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Customer Journey in Highly Emotional Contexts: The Case of Football

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Abstract

The customer journey is a tool for studying the customer experience, widely used in different industries. The customer journey emerged from the need to understand the purchase and service usage processes from the customer's perspective. This way, we will apply this tool to the sports sector, specifically football, and study the impact of emotions and the social dimension on the journey.

The impact of peers is already documented in the literature as one of its influencing factors, although in an extrinsic manner. The emotions experienced had also been measured in previous studies, and its' value as an influencing variable had been reported before.

The objective of this study is to understand how emotions affect the journey at different moments and whether these emotions are capable of altering the previously established journey, as well as understanding their impacts on the consumer community. Furthermore, this study aims to measure and understand the impact of the social dimension associated with the consumption of football events, both in the stadium and through television.

This study was based on a qualitative methodology, being its' primary objective understanding the impact of the variables under study and their reasons. Interviews were conducted based on a semi-structured script, made to 20 participants, from six of the main football clubs in the Primeira Liga, mostly residing in the Porto district. The interview script was designed to demonstrate the relationship between variables, represented and schematized in a conceptual model, based on the previously conducted literature review.

It was possible to establish the main features of the customer journey for television viewers and for those who regularly attend the stadium. This study demonstrated that the emotions felt by football fans can positively or negatively alter their consumption behavior. It was also possible to confirm the inter-variable influence proposed in the conceptual model, although stressing the need for its' confirmation and generalization in a quantitative study.

The conclusions of this study can be a useful tool in the development and management of sports event offerings by event promoters, clubs, and major industry stakeholders.

Keywords: Customer journey, Customer experience, Emotion, Community, Social dimension, Football, Sports events

Resumo

A jornada do cliente como método de estudo da experiência do cliente é amplamente utilizada nas diferentes indústrias e setores. A jornada do cliente surge pela necessidade de compreender processos de compra e de utilização do serviço através da perspetiva do cliente. Desta forma, aplicar esta ferramenta ao setor do desporto, em concreto o futebol, e estudar o impacto das emoções e da componente social nesta jornada.
O impacto dos "*peers" está* já documentado na literatura como sendo um dos fatores influenciadores da jornada, embora de forma extrínseca. A emoção sentida também já havia sido medida em estudos anteriores e reportado o seu valor como variável influenciadora. O objetivo deste estudo é compreender como as emoções afetam a jornada nos diferentes momentos e se estas emoções são capazes de alterar a jornada previamente estabelecida, assim como de perceber os seus impactos na comunidade de consumidores.
Mais ainda, este estudo pretende medir e compreender o impacto da componente social associada ao consumo de eventos de futebol, quer no estádio, quer através da televisão.
Este estudo teve por base uma metodologia qualitativa com o objetivo primário de entender o impacto das variáveis em estudo e as suas razões. Foram realizadas entrevistas com base num guião semiestruturado a 20 participantes, de 6 dos principais clubes da Primeira Liga de Futebol com uma população residente em sua maioria no distrito do Porto.
O guião desta entrevista foi idealizado para demonstrar a relação entre variáveis, representado e esquematizado em modelo teórico, concebido com base na revisão de literatura previamente efetuada.

Foi possível estabelecer os principais traços da jornada de cliente do adepto televisivo e do adepto que habitualmente frequenta o estádio. Este estudo conseguiu demonstrar que a emoção sentida por adeptos de futebol é capaz de alterar o seu comportamento de consumo de forma positiva ou negativa. Foi ainda possível confirmar a influência inter-variáveis proposto no modelo conceptual, sendo que se recomenda a sua confirmação em estudo quantitativo.
As conclusões deste estudo podem ser uma ferramenta útil na elaboração e gestão da oferta de eventos desportivos por parte de promotores dos eventos, dos clubes e principais *stakeholders* da indústria.
Palavras-chave: Jornada do cliente, Emoção, Comunidade, Experiência do cliente, Componente social, Futebol, Eventos desportivos

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1. Introduction

Customer behaviour is a subject widely explored by researchers, having decades of study. Following the rich contributions by this field of study to the literature, customer experience (CX) emerged as a domain that seeks to understand the consumption process in a holistic way, placing the customer at the spotlight. Customer experience takes customer's perspective of the product or service, being this perspective a key instrument to better shape businesses offers to their real needs, or, using it as an instrument for innovation in product, services or processes. (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016)

Researchers in this field, travelled a path that led them to a valuable instrument, a powerful way of understanding a business through their customers lenses, which is, the customer journey (CJ). (Parker & Heapy, 2006) As Lemon & Verhoef (2016) explain, the customer journey is a powerful tool to make a rich assessment of the customer experience.

Customer journey analyses the customer purchase process of a product or the usage process of service. Throughout this process, there are a different set of touchpoints influencing the customer, being them the focus of this analysis. It is also important to mention that, many times, emotions may have an impact on the journey one takes part on. (Følstad & Kvale, 2018)
To understand if this is in fact a valid statement, this research will try to capture these emotion-triggered events, that could change one's decisions across the CJ or affect their overall experience. For this purpose, research will be developed in a context known for its' passion and excitement, football events.

