**MASTERS IN**

INFORMATION SYSTEMS MANAGEMENT

**MASTERS FINAL WORK**

Dissertation

Relationship between a football club and its fans through
the club website: Study about Sporting Clube de Portugal

JOÃO EDGAR TRIGUEIRO DA SILVA

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**SUPERVISOR:**

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**Abstract**

The increased competition between companies that focus their activities in a particular business makes companies have a need to expand for several points of the globe in searching of other markets.

The websites are a way for a company to make known to in the world, to publicize their business and a way to getting success if it reflect a good image.

Football clubs, exploiting the fact that football be the king sport in much of the world, have a great opportunity to get to known through a website that is well built and attract users.

The aim of this work was to understand what kind of relationship exists between the fans and Sporting Clube de Portugal through the club's official website, taking into account the features that should be present in a website. From the feature 'Relationship with the user' can be noticed that the fans do not give great importance to the empathy created when visiting the website of Sporting and give importance to the content and information presented.

**Keywords:** website, internet, football clubs, relationship, users, features of a website

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## 1. Introduction

Today a company that focuses the business around a customer should take into account what kind of needs has each client, their consumption pattern and level of satisfaction so it can retain that customer and make it a regular customer.

Information continues to become more tightly integrated as interchangeable ever since Tim-Berners invented the World Wide Web (www) (Ho et al., 2012).

According to Miranda et al. (2010) the number of Internet users has grown significantly over the last few years, from virtually nothing to an estimated 1.04 billion users that are 16% of the world's population.

The emergence of the Internet has made information and knowledge of the world easier to obtain therefore business is able to get best out of each customer. With the advancement of new technologies and the increasing competition in the world of business, companies see on the internet a way to try to reach customers at various points of the globe to which without the existence of the internet would be very difficult to achieve.

To reach the name of the company and its products and services to various parts of the globe, creating a website has become essential to achieve this goal.

The disclosure of the name of a company on the internet becomes, thus, very important, whether at blogs, social networks and search engines. The interaction of consumers and marketers within the Web environment, particularly for retailing/purchasing is a growing area of importance (O'cass & Fenech, 2003).

However, the company's website should be seen as the face of the company when visiting their online portal. An organized website, with information accessible, easy to navigate and pleasing to the eye will be very attractive to those who visit it. The website

should reflect the image that the company is trying to project and which the customer will remember and return to (Cox & Dale, 2002).

The success of e-commerce for any company is greatly dependent on its website (Kriemadis et al. 2009).

Football and the Internet have shown early signs of a prosperous marriage (Miranda et al., 2010). Technology has become settled deep within football fandom (The Social Issues Research Centre, 2008). According to these authors the Internet has become a significant marketing tool for many sports organizations, including professional sports teams.

Then taking into account the power of the Internet and the popularity of football, the construction of a good website, which contains several services and products and it is easy to understand and navigation, can be seen as a powerful weapon by the clubs to reach, not only fans who are spread across various parts of the globe in order to get to know more about the club and what it offers them, so as to give greater comfort to fans who, although not so far physically from the club, want via a link to the club website to purchase products and services and also to hear what's going on in the club.

Few studies have been made on how football clubs can get great benefit from the Internet in order to achieve competitive advantage, to reach a larger number of sympathizers and supporters who can adhere to the products and services offered by the websites of clubs.

That said, what I'm proposing to do is to study the case of Sporting Clube de Portugal where the aim of the research process seeks to answer two questions related to the supporters of this club: **What are the means of communication used to check news and where to buy club products? What are the main features of the Sporting Clube de Portugal official website's that visitors consider more important?**

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Football and its dimension

Nowadays, football is not only a social phenomenon but also a big business, where large amounts of money circulates, many stakeholders groups interconnected worldwide, where clubs changed from simple sports teams to international entertainment companies, especially those teams that have a highly competitive behavior, trying to get the best business strategies (Dolles & Söderman, 2005).

According to Dolles and Söderman (2005) football is in front of many other team sports, such as volleyball, basketball or handball, and has been accepted as the number one sport with regard to media attention and audience reception worldwide (as cited in Horne & Manzenreiter, 2002b).

Many media sources are increasingly attempting ways of encouraging supporters to actively interact with them through the television and radio phone-in programs (both local and national) and the development of message boards on official, unofficial (such as those created by supporters of specific clubs) and independent (such as BBC Sport and Sky Sports) websites (Cleland, 2011). Cable and satellite tv had contributed to engagement between fans and sports, providing debates via text, phone or email (Cleland, 2011). Sport fans can now be informed about sports 24 hours a day, anywhere.

There are some clubs who have their internal media which refers to media sources that clubs control such as the match day program and the official club website. (Cleland, 2011).

Although there have been advances in the relationship between 'new' media and football, many football fans still prefer to gather news and information from traditional sources, such as local evening newspapers and local radio, rather than 'niche' media

(Cleland, 2011). Local radio continue to play an active role in providing commentary on matches while at the same time providing a phone line for supporters to call and discuss about particular clubs (Cleland, 2011). Local newspapers had developed parts of the football section to supporters writing in and becoming involved in discussing their club (Cleland, 2011).

Despite 'traditional' sources remaining an important part of modern football, it should be noted that one of the clear reasons behind the rapidly changing media-fan relationship is a result of the internet (Cleland, 2011).

Supporter dialogue not only developed the relationship between the specific media source and the supporters but also aided supporters to feel 'their' club, which can be noted in clubs who encourage supporters to dialogue through the available internal channels (Cleland, 2011).

Although research on the increasing level of two-way dialogue between various media sources and football supporters be limited, for those supporters who do not produce their own texts, the developments that have occurred within the media have provided an opportunity to connect with football supporters in various ways (Cleland, 2011). Due to this 'new' media also forced 'old' media, such as newspapers and radio, to establish strategies which encouraged two-way dialogue with their readers and listeners (Cleland, 2011).

Football stadiums, especially from the top clubs, are equipped with the most sophisticated technology. It also includes VIP lounges, kindergarten areas and eating dining places (Dolles & Söderman, 2005).

Development of media has changed the way sport is consumed and the spectator-sport industry is the financial base, which is crucial for the success of many profit and nonprofit organizations (Kim & Trail, 2011).

To reach 'international fans', the biggest clubs use various strategies, such as conducting games in remote locations or offering packages for sale on the website of the club to watch the games (Dolles & Söderman, 2005).

Sport-related licensed products are any and all products bearing the name or logo of a sport team, which manufacturers use, sell, and offer for sale through a licensing contract with the league or team (Kim & Trail, 2011).

Sponsorship is another strategic tool that can explain the greatest dimension that football has. Sponsorship is used to shape and promote the image of football, the club and its sponsor partners in markets needed to be developed (Dolles & Söderman, 2005). These authors takes the example of Manchester United's objective in creating global sponsorship to seek alliances that will encourage and reward investment in the club to the mutual advantage of both parties worldwide.

Yang (2011) considered that sponsors bring some advantages depending of teams' performance such as how many competitions a team can participate, how far it can reach in different competitions and how many titles can get and so on (as cited in Gedam, 2011).

According to Dolles & Söderman (2005) the bigger is the influence of the brand both the local market and the sports arena, the bigger is the growth of the potential revenue pie for your team.

Dolles & Söderman (2005) suggested a value creation with the construction of brand equity by the club and the generation of revenues beyond both the local market and the stadium.

Briefly, football is publicized by the media from various dimensions:

- traditional media, in which local radio and local newspaper play a very important role with some local newspaper promoting discussions with supporters about their clubs and local radio making programs where supporters make phone-calls to discuss about their clubs (Cleland, 2011).

- cable television, with some channels providing news and information about sports 24 hours a day (Cleland, 2011).

- football stadium, also has a big impact because new stadiums are equipped with new technologies bringing the possibility to live new experiences (Dolles & Söderman, 2005).

- Internet, which include official, unofficial, created by supporters and independent, such as BBC Sport and Sky Sports websites (Cleland, 2011). Official websites are used to reach international fans, for sponsorship to promote club's image and brand, so clubs can create alliances with other companies (Kim & Trail, 2011, Dolles & Söderman, 2005, Yang, 2011 as cited in Gedam, 2011).

### 2.2. Internet - Website Quality

Along with the coming era of Internet, people spent more and more time on the Web, gaining more information from the Web unconsciously (Ho et al., 2012).

With the evolution of e-commerce through the Internet and other transactional mechanisms, companies can now take advantage with the sharing of inter-organizational information that involves low costs, are easy to use and advantageous for global relationships (Smith, A.A. & Smith, A.D., 2012).

