongruence as well if not better than alcohol and tobacco. Gambling has been legalized online in the last decade despite the social risks it presents and the connection gambling has had with match-fixing. The most famous partnerships in European football are undoubtedly those of Bwin with Real Madrid and with Bayern Munich. Sports betting and sports sponsorship have always had a strong relationship with sports fans having long been an important target group for betting companies. As with alcohol, the concern raised by these alliances concerns the potential change in consumers' attitudes to gambling, particularly among the youth (McKelvey, 2004). The sponsorship of prominent European football clubs by online betting brands such as Betclac or Bwinn help to promote a new spectator behavior for whom victory is no longer the sporting victory of his/her team but that of the team on which s/he bet.

In 2014, in an effort to protect the integrity of the game and to battle match-fixing, the English Football Association banned players, coaches, club employees, and match officials from betting on any football match worldwide but it did not prevent clubs from signing advertising or sponsorship deals with betting companies and online casinos. This past season (2016-2017) half of the premier League's teams had sponsorship deals with online casinos or bookmakers. In April 2017, Burnley Football Club midfielder Joey Barton was sentenced with an 18 month ban from football and a £30,000 fine after acknowledging that he had been involved in betting activities over the last 10 years. Barton's penalty is conflicting with the English Football Association's decision to endorse betting firms and sends a confusing message to football fans. Football players and athletes from other sports disagree with this confusing situation too. A few isolated cases where athletes stood up to voice their concern regarding gambling websites created buzz on social media and a reputation for their actors but nothing to threaten the omnipotence of sponsors. Muslim strikers Frederic Kanoute and Papisse Cisse are two other

players who became for their steadfast position against their respective teams' sponsors.

Newcastle United was sponsored by a payday lender while FC Sevilla was by a betting company and their respective forwards refused to wear the jerseys as long as they bore the logos of such companies. Kanoute and Cisse's objections were motivated by religious principles but other sports figures publicly shared their discomfort too. Arsenal FC manager Arsene Wenger was very clear saying "If you don't want people to bet, you don't make betting official. If you don't want people to bet then you should forbid it from society, which I completely agree with".

Tennis player Andy Murray thinks the decision of the English Football Association to ban Barton is "a little bit hypocritical". He added: "I don't believe the players are allowed to be sponsored by betting companies but then the tournaments are. I don't really understand how it all works. I think it's a bit strange."

The multiplication of partnerships of football teams with gambling websites in England has pushed the English football association to review its position on bookmaking. On June 22<sup>nd</sup> 2017 the English Football Association has decided to part ways with Ladbrokes and terminates its £4 million-a-year sponsorship deal with Ladbrokes after gaining consciousness of the contradiction of this relationship. In an official statement, the FA said it "will continue to work with betting companies, including Ladbrokes, as they play a key role in sharing information on suspect betting patterns and so help in regulating the game". It seems that after all the FA is not ready to let go of its milk cow as betting companies will continue to support football in England for years to come: if not the premier league other cups and leagues such as the championship (which is the second most competitive league in the United Kingdom after the Premier League) which has been sponsored by Sky Bet under a deal running until 2019. This deal was signed three weeks before the start of the 2013 season (Spaaji and Maguire, 2017)

It will be interesting to see if clubs will follow their two-faced governing body. In the meantime, Premier League clubs are still allowed to have kit sponsorship deals with online betting companies. Actually, Newcastle United recently signed such a deal with Asian gambling company Fun88 for its return to the elite of English football.

The UEFA is conscious of the threat that betting represents as a business that encourages match fixing but is not ready to give up on the revenues it brings to football. The UEFA code of conduct is based on eleven values. One of which is named *Sporting Integrity and Betting*, in which it is explained that “betting is a source of funding but also a risk for football, especially to the integrity of competitions” and that “it is only right that football obtains its fair share of income from betting.”

