

This item was submitted to [Loughborough's Research Repository](#) by the author.
Items in Figshare are protected by copyright, with all rights reserved, unless otherwise indicated.

The 'floating' role of marketing in football clubs

PLEASE CITE THE PUBLISHED VERSION

<http://www.griffith.edu.au/smaanz-2017-conference>

PUBLISHER

SMAANZ

VERSION

AM (Accepted Manuscript)

PUBLISHER STATEMENT

This work is made available according to the conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0) licence. Full details of this licence are available at:
<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

LICENCE

CC BY-NC-ND 4.0

REPOSITORY RECORD

Manoli, Argyro Elisavet. 2019. "The 'floating' Role of Marketing in Football Clubs". figshare.
<https://hdl.handle.net/2134/26083>.

The 'floating' role of marketing in football clubs

Dr. Argyro Elisavet Manoli, Loughborough University

The origins of marketing are often associated with those of the sales function and exchange or transactional processes that date back before the industrial revolution (Kamboj & Raham, 2015). Over time, marketing transformed from sales-centric to product-centric or even service-centric, while being concentrated on profit-related goals. The constantly changing marketplace and re-adjustment of demand and supply, paired with rapid technological advances, multiplication of media and wide-spread globalisation, made marketing evolve into a brand-centric and loyal consumer-focused managerial process (Kotler, 2000; Baker & Magnini, 2016). According to the latest American Marketing Association (2016) definition, marketing is currently viewed as both a managerial orientation (or '*business philosophy*' according to Baker & Hart, 2008, p. 4) and a business function, consisting of short-term tactics and serving the long-term strategic objectives of an organisation. As a result, the idea of a marketing strategy or a marketing plan to strategically guide the marketing-related actions and processes taking place within an organisation, has been increasingly underlined within academia (Schultz et al., 2014).

Before any discussion on the future of marketing takes place, however, it is worth exploring the extent to which marketing in practice has achieved to distance itself from the sales function, or whether its current role still sits within the overarching umbrella of the commercial and sales-oriented arm. Taking the ideas of Christensen et al. (2008a; 2008b) as a starting point, this study aims to examine the current role of marketing in organisations through the investigation of the existence and contents of their marketing strategies. In more detail and in order for a thorough examination to be conducted, this study will focus on the most commercialised and '*most-watched*' sport league in the world (Deloitte, 2016), the English Premier League. The EPL is considered to be one of the most popular sports leagues globally, attracting the interest of more than 60 per cent of the global population (more than any other sports league - Sportfive, 2012). This increasing international attention is believed to be the reason behind the EPL's advances in marketing and communication that drew the author to study this fascinating industry, while her involvement with the football industry allowed her the trust needed in order for access to be allowed and for insights to be gained from industry leaders working in such highly prominent organizations. Criterion purposive sampling was employed to select the sample. The criterion selected was participation in the EPL in any of the five most recent consecutive seasons (2010/11, 2011/12, 2012/13, 2013/14 and 2014/15). All 30 clubs that share this criterion were selected and contacted for this study. Qualitative data was then generated from semi-structured interviews with all 30 individuals selected (the most senior employee in charge of marketing from each club), which were conducted in person between August 2015 and March 2016. Upon completion all interviews were transcribed allowing for the data to be coded manually and for the following themes to emerge.

Interestingly, a wide disparity of practices was presented by the interviewees, ranging from multiple, function-specific marketing strategies to a completely non-existing marketing strategy. As a result, four different patterns of marketing strategies were identified among the 30 clubs, with the most popular pattern suggesting that marketing is still considered a mere tool for the commercial arm of the club, while being a mainly sales-driven and commercially-focused, lax plan. As a result, it could be argued that despite the EPL's international success and some clubs' advanced practices, the role of marketing in football clubs has yet to be clarified, potentially perpetuating the image of an important yet 'floating' function.

Keywords: marketing strategy, marketing goals, marketing targets, football marketing, English Premier League