A website should reflect the value proposition and address whether it is trying to satisfy the customer needs to ensure repeat visits in the hope of gaining customer loyalty (Cox & Dale, 2002). According to Loiacano et al. (2002) the website should present a

consistent image, which corresponds to the picture of the company and what it demands to the user.

Isaías and Coelho (2013) analyzed the 36 most visited Portuguese e-Commerce websites in 2010 and they observed that Web 2.0 tools have a set of different characteristics that all together created a global tool, allowing to understand what are the Web 2.0 tools most used by Portuguese online retailers. It was possible to build a model of Web 2.0 tools optimized for retailers who want to operate in Portugal.

According to Miranda et al. (2010) the quality of a user's visit to a website is not simply determined by the strength of content on that website. The way a website is constructed and maintained can have a positive or negative impact on that experience. Placing obstacles in their way can lead to frustration, and consequently to website abandonment and undermine brand reputation.

In L.-A. Ho et al.'s (2012) work was concluded that the website quality mediates the link between internet attitudes and internet searching behaviour and influences the online information seeking process via the enhancement of the effect of users' internet attitudes. To this question, Sousa and Voss (2012) found evidence for a strong relationship between e-service quality and e-loyalty behavioural, suggesting that a customer with a strong intrinsic preference for the Internet channel would not change due to online service quality changes but he/she would potentially be a candidate for switching to the online service of a competitor, given his/her strong preference for this channel.

Isaías et al. (2009) observed that with web 2.0 tools users can create, themselves, information using more efficient components with better features and possibilities.

Sousa and Voss (2012) in 'The impacts of e-service quality on customer behavior in multi-channel e-services' argued that e-service quality dimensions may affect how

customers use multiple channels. They associated: Information availability with information quality; pursuit of efficiency with ease of use; risk with privacy/security; convenience and waiting time with fulfilment (Sousa & Voss, 2012).

Parasuraman et al. (2005) stated that consumers' perceptions of service quality can affect consumer loyalty and behavioral intentions. Parasuraman et al. (2005) created a multiple-item scale for assessing electronic service quality consisting in four dimensions: efficiency on navigation; fulfillment, which is the extent to which the site's commitment about order delivery and item availability are performed; system availability, i.e., the correct technical functioning of the site; and privacy, which is the degree to which the site is reliable and protects customer information. They observed that efficiency and fulfillment were the most critical of dimensions website service quality.

Lee et al.'s (2010) work showed that perceived quality factors of the Internet, such information discovery, entertainment, information quality, socialisation and relationship maintenance, significantly predicted the intention and behaviour of using Internet applications.

Cox and Dale (2002) in their study examined various key quality factors in website design and use. Those were: Clarity of purpose, design, accessibility and speed, content, customer service and customer. After consideration, Cox and Dale (2002) grouped these factors into four categories:

- ease of use, related to the design of the website and reflects the usability of the website during customer navigation trying to reduce his/her frustration. Related to this category, Loiacano et al. (2002) added the dimension of facility to understand the website and the intuitiveness when the user is able to navigate on the website. Chen and Dibb (2010) associated this dimension to the web site usability. Gehrke

and Turban (1999) extended to the navigation efficiency, so the user will not get confused or frustrated and abandon the site. Parasuraman et al. (2005) and Sousa and Voss (2012) related this dimension to the efficiency of the navigation on the website.

- customer confidence, referred to how customers feel when visiting a website in terms of accessibility, speed, reliability and customer service.

- online resources, referred to the products and services offered on the website , with a focus on the website's ability to provide information for customers be able to make a purchase online. According to Loiacono et al. (2002), the information should be fit to task and the website should interact with the user in order to receive tailored information to his/her needs and should contains features which help the user to complete his/her task. At this dimension, Trocchia and Janda (2003) associated the credibility of the information. Li et al. (2002) and Chen and Dibb (2010) referred to the website responsiveness to provide precise information about products and services and also the quality of the information if that information meets the needs of customers. According to Gehrke and Turban (1999) the business content was also important because of the usefulness of the content.

- and relationship services, referred to the factors that added value to the customer experience by building a relationship with them or by offering extra services and information. To this dimension Trocchia and Janda (2003) added the access to the website for the users who live in remote areas and expect to be able to access a wide assortment of products and services.

According to Parasuraman et al. (1994) the SERVQUAL scale was developed in an attempt to measure how consumers perceive the quality of a service. This scale comprises five dimensions: tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance and empathy.

Trocchia and Janda (2003) suggested that consumers perceive online service quality to consist of five dimensions:

- performance, which included elements of reliability and responsiveness of SERVQUAL to the firm's ability to confirm, process and deliver customers' online order correctly and speedily.

- access, emerged as a characteristic unique to Internet service quality for customers who live in distant places.

- security, resembled to the SERVQUAL dimension of assurance and reliability its related to the risk involving credit cards when purchasing online. Gehrke and Turban (1999) related this dimension with the website's operation after a consumer's purchase. Smith, A.A. and Smith, A.D. (2012), Chen and Dibb (2010), and Mayer et al. (1995) argued that notions of trust and risk are very important to understand if a customer wants to purchase online. Chen and Dibb (2010) also stated that consumer's confidence in the website positively and clearly affects their attitudes toward the website. Smith, A.A. and Smith, A.D. (2012) referred that fraud could be avoided if customers create an account with essential information. Loiacono et al. (2002) referred that trust on the website is essential to the customer make online purchases. Li et al. (2002), at this dimension, said that the competence of the website is also important to respond to the customer's orders.

- sensation, corresponded with SERVQUAL'S tangibles and empathy dimensions and its related with the environment offered in the Internet which some customers prefer because they don't have to deal with a salesperson but others customers defend that shops offer a good environment that Internet cannot replicate. Related to this, Loiacono et al. (2002) mentioned the flow of the website and feelings expressed by the user when visiting the website.

- and information, as a characteristic unique to Internet service quality and customers regarded information credibility and quantity.

Loiacono et al. (2002) started from four general categories of website quality and proposed the use of the WebQual instrument to measure consumers' perceptions of website service quality using twelve dimensions. The four categories were: ease of use, usefulness, entertainment and complementary relationship: These were subdivided: usefulness, which included: informational fit to task and interaction; trust, i.e., the user feels safe to make transactions; response time, it's related with the time a user waits for the website to response his/her actions; ease of use; entertainment, which included: visual appeal, if the website has nice looking, innovativeness, if the website is bold and dashing, and flow; and complementary relationship, which included: consistent image, business processes, i.e., the website allows transactions online and all the business processes are completed using the website; substitutability, its related with the capacity of the website to make all the business process without the need to use other means.

Li et al. (2002) examined a web-based service quality using a modified SERVQUAL which was defined as the scope to which services based on the web technology help the effective and efficient online communication, purchase and distribution of products/services. These included six dimensions: responsiveness of the website; competence, i.e., the ability of the online service system to fulfill the online service;

quality of information, presents the attributes of information quality, to evaluate which information content meets the needs of customers; empathy, should pay attention on providing caring and individual attention; web assistance, giving importance to the function of FAQs to help customers solve their problems; call-back systems, focusing only the complementary role of callback systems in web-based customer services.

Kriemadis et al. (2009) provided a better understanding of how the internet is used in the football sector. First, they described the online environment and how should be the website design. According to Kriemadis et al. (2009) an e-commerce company is successful if its website has an appropriate design.

According to Gehrke and Turban (1999), the website should include:

- Page-loading speed, which includes graphics simple and meaningful, limitation of the use of animation and/or multimedia plug in requirements, thumbnails, supply 'text-only' choice and progressive rendering. According to Chen and Dibb (2010) the speed of download is essential because of the time the website takes to respond to a solicitation; To this question Loiacono et al. (2002) referred the response time of the website.

- Business content, related to the quality of presentation and the usefulness of the content determine whether a potential customer will be attracted to, or driven away, from the site.

- Navigation efficiency.

- Security, which is a crucial issue regarding a website's operation.

- Marketing/customer focus, which is the ability to retain the customers on the website. These include: provide as many payment alternatives as possible, use an auto responder and write the web site in English or give the English choice.

Second, Kriemadis et al. (2009) tried to understand how customers are served in the online environment. Jang and Burnes (2004) defined a framework of customer services that involves the following variables: placing order, which is the number of order methods; payment option, which includes the number of credit cards accepted and offline payments; delivery and returns which includes, shipping information, including shipping and handling information and returns; and web service, including interactive service (email and FAQ section) and web policy (privacy, security policy and company information).