## V - Sponsoring inequity

Sponsorship deals create links with agents and events in sport and inevitably carry connotations whether positive or negative. Sponsorship deals create gaps in revenue which can translate in performance disparity between teams or athletes. A newly promoted team or a poor performing athlete will rarely attract a powerful sponsor therefore their chances of increasing revenues are slim. Successful teams attract brands looking to improve their image at all cost by having sport values assimilated to their own. Top teams attract top sponsors. Consequently, in professional sport dominating teams get more revenues and reassert their domination year after year, to the point that top leagues often have a handful – sometimes a couple – of hyper dominant teams that are certain to finish atop the league when the season ends. In the English premier league for example, according to Forbes, Manchester United – one of the most dominant clubs in league

history with 10 titles over the last 20 years – is collecting \$80 million of revenue from its shirt deal with Chevrolet, compared to Middlesbrough's less than \$1.5 million deal with Ramsdens. These two teams also happen to be sponsored by the same sportswear manufacturer namely Adidas; Manchester United's deal is estimated at \$1.3 billion (over 10 years) while Middlesbrough's deal details have not been disclosed. It is safe to say that the two deals are hundreds of millions of dollars apart as Middlesbrough's total revenues for 2016 were estimated around \$26 million.

Sponsorship deals amongst female athletes are offered based on different elements than males'. Female sports competitions are also far less popular than males' and therefore attract fewer sponsors. Sponsors are attracted to male competitions because they are more commercialized for their reach. This can increase the gender gap between male and female competitions (L'Etang, 2013). An appalling example is that of tennis player Serena Williams who has a less lucrative deal with Nike than her arch-rival Maria Sharapova even though she outperforms the latter. With her physique often compared to fashion models' and her easy going personality, Sharapova could be considered a natural choice for sponsors given the appeal she might have among the public especially if she garners a few trophies along the way (Shank, Mark R. Lyberger, 2014). But for a sporting goods sponsor like Nike that claims to have as a primary objective to help athletes reach a maximum performance, giving the most lucrative deal to a low performer might seem like an unfair and confusing decision. Nike confirmed that it builds the success of Sharapova on her appearance more than her athleticism when it launched the I feel pretty campaign in 2006 (Wertheim and Sommers 2016). The message sent by such deals is that success and fame in sport are due to factors other than performance. The place of the woman's body takes up more space

than that of athletic performance. High-level athletes find themselves without a sponsor, while others, with a lower performance level snatch everything.

Female athletes do not attract sponsors as much as males and when they do it is not always for their athletic prowess. Grau, Roselli and Taylor (2012) demonstrated that 81% of the ads featuring female athletes showed these athletes partially clad or wearing suggestive clothes. Another study Leah and Lumpkin (1992) found that women sharing more physical attributes with models than athletes appeared on 45% of endorsements.

## ***CASE STUDY***

### 1) FC Barcelona: Mes Que Un Club

FC Barcelona is a good example of a successful football team. It has millions of followers across the globe and a long history characterised by a unique culture. Founded in 1899, Barça never had a sponsor's name on its jersey and its supporters found pride in keeping the club's jersey pure unlike other teams in Spain and across Europe. FC Barcelona has resisted the kit sponsorship offers for years but finally yielded. Barcelona players proudly bore the UNICEF logo during the 2006-07 season as for the first time in club history Barça accepted to have a logo on its kits. Barça donated 1.5 million Euros per year to Unicef in a 10 year agreement signed in 2006. In 2016 the partnership was extended until 2020 and the donations increased to 2 million a year. A few years later, in 2011, the UNICEF logo was moved to the back of the shirt underneath the players' names as the chest section of the kit became property of another partner, Qatar Foundation, this one paying Barça and not the opposite. The transition from UNICEF to Qatar Foundation was criticized but the club justified its decision by emphasizing that it is a

partnership with a non-commercial organisation. Within a few years FC Barcelona went from paying UNICEF to carry its logo on team kits to lucrative sponsorship deals with Qatar Foundation, Qatar Airways and more recently Rakuten, a deal in which Barcelona will receive 55 million Euros every year until 2021. Visibly the focus of FC Barcelona changed over the years. FC Barcelona legend Yohan Cruyff criticized the decision saying it was “Sullyng of the jersey”. Indeed the jerseys are a key component in club’s visual identity and by having a logo on it a partner is intruding into the culture of a club. The club has always found pride in its culture and its motto "*Més que un club*" (more than a club in Catalan) which carried a social and political connotation. It has also been reported that Barcelona is in negotiations with several sponsors concerning naming rights of its stadium as it seeks new sources of income to renovate its stadium. Barca president Josep Maria Bartomeu does not have the same priorities as his predecessors or club legends. When criticized about the new direction the club took in the last few years he answered that the club wants “to develop in a way that not everything hangs on victories or defeats. We want to make sure that the club remains a reference around the world, even when there is a failure.” Indeed, during trophy-less seasons FC Barcelona’s balance sheets are positive.

