**Determinants of Brand in European Football**

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Keller (2008) explains ‘‘a brand is something that has actually created a certain amount of awareness, reputation, prominence, and so on in the market place.’’ Shank (1999) provides a more specific definition of brand in sports: ‘‘a name, design, symbol, or any combination that a sports organization uses to help differentiate its product from the competition.’’ Bauer et al. (2008), Bauer, Sauer & Schmitt (2005) and Bauer, Sauer & Exler (2005) have shown that a brand is a major determinant of fans’ loyalty. Czarnitzki and Stadtmann (2002) argue that club reputation is important to determination of attendance. Pawlowski and Anders (2012) have suggested that attendance at football matches in which the home team is expected to lose may be driven by the brand following of the visiting club. Pawlowski and Anders (2012) measure brand using an index constructed by Feldmann (2007) for the clubs of the Bundesliga.

 The Feldmann measure of brand is based on surveys of fans. Factor analysis produces evidence that “*perceived* brand image and *perceived* sporting success are the key dimensions of football clubs’ brand strength.” The approach here is quite different. Rather than use a measure of visitor brand to explain attendance, we estimate brand strength as the power of a visiting club to boost the attendance of the home team. Clubs with strong brand will travel well, that is, attendance when they are the visiting team will be greater for the home team, all other things held constant. Coates and Humphreys (2012) estimated the impact of visiting teams on national hockey league attendance but did not extend their analysis to determinants of these effects. Coates, Naidenova and Parshakov (2015) have done this type of analysis for the clubs of the Russian Premier League. Key findings are that a history of club success builds brand but that this brand can deteriorate with a period of reduced success.

 The analysis of this paper utilizes game attendance data over several seasons for each of the big five European football leagues as well as from other prominent leagues (the Netherlands and Portugal) to estimate brand strength of the visiting teams. These brand strength values are explained using such factors as the number of championships a club has won, the number of appearances in European competitions, and the history of the club’s success.

There are several interesting research questions in this analysis. First, do clubs in each league have a brand or is brand limited to the most prominent clubs in the most prominent leagues? It is easy to believe that Manchester United, Bayern Munich, or Real Madrid has a brand. Do Ajax or Porto? Do Chelsea or Schalke? Second, are the determinants of brand strength the same across leagues or are the determinants country and league specific? Finally, how persistent is brand strength? For example, does Dortmund have a strong brand and, given the club’s lackluster play in 2014-15, is the value of the brand depreciating? How many seasons of poor play does it take for a club to exhaust the capital built up in its brand?

Brand management is an important concern of clubs, as it is for all businesses. In football, strong brands are able to sell merchandise and club gear better than are weak brands. The strongest brands even have followings across national borders, meaning the market for those clubs’ merchandise is international. Loss of brand capital may translate into reduced revenues and, consequently, reduced ability to hire the best players, coaches and managers, leading to further declines in sporting success and added deterioration of brand. This study seeks to understand this process to be able to advise clubs on their brand management.

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