Chen and Dibb (2010) developed a conceptual framework about consumer trust in retail context. This framework paid attention on important features of website quality. These features included: website usability, including the interaction between human and computer in research area; security/privacy of customer's information; speed of download; website information quality, related to information about products and its price details on the website; and aesthetic aspects, related to appearance and the general organization of the site's content.

They found that usability, security and privacy and quality information of the products presented on the website have a positive and significant impact on trust. Speed of download, quality information of the services and aesthetic aspects don't have great impact on consumers trust in a website.

Other consequences pointed are site approach intentions and Chen and Dibb (2010) found that consumer's confidence in the website positively and clearly affects their attitudes toward the site and site approach intentions and consumer's confidence toward the website will positively and significantly affect their site approach intentions.

Related with security, to purchase online its important for an online consumer to understand the laws, rules, and regulations that surround e-commerce and related e-

governmental agencies' policies, practices, and procedures (Smith, A.A. and Smith, A.D., 2012). According to Smith, A.A. and Smith, A.D. (2012) initially select only e-tailers and other online service providers that host secured websites. A website is relatively secure if it uses encryption technology to transfer information. To prevent fraud companies use encryption to make messages be unreadable to anyone except those possessing special knowledge, giving confidentiality to the messages, which is necessary for purchasing tickets online in a number of dimensions.

Chen and Dibb (2010), with regard to security in online retail, considered that trust and risk are two important factors that are closely related. To the question of security, Mayer et al. (1995) argued that the higher the perceived risk, the greater trust needed to facilitate a transaction.

Crolley (2008) noted that, although the Spanish are still reluctant in relation to the purchase of products and services, there is a clear increase in purchases via the Internet. This author noted that the few purchases that are made through the Internet station-related sports and football clubs should take advantage of this situation.


## 2.3. Websites for football clubs

A competitive advantage in the online fantasy segment of the sport is providing extensive fantasy sports services in which service quality is a key component (Suh & Pedersen, 2010).

Despite many clubs being made substantial progress with their official websites, one criticism often raised is the lack of an interactive experience when compared to many unofficial websites (Cleland, 2011).

Cleland (2011) stated that there was few attempts by clubs to establish meaningful links or dialogue with supporters through the official website despite having opportunities to

engage with the official website on its message board service and to personally contact the club (as cited in Beech et al., 2000a). One of the reasons behind this could be because most clubs utilize the services of the digital media company Perform to develop a website for them (Cleland, 2011).

The design if website needs to be viewed primarily as a business task, which is consistent with previous research, not a technical task (Kriemadis et al.'s, 2009). Kriemadis et al. (2009) observed that the website design needs to be appropriate to the needs of the club and focus supporting business goals.

In their work, Kriemadis et al. (2009) compared two football clubs websites (Manchester United and Liverpool F. C.). They observed that:

- both sites were reviewed regularly so they are always providing above-average performance.

- Manchester's site is faster than Liverpool's.

- Both sites used appropriate animation and avoid large graphics onto web pages;

- Both sites used thumbnails to show images of products that they are selling.

- In terms of security, both included security protocols for customer's data security, providing a confirmation page and sending an e-mail after completing purchasing process.

- Both websites used simple and concise text, so they can provide what is their business and describing their services.

- Both websites provided free membership registration facility and both offer a FAQ section despite Manchester's be more effective and easier to understand;

- Liverpool's website provided a search engine option but Manchester's doesn't;

- Manchester's used subsequent pages and Liverpool's uses long pages.

- Both websites had site map to guide user.

- Manchester's used English, Korean, Japanese and Chinese languages and Liverpool's uses English, Chinese and Korean.

Miranda et al. (2010) for evaluating Football Club websites (Web Assessment Index or WAI) selected four broad categories as the basis for a quality website:

- accessibility, which is a category that includes two indicators: search engines presence, translated into greater traffic to the site, and link popularity, defined as the number of external links on the website analyzed.

- speed is a critical factor and it's the time it takes for a page to download.

- navigability, is related with the web design and a website with good navigability includes a rapid access to the different sections from every page, a website map, for users to locate available interesting items within the company home page and keyword search option.

- and site content, with contents that satisfy users' needs and it should be frequently updated which contains various features, including tickets information, history, events, online shop, etc. Related with the site content, Miranda et al. (2010) considered three sets of factors: informational factors, providing online information to potential users; transactional factors, to the provision of services online; and communicational factors, so visitors can obtain access to information about the football club.

However football clubs need to be aware about the regional differences in the demographic patterns of Internet. In other words, football clubs should take into account economic and social factors of the region where the club is located. Crolley (2008) noted that in Spain there are some regions with higher penetration than other regions with low penetration, and so Spanish clubs need to be aware of demographic profile of

their fan-base and the risks of alienating some fans if the Internet were to be used as their exclusive communication tool.

According to Crolley (2008) most football clubs are only in a position to develop their Internet sites if they can make a business case to do so because keeping a website up-to-date and ensuring its information is reliable involves costs for the club and they need to ensure that site generates revenue. This author suggested that this could be done in one of three ways: through providing subscription-based services to fans; through offering sponsorship or advertising opportunities to commercial partners via the website; and through advertising other products or services the club offers (for example, merchandising, online store/ticketing, stadium tours, restaurant, and so on).

Hur et al. (2011) developed a Sport Website Acceptance Model (SWAM), a model which purposed that beliefs about sports websites influenced the intention to use websites. This model incorporates four key variables based on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM):

- perceived ease of use, this is the belief that a person has, that using a particular system will not have to make a big effort, ie, browsing the website will be easy and without difficulty find the information he/she wants. This is a key antecedent of attitude towards the use of technology.

- perceived usefulness which according to Davis (1989) and Davis et al. (1989) defined as the probability that a user utilizing one application system will get better results within an organizational context. Hur et al. (2011) defined perceived usefulness related to sports as the perception that fans have about a sports website to provide relevant and important information to the fan. For example, a fan, who likes fantasy sports, wants to find accurate, timely updated and useful information. Like the perception to be ease to use the website this

factor is an antecedent attitude regarding an online retailer and the aim to use its website.

- perceived enjoyment (Hur et. al., 2011 as cited Davis, Bagozzi, & Warshaw, 1992; Eighmey & McCord, 1998; Hur et. al., 2011 as cited Jarvenpaa & Todd, 1997; Moon & Kim, 2001) as the perception that the use of the website brings inherent entertainment and fun to the user and along with perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use, has been determined to be a significant antecedent of attitude regarding technology acceptance and use of websites. Moon and Kim (2001) argued that users are enjoying when they are in the playfulness state.

- and perceived trustworthiness which Belanger, Hiller and Smith (2002) defined as the perception of confidence in electronic commerce marketer's reliability and integrity; Ganesan, abd Hess (1997), about this variable, distinguished between trust in a salesperson and trust in vendor organizations, and between the credibility and benevolence dimensions of trust; Morgan, & Hunt (1994) argued that trust exists 'when one party has confidence in an exchange partner's reliability and integrity'; Reichheld and Schefter (2000) stated that customers are loyal to a website if firstly they trust in that website. This is a very important factor on a sports website because consumers aren't sure of the financial transactions in a virtual environment and retain consumers is more important than have financial benefit.

Kriemadis et al. (2009), when they compared Manchester United and Liverpool's websites, observed how customers were served in both online environment's. They concluded that:

- Both websites provided number of ways for placing order (to buy and pay on-line, by telephone, or from physical offices).

- Both websites provided facility to manage booking, which allowed customers to cancel or refund a ticket or a product and request a seat online. Manchester's accepted credit cards (Visa, Master and American Express cards) however, Liverpool allows customers to pay by different cards (credit and debit cards).

- Fees and surcharges information were available on both web sites. However, sales tax information is not available at the Liverpool's site.

- the site of Manchester United provided ticket information in quite earlier stages rather than Liverpool's, which gives this information in later stages.

- In terms of returning policy, both websites allowed customers to cancel or refund product online without any charge for 14 days and liverpoolfc.tv tickets for seven days.

- Regarding interactive service, the clubs used e-mail to stay in contact with customers, to inform them of any additional requirements about the services offered but offering a FAQ section.

### 2.4. Football and Internet - Relationship with football fans through the football club website

The Internet does not exist as a substitute for social activity, but rather that adds to and engenders new ways of experiencing being a football fan (The Social Issues Research Centre, 2008).

The more loyal fans consider online forums to be a very strong means of communication which they utilize frequently because they considered being a useful way to talk about football and their team with a broader group of people which extends

beyond the fan's immediate friends and family (The Social Issues Research Centre, 2008).

Nowadays, fans interact on the fan club site, where forums serve as a good organizational tool for leaders to coordinate the fan club's activities, from songs and chants to trip to away games, and they also become a place where fans share their love and emotion about the game (The Social Issues Research Centre, 2008).