Since its establishment and throughout its existence FC Barcelona has been the standard bearer of the Catalanista movement since its establishment but has adjusted its vision to its competitors’, whose focus has been commercial football for a while. FC Barcelona has been publicly in favour of the independence of the region of Catalonia, having signed several petitions for this cause (Spaaji, 2006). In 2015 club president Bartomeu Josep Maria declared “We have always spoken about sport. We don’t take part in campaigns”. Bartomeu’s declarations mark a stark change of direction in the club’s mindset.

This example provides some insights into how sponsorship has become unavoidable even for a top performing and conservative team like FC Barcelona. Financial pressure – or bait depending on the angle – has pushed the club to renounce on its values and part of its identity to remain competitive in a sport scene where money goes hand in hand with success. FC Barcelona's motto is still “more than a club” but the meaning it carries seems to have changed.

## 2) Paris Saint Germain: Rêvons plus grand

FC Barcelona has undergone major changes in its management and culture over the last few decades and these have contributed to its success from sport and business perspectives. Its attraction for sponsors strengthened its position as a favorite in Spanish, European and intercontinental competitions and made of the club a destination of choice for the best players on the planet. FC Barcelona discovered the hard way this summer that other clubs could beat it at the game it mastered for years. The knockout came from Paris Saint Germain when it convinced Brazilian superstar Neymar Da Silva to sign for the French. When FC Barcelona extended the Neymar's contract until 2021 in October 2016 and set a buyout clause of 222 million Euros it never expected a club to be able to snatch its Brazilian prodigy. This was without reckoning with Qatar's disguised support of its Parisian football club and the massive contract extensions Paris Saint Germain is involved in and planning to sign. The details of the transaction have not been made public but it is safe to assume to that the buyout clause was not entirely paid from the club's sport related revenue. From a non-sporting perspective the signing of these two players is a statement by Qatar to the world that the diplomatic crisis it is going through is temporary; a statement that highlights the prevalence of external agents in influencing the managing of

football clubs. The 222 million euros spent on a single player seemed unimaginable a year ago when Manchester United signed French forward Paul Pogba for a record transfer fee of about 105 million euro. But Paris Saint Germain did not stop here. They also signed 18 year old Kylian Mbappe – who played a total of 47 professional games with Monaco and the French national team – for a deal estimated around 180 million euros. Backed by petrodollars Paris Saint Germain has raised the already high transfer market ceiling and confirmed the folly of greatness in football. Paris Saint Germain and Manchester City FC, two clubs owned by foreign investors, have been unsuccessful for most of their existence but have taken off since they were bought by members of the Qatari and Emirati royal families. Both teams are under scrutiny by the UEFA always following their expenditures closely to see if they respect the financial fair play rules. Both teams have been fined in the recent past for failure to abide financial fair play rules as they declared sponsorship revenues far higher than the ones more marketable teams could negotiate. As a matter of fact, Paris Saint Germain signed a contract with the Qatar Tourism Authority for an amount of 200 million euros annually, about half of the club's annual budget at that time (Bouchez, 2014).

The similarity between both teams is that their major sponsors are a subsidiary or a branch of the owning group (Qatar Tourism Authority for Paris Saint Germain and Etihad Airways for Manchester City FC), they invested in the club and contributed to its success and their own. Paris Saint Germain has won 4 Ligue 1 titles and finished second since Oryx Qatar Sports Investments took over the club in 2011; it had only won the title twice in 41 years. Manchester City FC has won the English Premier League twice and finished in the top 5 eight times since the Abu Dhabi United Group Investment and Development Limited group took over the club in 2008. It had

only been in the top 10 six times and played 6 seasons in lower divisions in the 20 years prior to the Emirati ownership.

## ***DATA ANALYSIS***

### ***Sponsorship analysis***

The Spanish La Liga and the English premier league are considered by the UEFA and fans as two of the most popular football leagues in the world. They are respectively ranked first and third on the UEFA associations' club coefficients rankings and have the highest number of followers on social media amongst European football clubs. In this section we take a look at the types of brands attracted by these two leagues: team kits and stadia names are analyzed.

#### English Premier League:

On its website the English Premier league currently displays 6 official partners, of which two can be considered as not suitable for sport (Cadbury and Carling). The Premier League has been named after a sponsor between 1993 and 2016 (Carling from 1993 to 2001 and Barclays from 2001 to 2016). As of 2016 it decided to stop selling naming rights.