Some statistics allow to observe that a large number of fans across a range of forums admit to spend much of their free time online (The Social Issues Research Centre, 2008).

The Internet serves as a valuable information repository for the schedule of upcoming fixtures, statistics, player lineups, ticket prices and day-to-day news about football teams (The Social Issues Research Centre, 2008).

Internet fan activity, in many clubs is a prolongation of fan activities at the stadium which suggests that there is a very personal relationship between fans online. Online fans are, in many cases, as belonging to a family, ie, group of people in which the relationship that nurture between them when they are online is as strong as when they are on the stands watching a live game (The Social Issues Research Centre, 2008).

Football clubs use the internet to interact with their fans and providing them with the necessary information. This process allows fans with online capabilities to access up-to-date information by accessing the official club website, with Cleland (2011) suggesting that this can only aid the club-fan relationship (as cited in Turner, 1999).

The way in which football clubs and their fans interact is now evolving rapidly and communication patterns are increasingly complex (Crolley, 2008). And the way that football clubs use their official website is very important to increase fans identity to their club.

Football clubs websites have a loyal fan base that they can rely upon. They are able to provide a lot of exclusive content that can't be found elsewhere. And they have brand names easily recognizable, in many cases, worldwide (Miranda et al., 2010). However and according to these same authors loyalty to one team should not be confused with loyalty to the team's official website because there are authoritative and comprehensive websites from newspapers and TV channel and others, including "unofficial" fan websites, that provide alternatives for users to turn to.

Crolley (2008) suggested that football clubs need to use the website to maintain close links with fans and to reinforce its identity and relationship with fans, promoting a sense of belonging, to portray their identity and reinforce it effectively.

The content of the official club website is within the control of the club and so is the most powerful means by which a football club can communicate exactly what it wants, when it chooses, in the way it wishes (Crolley, 2008).

The fans prefer updated and reliable news to be presented on the club website, instead of content for commercial purposes.

Traditionally, football clubs use television, radio and newspapers to send messages to their fans, such as interviews or publicity on ticket sales. According to Crolley (2008) the emergence of the internet and the websites of the clubs brought a new medium that will substitute traditional media.

Crolley (2008) taked the example of Villarreal Club de Futbol website's where the President used a statement to greeting the visitors to its website. This author pointed three notes about this statement: first, the statement was a clear confirmation that the internet is the future communication channel club; second, in the statement it was recognized the globalizing potential of the Internet to reach all football fans around the

world; and third, suggested commercial interests when he hints fans to make the club site their homepage.

In this example it was evident the option of football clubs to enhance its Internet presence in order to communicate its message.

Crolley (2008), in her work about Spanish football clubs, observed differences in content that reflected not only the different stages of development of club websites in Spain and the budget of the club available to spend on such development, but also the different roles of the website as a tool of communication. This author considered that websites sould: provide basic information and news effectively; increase revenues; and enhance the image and identity of the club.

Yang (2011) suggested that an efficient information communication system offers football employees online chat and instant message functions, being an helper to users send messages both in point-to-point and multicast way and dramatically reduce communication time (as cited in Beynon-Davies, 2009).

Yang (2011) suggested the use of interactive marketing based on information systems and internet between football clubs and fans or potentials. An appropriate information system to a club allowed analyzes and understands the patterns of behavior of fans (as cited in Gedam, 2011).

Yang (2011) argued that fans would be more attracted to the club if the club offered an interactive marketing using information systems that transform fans into club partners by fans products designing, match tickets pricing, customer services improving and so on. The information technologies inherent include chat and discussion groups, web forms, questionnaires and e-mail correspondence (as cited in Gedam, 2011).

According to Yang (2011) an online-chat system allowed to see other online users' list, to show online status to others, to send and receive online-chatting request, providing a

platform to interact. Instant message system allowed users to show contact list, send message and receive message. Conference system provided users to share important documents. E-mail system allowed users to send/write e-mails, and upload/download attachment. Document management system helped users to establish, retrieve and publish documents. Established documents and retrieval information would be transferred to document database and publishing function needs users' request and then supports users to publish target documents. Yang (2011), in his research, observed that the internal information system is not complete and argues that the access to business network could be crucial to the internal communication system model (as cited in Duncan, 2007).

Yang (2011) argued that a system of marketing information allows the collection of information from various sources, such as internal database of the club, data warehouse, web sites, telemarketing and even competition can help clubs to understand what the supporters' needs are. (as cited in Yoshida, 2009).

Yang (2011) said that with information systems, clubs can communicate with the clubs supporters, reduce purchasing costs and reduce the costs of business process (as cited in James, 2000).

The biggest clubs — Chelsea, Arsenal, Manchester United — have reasonably sophisticated channel management systems with, for example, telephone bureaux taking inbound enquires and making outbound sales calls (Adamson et al., 2005). Websites are set up to allow fans chat facilities and contact with the club, though reply times and quality may be variable (Adamson et al., 2005).

To make communications with supporters and fans of the club, the languages given in the website of the clubs have a vital importance, since, depending on the fan base and basic demographic.

Crolley (2008) observed that all the Spanish football clubs websites' use the Castilian, the official language in Spain. However, there are other websites using native languages to communicate with their fans because the club is closely identified with its local community. There are other clubs who use an English version, those who are or expect to play the European competitions or other clubs that, despite not playing in the European competitions, use English to attract international people.

So it's important for clubs to know how to deal with the conflict between the expansion of the fan-base into new territories via the Internet and the need to maintain a club's identity and identification with the local community (Crolley, 2008).

The need for a club to understand its fan-base cannot be under-estimated – and this should include an awareness of the extent of digital literacy, regional and demographic variations and the integration of the Internet into the communication patterns of its fans (Crolley, 2008).

To these factors, Hur et al. (2011) added fan's sports involvement and psychological commitment to a team as constraints that may affect behavioral intention in the context of sports website consumption.

Related with the fans' sports involvement and according to Celsi and Olson (1988) involvement can be defined as felt involvement and has been considered as one of the important moderators that determines a consumer's purchase decision, therefore, according to Hur et al. (2011) identifying the individual involvement level in sport could be a key element in understanding sports information search behavior. Hur et al. (2011) considered that involvement level in sports serves as a starting point that may influence other constructs within the Sport Website Acceptance Model (SWAM).

Related with psychological commitment, Evanschitzky et al. (2006) argued that affective commitment drives behavioral loyalty. Thomson et al. (2005) developed a

measure reflecting the strength of consumers' emotional attachment to brands where they identified a set of emotions items thought to potentially indicate attachment. Still related with psychological commitment, Dimitriades (2006) found that customer commitment was highly positively connected with loyalty and satisfaction while Hur et al. (2011) (as cited in Beatty & Kahle, 1988 and Havitz & Mannell, 2005) considered a fundamental antecedent to customer loyalty.

Based in sports, Mahony et al (2000) developed the psychological commitment to team (PCT) scale which provides researchers with a reliable and valid tool for measuring attitude loyalty or the strength of fans' commitment to a particular sports team. They considered that the scale is relatively short, easy to administer, and easy to adjust to different team sports at different competition levels and it could allow marketers to better evaluate loyalty toward their team and to be better prepared for their future.

According to Suh and Pedersen (2010) the perception of service quality of the fantasy sports participants would be positively and significantly related to the participants' satisfaction with the fantasy sports websites because it's a significant predictor of customer attitude which influences behavioral intentions. These authors considered that the satisfaction levels of fantasy sports participants will be vastly associated to the participants' attitudes toward fantasy sports participation carrying high levels of customer loyalty. In their study, Suh & Pedersen (2010) concluded that fantasy sports participants' satisfaction and attitude have mediating effects. Yang (2011) argueed that internet and information technology are set to have a big impact on football information service and to the market clubs as global ―brands (as cited in Green, 1999).

Adamson et al. (2005) observed that sports franchises across the spectrum have been transformed by ticketing systems that allow easy sales of match day tickets .

Streaming matches, downloading archive footage or podcasts, and whose premium (pay-for) content relies on broadband technology are some examples of innovative features that football clubs who depend increasingly on broadband can use to communicate with their fans around the world (Crolley, 2008).

Briefly, a quality website with business perspective should contain the following features presented on table 1:

Table 1 – Features of a website:

| Feature | Sub- feature | Authors |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Quality of Information | Information Availability | Sousa & Voss, 2012 |
| | Products and Price Details, Information of the Services | Chen & Dibb ,2010 |
| | Information Quality | Lee et al., 2010; Li, Tan, and Xie, 2002 |
| | Online Resources | Cox and Dale, 2002 |
| | Informational Fit to Task | Loiacono et al., 2002 |
| | Business Content | Gehrke and Turban, 1999 |
| | Responsiveness to provide precise Information | Li, Tan, and Xie, 2002 |
| | Information Credibility and Quantity | Trocchia & Janda, 2003 |
| Ease of Use | Pursuit of Efficiency Availability | Sousa & Voss, 2012 |
| | Information Discovery | Lee et al., 2010 |
| | Able to Access | Trocchia & Janda, 2003 |
| | Navigation Efficiency | Gehrke and Turban, 1999 |
| | Website Usability and Familiarity | Chen & Dibb ,2010 |
| | Interaction, Informational Fit to Task, Ease of Understanding and Intuitiveness | Loiacono et al., 2002 |
| | Efficiency | Parasuraman et al., 2005 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Customer Confidence | Cox and Dale, 2002 |
| | Assurance and Reliability | Parasuraman et al., 1994 |
| Secuity and Privacy | Security/Privaty Usability | Trocchia & Janda, 2003, Gehrke and Turban, 1999, Smith, A.A. and Smith, A.D., 2012, Sousa & Voss, 2012, Mayer et al., 1995, Chen  & Dibb ,2010 |
| | Trust | Chen  & Dibb ,2010, Loiacono et al., 2002, Mayer et . 1995 |
| | Risk | Chen  & Dibb ,2010, Sousa & Voss, 2012 |
| | Fraud | Smith, A.A. and Smith, A.D., 2012 |
| | Performance | Trocchia & Janda, 2003 |
| | Competence | Li, Tan, and Xie,  2002 |
| | Convenience and Waiting Time | Sousa & Voss, 2012 |
| | Customer Confidence about the Speed | Cox and Dale, 2002 |
| Processing Speed | Page-loading Speed | Gehrke and Turban, 1999 |
| | Performance and system availability | Trocchia & Janda, 2003,  Parasuraman et al., 2005 |
| | Speed of Download | Chen  & Dibb ,2010 |
| | Visual appeal,  Innovativeness and Flow | Loiacono et al., 2002 |
| Aesthetic | Graphics Simple and Meaningful and Animation and/or Multimedia Plug | Gehrke and Turban, 1999 |
| | Aesthetic Aspects | Chen  & Dibb ,2010 |
| | Internet Attitudes | L.-A. Ho et al.'s 2012 |
| | Socialisation and Relationship Maintenance | Lee et al., 2010 |
| | Convenience and Waiting Time associated with Fulfilment | Sousa & Voss, 2012 |
| | e-loyalty Behavioural Intentions | Sousa & Voss, 2012; Parasuraman et al., 2005 |
| | Relationship Services | Cox and Dale, 2002 |
| | Empathy | Parasuraman et al., 1994; Li et al.,  2002 |
| Relationship with the User | Sensation, Access | Trocchia & Janda, 2003 |
| | Web Assistance and Call-Back Systems | Li et al.,  2002 |
| | Marketing/Customer Focus | Gehrke and Turban, 1999 |
| | Customer Services | Jang and Burnes, 2004 |
| | FAQ and Customers Backing | Chen  & Dibb ,2010; Gehrke and Turban, 1999 |
| | Business Processes, Consistent Image and Substitutability | Loiacono et al., 2002 |
| | Responsiveness | Li et al.,  2002 |
| | Fulfillment and Privacy | Parasuraman et al., 2005 |

# 3. Methodology

## 3.1. Hypotheses

Chen and Dibb (2010) developed a conceptual framework about consumer trust in retail context. They found that usability, security and privacy and quality information of the products presented on the website have a positive and significant impact on trust. Speed of download, quality information of the services and aesthetic aspects don't have great impact on consumers trust in a website.

Parasuraman et al. (2005) stated that consumers' perceptions of service quality can affect consumer loyalty and behavioral intentions. They observed that efficiency and fulfillment are the most critical of dimensions website service quality. Taking into account the following hypothesis is presented.

H1: The survey allowed to observe which features and sub-features that users find most important.

Despite the effort to reach all kind of fans, as for example, offering packages for sale on the website of the club to watch the games (Dolles and Söderman, 2005), according to Cleland (2011) many football fans still prefer to gather news and information from traditional sources, such as local evening newspapers and local radio. Based on these studies, the following hypothesis is presented:

H2: The official website of Sporting Clube de Portugal isn't the mean of communication more utilized by users to check about club news.

Taking the example of Manchester United, Dölles and Söderman (2005), observed that sponsorship brings value to the club. The bigger is the influence of the brand both the local market and the sports arena, the bigger is the growth of the potential revenue pie for your team. Although these authors didn't refer if the Manchester's United official

website is used as a place where this club fans buy products of the club. According to this, the following hypothesis is presented:

H3: The official website of Sporting Clube de Portugal isn't the place more utilized by users to buy the club's products.

Football clubs websites have a loyal fan base that they can rely upon. This loyalty should not be confused with loyalty to the team's official website because there are other media that fans can use to check news (Miranda et al., 2010). Crolley (2008) observed that many Spanish football clubs miss an opportunity to reinforce relationships with fans, give little emphasis to the sense of belonging of fans-base and rarely reinforce their unique identity via their website.

Cleland (2011) observed there is a lack of an interactive experience when compared to many unofficial websites.

According to Kriemadis et al. (2009) the design of the website needs to be viewed primarily as a business task and needs to be appropriate to the needs of the club and focus supporting business goals. Based on these studies, the following hypothesis is presented:

H4: The little regard to the feeling of the user when he/she visits the website justify why the feature 'relationship with user' isn't the most important to be highlighted on the official website of Sporting Clube de Portugal.


## 3.2. Research approach

The method chosen to collect the data was the questionnaire survey presented on the Appendix A. This method has the advantage of collecting data faster and less

expensive containing standardized questions. At the same time ensures their anonymity and non-interference of the investigator at the time of data collection.

It was designed using the tool *Google Docs*. This allows the design of the questionnaire and filling of it over the Internet, generating, for this, an electronic address (link) associated with each questionnaire.

The questionnaire has a short introduction thanking the availability of the respondent, also providing information about the objectives of the study. This survey is divided in three sections: first, starts asking about the basic information of users; then its intended to know where supporters and fans of Sporting Clube de Portugal check news about the club and if they buy or not club's products and where they do that. In this section respondents can choose more than one answer; and finally respondents are asked about the characteristics of the Sporting Clube de Portugal official website assigning a degree of importance to each of the aspects.

### 3.3. Sample

The questionnaire was made available on the Internet between August 5th and September 12th 2013, being the link distributed by groups related to Sporting Clube de Portugal on Facebook, blogs also about the club, and by email to the post-graduation secretary of ISEG so it could be delivered to students. It was obtained 157 answers which is considered valid for analysis. Tables on the appendix B presented the sample characteristics.

### 3.4. Performed tests

In order to illustrate the characteristics of the sample, performed descriptive statistics and the standard deviation of the variables are presented on Appendix C.

To test the reliability of the sample, Cronbach's alpha test (Appendix D) was used to measure the internal consistency, where alpha measures the uniformity of the variables correlating averages of all items to estimate the consistency of the instrument. All the results show a great reliability ($> 0.8$).

Pearson correlation was used in order to measure the degree of linear correlation between all the variables (Appendix E).

## 4. Analysis of the results

Data processing was done using, together, Excell and SPSS. As can be seen from the results in appendix all the hypotheses were confirmed.

H1 was confirmed because the results of the survey allow to observe that there are some features and sub-features that users of the official website of Sporting Clube de Portugal considered more important than others. The results showed that ´Quality of the information' was the feature that users considered more important to be highlighted on the club's official website with the average being 4,64.

Between the sub-features it was observed that in 'Quality of the information', the sub-feature 'Availability of the information' was considered the most important than the others with 4.63 of average. In the feature 'Ease of use', 'Ease of Understanding ' was the sub-feature considered the most important with 4.64 of average. With respect to 'Security and Privacy', the sub-features 'Prevention of  Risk and 'fraud' were considered the most important with the average of 4.72. In relation to 'Processing Speed' with the average of 4.58 'Efficiency of the system' was the most important sub-feature from the point of view of the user. Related with 'Aesthetic', the sub-feature 'Visual aspect' was the most important with 4.44 of average. It was also observed that in 'Relationship with the user', 'Positive feeling' is the sub-feature considered the most important with average of 4.55.

H2 confirmed that the official website of Sporting Clube de Portugal isn't the mean of communication more utilized by users to check about club news. It was found that only 17.14% of the sample in table 2 used the club's official website for news. Of the 157 respondents only 66 checked news of Sporting Clube de Portugal from the club's official website.