Premier League teams' kits were examined for the last 10 seasons. 20 teams play each season with the top 17 teams staying in the league, the last 3 relegated to the championship and the top 3 from the championship promoted to the Premier League. Overall 34 teams have played at least one season in the English Premier League over the last 10 seasons. Over the span of 10 years fans have seen 200 different kits, out of which 199 had a sponsor's logo printed on the chest (West Bromwich Albion being the only team playing the whole 2008-09 season without a kit

deal). 73 of the 199 kit sponsorship deals were gambling or alcohol brands. In England not one club playing in the Premier League is owned by the supporters. The highest ranked fans-owned clubs are Portsmouth FC., Exeter city FC, Newport County A.F.C., and Wycombe Wanderers FC. which all play in the SkyBet league two (which is the third highest level of competition in England). Portsmouth FC will be promoted to SkyBet league one (the second highest level of competition in England). Out of the 35 teams included in this study, 11 play in a stadium named after a sponsor.

### Spanish La Liga

La Liga has 13 partner brands, of which one can be considered as not suitable for sport (Mahou). Liga has started selling naming rights in 2008. It was called La Liga BBVA from 2008 to 2016 and La Liga Santander since 2016.

La Liga teams' kits were examined for the last 10 seasons. This competition has 20 clubs per season too, with 3 teams promoted and three relegated. Out of the 200 kits analyzed, 177 had a logo printed on their chest. Out of the 177 deals, 36 were struck with an alcoholic, a gambling company, a fast food chain or an energy drink brand. 11 teams have spent at least one season without a sponsor. By splitting the 10 year period into two, it is noticeable that most of the sponsorship deals with a sponsor that could be considered as a misfit in sport were contracted in the first half (2007-2012).

In the Spanish top division, clubs are more conservative as 5 clubs amongst the elite are still owned by the fans. The rest have all been sold to private firms or investors. Stadium naming rights are not as prized in Spain as they are in England. Out of the 36 teams included in this study, only 3 play in a stadium named after a sponsor.

## *DISCUSSION*

After conducting a thorough literature review of research done about the sponsorship in sports, a few recurrent themes stand out, the most prominent of which is the close link between brands that produce harmful substance substances and sport (cigarette, smoking, fast food and soft drinks). Other issues raised in the literature covered include the commodification of sport, the change in consumption of sport, the growing gap between amateur and professional sport, the inequality between genders, the change of ethics in sport, and the recent surge of gambling websites on football kits. Professional sport is now a show before everything else and it relies on revenue from sponsorship and broadcasting rights. This reliance puts some competitions on the front stage and demotes others creating – or increasing – inequality has increased in sport. There is a growing gap between professional and amateur sport but also between professional sports by popularity, between genders, and between teams involved in the same tournaments. The cult of performance has turned into a cult of money in a new sector called sport. As the case study about FC Barcelona substantiates club culture has become secondary to financial competitiveness. The changes that sport has gone through have favoured incongruence in sport sponsorship and legitimized incompatible sponsor-sponsee relationships as it was shown in the Premier League and La Liga sponsorship and naming rights analysis. This study was focused on football but the tendency seems to be applicable to other sports too as sport management's successful practices can be applied in other sports; by its prominence and popularity, football provides more examples on a larger scale. This calls into question the importance of ethics in the modern definition of sport. Sport is not just physical activity; it is also a combination of noble ethics and a universal message. There is no single authoritative list of sporting values but several values and

aspirations are shared in all sports such as fair play, equity, inclusion, promoting good health, etc. A concept based on ethics like sport cannot be sold otherwise it starts losing its integrity. Ethics imply limits, which can fade when a club is financially dependent on one of its partners. In order to guarantee that values stay intact, sports associations and their members should be independent (financially and morally). Ideally clubs should not be dependent on any other organizations but cutting ties with sponsors will place them clubs into instant insolvency. Ethics are embedded in sport and a proper deontology is usually enforced by sporting federations to define positive principles to follow. One of the international Olympic Committee's missions is to promote "opposition to all forms of commercial exploitation of sport and athletes". For FIFA financial independence of football clubs and federations is key to their success on the long run and yet it tolerates certain derogations when the economic implications are significant for a team, a league or football in general. International sporting regulatory bodies want to believe they are on the same page when it comes to commercialization of sport but they follow the do as I say not as I do canon. The unregulated penetration of finance into professional sport was a response for a dire need for resources, a solution that could make it lose its sense of ethics and transform it into a simple spectacle financed by companies seeking higher brand awareness or affect.