H3 was also confirmed. Only 18.45% of the sample in table 3 used the official website of Sporting Clube de Portugal to buy products of the club. Only 31 respondents of 157 use the official website of Sporting Clube de Portugal to buy club's products.

H4 was  also confirmed as can be seen in Table 4 in the appendix. Although the feature 'Relationship with the user' be regarded very important users  one of the considered that 'Quality of the information' and 'Ease of use' are the most important features of a good website.

## 5. Conclusions

After the results it was concluded that the users did not consider that the relationship with the user was a feature that should be very highlighted on the official website of Sporting Clube de Portugal comparing with the other features.

It was also allowed to observe that between all the sub-features of 'Relationship with the user', 'Socialisation and Relationship Maintenance' is one the sub-features with the lowest average, which gives the idea that users do not consider it is important that the website will cause them a sense of interaction and relationship more intimate.

It was concluded that users prefer the website to be more informative and easy to navigate.

Despite the preferences on the characteristics, it was observed that the official website of Sporting Clube de Portugal is not widely used for querying news about the club.

The fact that users do not use the website in large numbers to buy Sporting products can be explained by the lowest value of 'Business Processes' in the characteristic 'Relationship with the user' they consider to be one of the sub-features to be less important in this website.

The initial research questions were answered, because as the results show, it was possible to observe which are the means of communication used to refer to the news of Sporting Clube de Portugal, where to buy products of the club and what is the relationship between users and the club via the club's official website.

### 5.1. Limitations

In preparing this report, there were some difficulties. Initially had the idea to do an interview with a responsible computer club in question but due to internal issues the club has not been possible to do the interview. Another difficulty was the little specific

literature on this theme. Finally another difficulty was to design a survey that would be appealing against the research questions.

### 5.2. Recommendations

In the future, so that to give a greater wealth to this subject I suggest the following:

- Make a comparative analysis with other clubs websites that have great success with internet presence.

- Make case studies with professional website development to indicate factors improving.

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**Appendix**

**Appendix A – Questionnaire**

**Online survey on the official website of Sporting Clube de Portugal**

This questionnaire, which I already I appreciate your cooperation, is part of the Masters Final Work in Information Systems Management of the School of Economics and Management (ISEG) and aims to understand what is the relationship that exists between fans and supporters of Sporting Clube de Portugal and the club through the official Web site of the club.

In this survey it is intended to obtain basic information of the users, information about the media and related Sporting Clube de Portugal and finally it is intended to understand what are the most important features of the official website of Sporting Clube de Portugal from the perspective of the user, assigning a level of importance for each of the aspects.

The questions are anonymous and after collected will have statistical treatment.

Greetings,
João Silva

**Basic Information**

Gender?

Male
Female

Age group?

<20
21-30
31-40
41-50
50<

**Media, products and services**

This section aims to determine which is the medium used to check news and where consumers buy products club.

What are the sources of communication you use to check to the news of Sporting?

Generalist newspapers
Sports newspapers
Radio
TV
Unofficial Web sites club
Official website of the club

If you usually buy products from Sporting, where usually buy?

Sports shops (Sportzone, Decathlon)
Internet sites (online stores, olx, fair cost, ebay.)
Official Web Site of the club
Do not buy

**Features of the official website of Sporting Clube de Portugal**

A website providing services to customers and selling products needs to have some characteristics that make it more attractive to visitors. The official web site of Sporting provides news about the history and rules of the club, but also provides services and sale of products, including ticket sales and merchandising of club.

Having regard to the type of service that the Official Web Site of Sporting Clube de Portugal provides, this should bear in mind the following features: Quality Information website; Ease of Use of the Website, Security and Privacy Website; Speed

processing Website; Aesthetic Appearance of the Website and relationship with the user. Then assign the degree of importance of each feature.

Quality of Information?
(1 – Minor importance; 6 - Most Importance)
1    2    3    4    5    6
Select a value in the range of 1 to 6.

Ease of use?
(1 - Minor importance; 6 - Most Importance)
1    2    3    4    5    6
Select a value in the range of 1 to 6.

Security and privacy?
(1 - Minor importance; 6 - Most Importance)
1    2    3    4    5    6
Select a value in the range of 1 to 6.

Processing speed?
(1 - Minor importance; 6 - Most Importance)
1    2    3    4    5    6
Select a value in the range of 1 to 6.

Aesthetic aspect?
(1 - Minor importance; 6 - Most Importance)
1    2    3    4    5    6
Select a value in the range of 1 to 6.

Relationship with the user?
(1 - Minor importance; 6 - Most Importance)
1    2    3    4    5    6
Select a value in the range of 1 to 6.


**Quality of information**

This feature takes into account the following: the availability of information on the web site, details of products and services, the usefulness

of the content of the web site, online resources, ie the ability of the web site to inform users about products and services and ability to provide accurate information. Next, assign the importance of each aspect:

Availability of information?
(1 - Minor importance; 6 - Most Importance)
1    2    3    4    5    6
Select a value in the range of 1 to 6.


Details of the products and services?
(1 - Minor importance; 6 - Most Importance)
1    2    3    4    5    6
Select a value in the range of 1 to 6.


Usefulness of content?
(1 - Minor importance; 6 - Most Importance)
1    2    3    4    5    6
Select a value in the range of 1 to 6.


Online resources?
(1 - Minor importance; 6 - Most Importance)
1    2    3    4    5    6
Select a value in the range of 1 to 6.


Ability to provide accurate information?
(1 - Minor importance; 6 - Most Importance)
1    2    3    4    5    6
Select a value in the range of 1 to 6.

**Ease of use**

This feature takes into account the following aspects : the ability to access the Web site , information discovery on the web site ; interaction with the web site , ease of

understanding of the web site ; efficiency of navigation on the web site . Next, assign the importance of each aspect

Ability to access ?
( 1 - Minor importance, 6 - Most Importance )
1 2 3 4 5 6
Select a value in the range of 1 to 6 .

Information discovery ?
( 1 - Minor importance, 6 - Most Importance )
1 2 3 4 5 6
Select a value in the range of 1 to 6 .

Interaction ?
( 1 - Minor importance, 6 - Most Importance )
1 2 3 4 5 6
Select a value in the range of 1 to 6 .

Ease of understanding ?
( 1 - Minor importance, 6 - Most Importance )
1 2 3 4 5 6
Select a value in the range of 1 to 6 .

Efficiency of navigation ?
( 1 - Minor importance, 6 - Most Importance )
1 2 3 4 5 6
Select a value in the range of 1 to 6 .

## Security and privacy

This feature takes into account the following aspects: user confidence in the web site; racing web site to provide services, risk and fraud prevention. Next, assign the importance of each aspect:

User confidence?
(1 - Minor importance; 6 - Most Importance)
1 2 3 4 5 6
Select a value in the range of 1 to 6.

Provision of services?
(1 - Minor importance; 6 - Most Importance)
1 2 3 4 5 6
Select a value in the range of 1 to 6.

Prevention of risk and fraud?
(1 - Minor importance; 6 - Most Importance)
1 2 3 4 5 6
Select a value in the range of 1 to 6.

## Processing speed of the web site

This feature takes into account the following aspects: convenience and waiting time, page load speed, efficiency. Next, assign the importance of each aspect:

Convenience and waiting time?
(1 - Minor importance; 6 - Most Importance)
1 2 3 4 5 6
Select a value in the range of 1 to 6.

Upload Speed?
(1 - Minor importance; 6 - Most Importance)
1 2 3 4 5 6
Select a value in the range of 1 to 6.

Efficiency of the system?
(1 - Minor importance; 6 - Most Importance)
1 2 3 4 5 6
Select a value in the range of 1 to 6.

## Aesthetic

This feature takes into account the following aspects: visual aspect of the web site; innovation and flow; simple and meaningful graphs and animations. Next, assign the importance of each aspect:

Visual aspect?
(1 - Minor importance; 6 - Most

Importance)
1     2     3     4     5     6
Select a value in the range of 1 to 6.

Innovation          and          flow?
(1 - Minor importance; 6 - Most
Importance)
1     2     3     4     5     6
Select a value in the range of 1 to 6.

Simple     and     meaningful     charts?
(1 - Minor importance; 6 - Most
Importance)
1     2     3     4     5     6
Select a value in the range of 1 to 6.

Animations?
(1 - Minor importance; 6 - Most
Importance)
Select a value in the range of 1 to 6.

## Relationship with the user

This feature takes into account the
following aspects : socialization and
maintenance of the relationship ;
intention to conduct loyalty , positive
feeling in navigating the website ;
convenience     and     time     delay
associated with customer satisfaction
, business processes , and customer
support FAQ . Next, assign the
importance     of     each     aspect

Socialization and maintenance of the
relationship                              ?
( 1 - Minor importance; 6 - Most
Importance                                )
1     2     3     4     5     6
Select a value in the range of 1 to 6 .

Behavioral intentions of loyalty ?
( 1 – Minor importance; 6 - Most
Importance                                )
1     2     3     4     5     6
Select a value in the range of 1 to 6 .

Positive feeling in navigating the web
site                                        ?

( 1 - Minor importance; 6 - Most
Importance                                )
1     2     3     4     5     6
Select a value in the range of 1 to 6 .

Convenience     and     time     delay
associated     with     customer
satisfaction?
( 1 - Minor importance; 6 - Most
Importance                                )
1     2     3     4     5     6
Select a value in the range of 1 to 6 .

Business                      processes?
( 1 - Minor importance; 6 - Most
Importance                                )
1     2     3     4     5     6
Select a value in the range of 1 to 6 .

FAQ     and     customer     support     ?
( 1 - Minor importance; 6 - Most
Importance                                )
1     2     3     4     5     6
Select a value in the range of 1 to 6 .

**Appendix B – Tables of the Samples**

Table 1 – Sample characteristics

| Variable | Scale | Absolute Freq. | Relative Freq. |
|---|---|---|---|
| Sex | M | 113 | 71,97% |
| | F | 44 | 28,03% |
| | Total | 157 | |
| Age Group | 20> | 36 | 22,93% |
| | 21-30 | 91 | 57,96% |
| | 31-40 | 20 | 12,74% |
| | 41-50 | 7 | 4,46% |
| | 50< | 3 | 1,91% |
| | Total | 157 | |

Table 2- Sample of the media used to check news

| What are the sources of communication you use to check news of Sporting? | Answers | Absolute Freq. | Relative Freq. |
|---|---|---|---|
| Generalist newspapers - GN | GN | 23 | 5,97% |
| Sports newspapers - SN | SN | 111 | 28,83% |
| Radio - R | R | 25 | 6,49% |
| TV | TV | 91 | 23,64% |
| Unofficial Websites of the Club - UWC | UWC | 69 | 17,92% |
| Official Website of the Club - OWC | OWC | 66 | 17,14% |
| | Total | 385 | |

Table 3 - Sample of sites used to buy products of the club

| If you usually buy products from Sporting, where usually buy? | Answers | Absolute Freq. | Relative Freq. |
|---|---|---|---|
| Sports shops - SS | SS | 46 | 27,38% |
| Internet sites - IS | IS | 10 | 5,95% |
| Official Website of the club - OWC | OWC | 31 | 18,45% |
| Do not buy - DB | DB | 81 | 48,21% |
| | TOTAL | 168 | |

**Appendix C – Table of the Descriptive Statistics**

Table 4 – Descriptive statistics of the features

| Features | Quality of the information | Ease of use | Security and Privacy | Processing speed | Aesthetic | Relationship with the user |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Average | 4,636942675 | 4,535031847 | 4,49044586 | 4,312101911 | 4,23566879 | 4,292993631 |
| Standard error | 0,105442639 | 0,10363658 | 0,110163655 | 0,10097253 | 0,105049753 | 0,097854306 |
| Standard deviation | 1,321192479 | 1,29856263 | 1,380346642 | 1,265182176 | 1,316269629 | 1,226110938 |
| Sample variance | 1,745549567 | 1,686264903 | 1,905356851 | 1,600685938 | 1,732565736 | 1,503348032 |
| Minimum | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Maximum | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 |
| Sum | 728 | 712 | 705 | 677 | 665 | 674 |
| Count | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 |

Table 5 - Descriptive statistics of the sub-features of 'Quality of the information'

| Sub-Features | Availability of the information | Details of the products and services | Usefulness of content | Online resources | Ability to provide accurate information |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Average | 4,505955414 | 4,292993631 | 4,43949 | 4,21656051 | 4,630573 |
| Standard error | 0,099245 | 0,091381483 | 0,089154 | 0,086825476 | 0,10155 |
| Standard deviation | 1,243536285 | 1,145006699 | 1,117102 | 1,087920101 | 1,272423 |
| Sample variance | 1,546382492 | 1,31104034 | 1,247918 | 1,183570145 | 1,619059 |
| Minimum | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Maximum | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 |
| Sum | 708 | 674 | 697 | 662 | 727 |
| Count | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 |

Table 6 - Descriptive statistics of the sub-features of 'Ease of use'

| Sub-Features | Ability to access | Information discovery | Interaction | Ease of understanding | Efficiency of navigation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Average | 4,611464968 | 4,337579618 | 4,050955414 | 4,636942675 | 4,617834395 |
| Standard error | 0,08975336 | 0,097139447 | 0,096820336 | 0,097809116 | 0,097968518 |
| Standard deviation | 1,124606379 | 1,217153784 | 1,213155339 | 1,225544705 | 1,227542009 |
| Sample variance | 1,264739507 | 1,481463335 | 1,471745876 | 1,501959824 | 1,506859383 |
| Minimum | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Maximum | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 |
| Sum | 724 | 681 | 636 | 728 | 725 |
| Count | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 |

Table 7 - Descriptive statistics of the sub-features of 'Security and Privacy'

| Sub-Features | User confidence | Provision of services | Prevention of risk and fraud | Ease of understanding |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Average | 4,681528662 | 4,458598726 | 4,719745223 | 4,636942675 |
| Standard error | 0,096922352 | 0,093688828 | 0,10912716 | 0,097809116 |
| Standard deviation | 1,214433584 | 1,173917646 | 1,3673594 | 1,225544705 |
| Sample variance | 1,47484893 | 1,378082639 | 1,86967173 | 1,501959824 |
| Minimum | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Maximum | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 |
| Sum | 735 | 700 | 741 | 728 |
| Count | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 |

Table 8 - Descriptive statistics of the sub-features of 'Speed Processing'

| Sub-Features | Convenience and waiting time | Upload Speed | Efficiency of the system |
|---|---|---|---|
| Average | 4,541401274 | 4,503184713 | 4,579617836 |
| Standard error | 0,099192578 | 0,100414216 | 0,098629921 |
| Standard deviation | 1,242879441 | 1,258938319 | 1,235829362 |
| Sample variance | 1,544749306 | 1,58492569 | 1,527274212 |
| Minimum | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Maximum | 6 | 6 | 6 |
| Sum | 713 | 707 | 719 |
| Count | 157 | 157 | 157 |

Table 9 - Descriptive statistics of the sub-features of 'Aesthetic'

| Sub-Features | Visual aspect | Innovation and flow | Simple and meaningful charts | Animations |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Average | 4,439490446 | 4,312101911 | 4,388535032 | 3,624203822 |
| Standard error | 0,093622185 | 0,088472208 | 0,095910876 | 0,109343808 |
| Standard deviation | 1,173082612 | 1,108553592 | 1,201759829 | 1,370073986 |
| Sample variance | 1,376122816 | 1,228891066 | 1,444226686 | 1,877102727 |
| Minimum | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Maximum | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 |
| Sum | 697 | 677 | 689 | 569 |
| Count | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 |

Table 10 - Descriptive statistics of the sub-features of 'Relationship with the user'

| Sub-Features | Socialization and maintenance of the relationship | Behavioral intentions of loyalty | Positive feeling in navigating the web site | Convenience and time delay associated with customer satisfaction | Business processes | FAQ and customer support |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Average | 4,197452229 | 4,363057325 | 4,547770701 | 4,420382166 | 4,140127389 | 4,369427 |
| Standard error | 0,097928691 | 0,095271544 | 0,092793518 | 0,101083219 | 0,097099281 | 0,113691 |
| Standard deviation | 1,227042987 | 1,19374903 | 1,162699445 | 1,266569102 | 1,21665055 | 1,424541 |
| Sample variance | 1,505634493 | 1,425036747 | 1,351869998 | 1,604197289 | 1,480238445 | 2,029316 |
| Minimum | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Maximum | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 6 |  |
| Sum | 659 | 685 | 714 | 694 | 650 | 686 |
| Count | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 |