## ***CONCLUSION***

Sponsors have enabled sport to become a sector of its own but have transformed the way it is consumed. Sport has become a combination of competition between athletes and teams, major media exposure and high financial stakes and sponsors have an influence on all factors of the equation. This shows how sponsorship has contributed to changing the image of sport. Sport is now more than simple physical activity whereby merit and effort are articulated. It has

undergone and is still undergoing major changes today, both in its consumption and in the management as it has been widely demonstrated in previous research. Internationally mediated sporting events validate the argument that sporting events are now a money-making business before being a competition and the embodiment of values.

The influence of the sponsors had consequences that were not envisaged at the outset and their influence affects several aspects of sport as a concept. Sponsors are at the heart of the changes undergone in sport and have gained enough leverage on sport associations and clubs to impose their will. Sponsors have brought revenue to sport but in an imbalanced fashion. The best teams (or athletes) and mediated sports attract far more sponsors than low performing teams and unpopular sports which has created a number of divides that interfere with equal competition. Football purists and conformists from other disciplines do not accept the neo-liberal business practices for several reasons the most important of which are the inequalities they create between teams and between heavily mediated sports and marginalized ones.

Governing bodies such as the International Olympic Committee and the UEFA have statute books in which they underline the importance of the independence of moral and/or physical persons vis-à-vis their partners but omit to define a framework for sponsorship even though it has become a vital element of sport. The biggest football clubs in Europe are deeply indebted and measures put in place by the UEFA like the financial fair play regulations have a very limited effect on the sponsor dependency.

Sponsorship had Trojan horse effect – as Philips and Whannel (2006) metaphorically coined it – on football and other heavily mediated professional sports. It offered lucrative deals –

sometimes worth more than clubs could spend on recruitment of players – but in exchange imposed their laws and stripped them from their culture. Major football clubs have grown dependent on their sponsors and the tendency could very well export to other sports as professionalization of sport is generalized. Professional sport has been experiencing commodification amplified by political choices based on economic aspects. Politicians and media owners are complicit in promoting associations of alcohol, unhealthy food and betting companies. The challenge for the future will be to find balance between morals and commerce with ethical sponsoring if that exists. Sport has been a business for decades and a source of revenue for the unscrupulous for centuries. Today sponsorship in sport can be seen as a legal mixture of both that is revisiting the definition of sport.

## Appendix A

team	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	Stadium name
Arsenal					Fly Emirates						Emirates Stadium
Aston Villa	32 Red Casino	Acoms Charity	FX Pro	FX Pro	Genting Casinos		Dafabet		Quickbooks		Villa Park
Birmingham	&C Investments		F&C Investments								St Andrews
Blackburn	Bet 24 Casino		Crown Paints		Prince's trust						Ewood Park
Blackpool				Wonga							Bloomfield road
Bolton	Reebok			188 BET							Macron Stadium
Bournemouth									Mansion Casinos		Vitality Stadium
Burnley			Samuel Cooke & Co					FUN88		Dafabet	Turf Moor
Cardiff City	Samsung Mob				Samsung	Visit Malaysia					Cardiff City Stadium
Chelsea							GAC	Neteller	Yokohama		Stamford Bridge
Crystal Palace									Mansion Group		Selhurst Park
Derby County	Derbyshire B										Pride park
Everton					Chang						Goodison Park
Fulham		LG			FX Pro		Marathon Bet				Craven Cottage
Hull City		Karoo / Kingston	Totesport.com				Cash Converters	12BET		Sport, pes	KCOM Stadium
Leicester									King Power		King power stadium
Liverpool		Carlsberg				Standard Chartered					Anfield road
Manchester City	Thomas Cook				Ethihad						Ethihad Stadium
Manchester United		ALG Insurance			AON			Chevrolet			Old Trafford
Middlesbrough		Garmin								Ramsdens	Riverside Stadium
Newcastle		Northern Rock			Virgin money			Wonga			St James Park
Norwich					Aviva			Aviva			Carrow Road
Portsmouth	OKI Printing solutions		Jobsite								Fratton Park
Queenspark Rangers						Air Asia		Air Asia			Loftus Road
Reading	Kyocera Mita				Waitrose						Majedski Stadium
Southampton							AAP	Veho		Virgin	St Mary's Stadium
Stoke City			Britannia Building Society					bet365			bet365 Stadium
Sunderland		Boylesports		Tombola bingo	Invest in Africa		Bidvest	dafabet			Stadium of light
Swansea City				32Red				GWFX		Beteast	Liberty Stadium
Tottenham		Mansion Casino		Autonomy	Aurasma	HP		AIA			White Hart Lane
Watford									138.com		Vicarage Road
West Bromwich Albion		NONE		Homeserve	Bodog casinos	Zoopla		Intuit Quickbooks	TLCBet	UKK	The Hawthorns
West Ham	XL Holidays			SBOBet		Alpari FX Trading		Betway			London stadium
Wigan	JJB Sportswear		188Bet		12Bet						DW Stadium
Wolverhampton				Sporting bet							Molineux Stadium