**Appendix D – Tables of the Reliability statistics**

Table 11 – Reliability statistics of the Features

| Cronbach's alpha test | N of itens |
|---|---|
| 0,901 | 6 |

Table 12 – Reliability statistics of the sub-features of the feature 'Quality of the information'

| Cronbach's alpha test | N of itens |
|---|---|
| 0,905 | 5 |

Table 13 – Reliability statistics of the sub-features of the feature 'Ease of use'

| Cronbach's alpha test | N of itens |
|---|---|
| 0,914 | 5 |

Table 14 – Reliability statistics of the sub-features of the feature 'Security and privacy'

| Cronbach's alpha test | N of itens |
|---|---|
| 0,897 | 3 |

Table 15 - Reliability statistics of the sub-features of the feature 'Speed Processing'

| Cronbach's alpha test | N of itens |
|---|---|
| 0,939 | 3 |

Table 16 – Reliability statistics of the sub-features of the feature 'Aesthetic'

| Cronbach's alpha test | N of itens |
|---|---|
| 0,86 | 4 |

Table 17 – Reliability statistics of the sub-features of the feature 'Relationship with the user'

| Cronbach's alpha test | N of itens |
|---|---|
| 0,928 | 6 |

# Appendix E – Tables of the Pearson correlation

## Table 18 – Pearson correlation test between the features

| Features | | Quality of the information | Ease of use | Security and Privacy | Speeding Process | Aesthetic | Relationship with the user |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Quality of the information | Pearson's Correlation | 1 | 0,719 | 0,594 | 0,659 | 0,569 | 0,581 |
| | Sig. (2 tails) | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | N | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 |
| Ease of use | Pearson's Correlation | 0,719 | 1 | 0,579 | 0,69 | 0,578 | 0,614 |
| | Sig. (2 tails) | 0 | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | N | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 |
| Security and Privacy | Pearson's Correlation | 0,594 | 0,579 | 1 | 0,602 | 0,483 | 0,524 |
| | Sig. (2 tails) | 0 | 0 | | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | N | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 |
| Speeding Process | Pearson's Correlation | 0,659 | 0,69 | 0,602 | 1 | 0,571 | 0,631 |
| | Sig. (2 tails) | 0 | 0 | 0 | | 0 | 0 |
| | N | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 |
| Aesthetic | Pearson's Correlation | 0,569 | 0,578 | 0,483 | 0,571 | 1 | 0,672 |
| | Sig. (2 tails) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | 0 |
| | N | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 |
| Relationship w/ user | Pearson's Correlation | 0,581 | 0,614 | 0,524 | 0,631 | 0,672 | 1 |
| | Sig. (2 tails) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| | N | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 |

## Table 19 – Pearson correlation test between sub-features of the feature 'Quality of the information'

| Sub-Features | | Availability of information | Details of the products and services | Usefulness of content | Online resources | Ability to provide accurate information |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Availability of the information | Pearson's Correlation | 1 | 0,633 | 0,618 | 0,534 | 0,667 |
| | Sig. (2 tails) | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | N | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 |
| Details of the products and services | Pearson's Correlation | 0,633 | 1 | 0,696 | 0,721 | 0,682 |
| | Sig. (2 tails) | 0 | | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | N | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 |
| Usefulness of content | Pearson's Correlation | 0,618 | 0,696 | 1 | 0,665 | 0,742 |
| | Sig. (2 tails) | 0 | 0 | | 0 | 0 |
| | N | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 |
| Online resources | Pearson's Correlation | 0,534 | 0,721 | 0,665 | 1 | 0,646 |
| | Sig. (2 tails) | 0 | 0 | 0 | | 0 |
| | N | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 |
| Ability to provide accurate information | Pearson's Correlation | 0,667 | 0,682 | 0,742 | 0,646 | 1 |
| | Sig. (2 tails) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| | N | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 |

## Table 20 – Pearson correlation test between sub-features of the feature 'Ease of use'

| Sub-Features | | Ability to access | Information discovery | Interaction | Ease of understanding | Efficiency of navigation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ability to access | Pearson's Correlation | 1 | 0,729 | 0,574 | 0,73 | 0,723 |
| | Sig. (2 tails) | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | N | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 |
| Information discovery | Pearson's Correlation | 0,729 | 1 | 0,639 | 0,689 | 0,722 |
| | Sig. (2 tails) | 0 | | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | N | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 |
| Interaction | Pearson's Correlation | 0,574 | 0,639 | 1 | 0,642 | 0,599 |
| | Sig. (2 tails) | 0 | 0 | | 0 | 0 |
| | N | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 |
| Ease of understanding | Pearson's Correlation | 0,73 | 0,689 | 0,642 | 1 | 0,772 |
| | Sig. (2 tails) | 0 | 0 | 0 | | 0 |
| | N | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 |
| Efficiency of navigation | Pearson's Correlation | 0,723 | 0,722 | 0,599 | 0,772 | 1 |
| | Sig. (2 tails) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| | N | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 |

## Table 21 – Pearson correlation test between sub-features of the feature 'Security and Privacy'

| Sub-Features | | User confidence | Provision of services | Prevention of risk and fraud |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| User confidence | Pearson's Correlation | 1 | 0,733 | 0,784 |
| | Sig. (2 tails) | | 0 | 0 |
| | N | 157 | 157 | 157 |
| Provision of services | Pearson's Correlation | 0,733 | 1 | 0,728 |
| | Sig. (2 tails) | 0 | | 0 |
| | N | 157 | 157 | 157 |
| Prevention of risk and fraud | Pearson's Correlation | 0,784 | 0,728 | 1 |
| | Sig. (2 tails) | 0 | 0 | |
| | N | 157 | 157 | 157 |

## Table 22 – Pearson correlation test between sub-features of the feature 'Speeding Process'

| Sub-Features | | Convenience and waiting time | Upload Speed | Efficiency of the system |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Convenience and waiting time | Pearson's Correlation | 1 | 0,861 | 0,813 |
| | Sig. (2 tails) | | 0 | 0 |
| | N | 157 | 157 | 157 |
| Upload Speed | Pearson's Correlation | 0,861 | 1 | 0,833 |
| | Sig. (2 tails) | 0 | | 0 |
| | N | 157 | 157 | 157 |
| Prevention of risk and fraud | Pearson's Correlation | 0,813 | 0,833 | 1 |
| | Sig. (2 tails) | 0 | 0 | |
| | N | 157 | 157 | 157 |

## Table 23 – Pearson correlation test between sub-features of the feature 'Aesthetic'

| Sub-Features | | Visual aspect | Innovation and flow | Simple and meaningful charts | Animations |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Visual aspect | Pearson's Correlation | 1 | 0,796 | 0,774 | 0,379 |
| | Sig. (2 tails) | | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | N | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 |
| Innovation and flow | Pearson's Correlation | 0,796 | 1 | 0,784 | 0,491 |
| | Sig. (2 tails) | 0 | | 0 | 0 |
| | N | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 |
| Simple and meaningful charts | Pearson's Correlation | 0,774 | 0,784 | 1 | 0,521 |
| | Sig. (2 tails) | 0 | 0 | | 0 |
| | N | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 |
| Efficiency of the system | Pearson's Correlation | 0,379 | 0,491 | 0,521 | 1 |
| | Sig. (2 tails) | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| | N | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 |
| Animations | Pearson's Correlation | 0,723 | 0,722 | 0,599 | 0,772 |
| | Sig. (2 tails) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | N | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 |

## Table 24 – Pearson correlation test between sub-features of the feature 'Relationship with the user'

| Sub-Features | | Socialization and maintenance of the relationship | Behavioral intentions of loyalty | Positive feeling in navigating the web site | Convenience and time delay associated with customer satisfaction | Business processes | FAQ and customer support |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Socialization and maintenance of the relationship | Pearson's Correlation | 1 | 0,69 | 0,768 | 0,738 | 0,677 | 0,611 |
| | Sig. (2 tails) | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | N | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 |
| Behavioral intentions of loyalty | Pearson's Correlation | 0,69 | 1 | 0,779 | 0,763 | 0,595 | 0,637 |
| | Sig. (2 tails) | 0 | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | N | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 |
| Positive feeling in navigating the web site | Pearson's Correlation | 0,768 | 0,779 | 1 | 0,792 | 0,643 | 0,62 |
| | Sig. (2 tails) | 0 | 0 | | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | N | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 |
| Convenience and time delay associated with customer satisfaction | Pearson's Correlation | 0,738 | 0,763 | 0,792 | 1 | 0,698 | 0,713 |
| | Sig. (2 tails) | 0 | 0 | 0 | | 0 | 0 |
| | N | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 |
| Business processes | Pearson's Correlation | 0,677 | 0,596 | 0,643 | 0,698 | 1 | 0,625 |
| | Sig. (2 tails) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | 0 |
| | N | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 |
| FAQ and customer support | Pearson's Correlation | 0,611 | 0,637 | 0,62 | 0,713 | 0,625 | 1 |
| | Sig. (2 tails) | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| | N | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 | 157 |