## Appendix B

team	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	Stadium naming
Alaves										<b>NONE</b>	Mendizorrotza stadium
Almeria	Obrascampo	Isla del fraile.com	none	Urcisol				Urcisol			Estadio de los Juegos Mediterráneos
Athletico Bilbao				Petronor							San Mamés
Atletico Madrid		KIA		Huawei			Azerbaijan tourism				Vicente Calderon
Barcelona		UNICEF		Qatar foundation				Qatar Airways			Camp nou
Betis Sevilla	Andalucía			Cirsa	<b>NONE</b>			UED Sports		<b>NONE</b>	Benito Villamarín
Celta Vigo				Citroen							Estadio Municipal de Balaidos
Cordoba								RD Impagos		<b>Estrella Galicia</b>	Estadio Nuevo Arcángel
Deportivo La Coruna	Fadesa		Estrella Galicia		<b>Estrella Galicia</b>			<b>Estrella Galicia</b>			Abanca-Riazor
Eibar								Hierros servando		Avia	Eibar City Council
Elche								Gioseppo			Estadio Manuel Martínez Valero
Espanyol	Quat	interapuestas			Cancun Tourism			Power8		Rastar	Espanyol Cornellà-El Prat
Getafe	Grupo Galco	Galco		Burger King		Confrenar		Technocasa group			Coliseum Alfonso Pérez
Granada					Caja Granada		Caja Granada	Solver		<b>Energy King</b>	Nuevo Estadio de Los Cármenes
Hercules				<b>NONE</b>							Estadio José Rico Pérez
Las Palmas									Gran Canaria		Estadio Gran Canaria
Leganes											Estadio Municipal de Butarque
Levante	Comunitat Valenciana				Comunitat Valenciana			East united			Estadi Ciutat de València
Malaga		Malaga Ciudad Genial		Williamhill.com		UNESCO		<b>NONE</b>			Estadio La Rosaleda
Mallorca	Viajes Iberia		AirEuropa	Bet-at-home.com	<b>NONE</b>						<b>Iberostar Stadium</b>
Murcia	Cajamurcia										Estadio Nueva Condomina
Numancia		Caja Duero									Nuevo Estadio Los Pajaritos
Osasuna		Yingli Solar			<b>NONE</b>		Lacturale				El Sadar Stadium
Racing Santander	Norquimia	<b>NONE</b>		palacios							Campos de Sport de El Sardinero
Rayo Vallecano					<b>NONE</b>			QBAA			Campos de Fútbol de Vallecas
Real Madrid			Bwin					Flyemirates			Santiago Bernabeu
Real Sociedad		Cajasol		Gipuzkoa	<b>NONE</b>			QBAA			Anoeta Stadium
Recreativo											Estadio Nuevo Colomino
Sevilla	888.com		12BET.com	<b>NONE</b>	inetrwetten		visit malaysia			seepuertorico.com	Ramón Sánchez Pizjuán Stadium
Sporting Gijon			Gijon Asturias							Gijon	Estadio Municipal El Molinón
Tenerife			Caja Canarias								Estadio Heliodoro Rodríguez López
Valencia	Toyota	Unibet + Valencia Exp		Unibet	vcfshop.com	Jinko Solar	<b>NONE</b>	<b>NONE</b>		front none - back B	Mestalla Stadium
Valladolid		Caja Duero									Estadio José Zorrilla
Villarreal		Aeroport Castello		RenRen				Pamesa			<b>Estadio de la Cerámica</b>
Xerez			Cajasol								Estadio Municipal de Chapín
Zaragoza	Expo 2008 + Telefonica	Telefonica		promino							Estadio La Romareda

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