This study's goal is to apply the customer journey framework to a highly emotional context, studying it in a context where many times the customer is experiencing live emotional reactions, that may affect their experience, future decisions, and behaviour. Recently Hamilton et al. (2021) has pointed out that the social dimension of consumption may have serious impacts on the experience and journey, hence, the community and the social dimension will be considered as variables shaping the study here described. Moreover, sports consumers are not only that, they are also fans, supporters, proactive members, which makes them part of the so called "tribe". (Dionísio et al., 2008) This phenomenon will also provide important support to develop this study.

Football is known for its communities of fans, which places the consumer at a particular "tribe", or even at sub-groups within the specific tribe. (Lamberti et al., 2022) Consumer communities and the social act of consumption associated with sporting live events, will also play a major role in this research, since this study seeks to understand the relative importance of this social dimension in the journey of a sports consumer, and, if those are outcomes affecting the community all together.

The football case here presented, reflects insights from the Portuguese professional league's reality, that demonstrated an impact of 619€ million to the national GDP (0,29%) during the season of 2021-2022 with an increase of 12.2% from the later season of 2020-2021 justified by the spectators return to the stadiums, post covid-19. (EY, 2022)
In terms of spectator's figures, there were 2,4 million spectators watching live games at the stadium (Liga Portugal Bwin) and 24 million viewers for broadcasted games on television. Media exposure of all competitions managed by Liga Portugal de Futebol, went up to 1866€ million. (EY,2022)

Deloitte's (2022) recent report "Annual review of Football Finance" showed 27.6 billion € revenue for the European football market.

The numbers from the latest EY 2022 report for professional football in Portugal, reveal a huge market for the football industry in Portugal, which in turn explains and makes relevant the context proposed to apply this research. Football is widely known as "king-sport" for practitioners and fans in Portugal, hence making it very relevant to study its' customers, creating bigger opportunities for brands, teams and institutions that manage the sport, to create effective strategies to level-up the experience offered to their customers.

Moreover, the worldwide dimension football has gained over the last years - depicted in Deloitte's report for 2022 - makes this research relevant to other countries where football has a big market impact, given that it was not possible to find a similar study applied to this context.
Having framed the means and the object under analysis, it is important to define the research problem presented on this research work, being it simply put by the following question:

How is the fan customer journey affected by the emotional and social dimensions of football?

The aim of this study is to present answers to this problem through a set of specific questions that will help draw conclusions on the research problem.
These specific questions will help explain how emotions affect the customer journey and the fan community, and how community affects the customer journey.

With these 3 main targets, we will be able to explain how is in fact the fan customer journey affected by the emotional and social dimensions. This study will focus on understanding the usage of the service by the customer, not aiming specifically to the buying stage of the journey.

Finally, it is important to mention that this dissertation study will be composed by six main sections. First, we have clearly presented the research topic and its' relevance for academy and management. Following this first section, it will be presented the literature review that supports this investigation and that will sustain or refuse the results presented and discussed.
On the third chapter we will present the conceptual model built, based on this literature review, and present the main research questions and objectives.
The fourth chapter will focus on the methodological approach, data collection and data analysis applied.
On the fifth chapter findings will be presented and discussed based on literature review presented on chapter two.

Lastly, the sixth chapter will present the main conclusion drawn on this research study, presenting answers to the research question and objectives, managerial and literature contributes, study limitations and suggestions for future research.

2. Literature review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter looks into the evolution of the customer journey literature and its articulation with the other relevant concepts, that will help to frame and support the analysis of the emotional impact on the CJ and its social dimension.
Emotions and its' relationship with marketing will help understand what is known to affect the customer, their decisions, service quality or service evaluation.
The social aspect of consumption is also explored, presenting the relevant contributes of brand communities, tribal communities and finally fandom and football fans communities.
All the topics here reviewed give support to the methodology and analysis model built to collect data, relevant to map and characterize the customer journey of the football industry.

2.2 Customer Experience

Customer experience arouse as an important concept as we entered the fourth stage of the economic value, the experience economy, made popular by Pine & Gilmore in 1998. In the late nineties, the experience economy showed as the next step in the value proposal for companies' offerings, being the ultimate way of differentiation and economic value. People were now willing to pay more for an experience, rather than merely buying goods or services. Later, in 2004, Vargo & Lush set a new paradigm for value creation, explaining that "value in use" is now the new standard. Customers are seen as an active subject in value creation as co-creators. Their own experience depends on their interaction with the service provider and the multiple inputs along the customer journey. (Gahler et al., 2023; Teixeira et al., 2012) This new perspective on economic offerings and value creation, brought with them new challenges for managers and the academy.

An overview definition of the customer experience concept was given as *"the internal and subjective response customers have to any direct or indirect contact with a company"*. (Meyer & Schwager, 2007)

In 2017 a review paper on the concept, showed the root origins of the concept and showed the evolution of term from different authors perspectives. This review on the term allowed the reviewing authors to aggregate the different inputs from the several contributing researchers to the term, gathering an overall definition for the term:

"Customer experience is the aggregate of feelings, perceptions and attitudes formed during the entire process of decision making and consumption chain involving an integrated series of interaction with people, objects, processes and environment, leading to cognitive, emotional, sensorial and behavioural responses." (Jain et al., 2017)

Complementary to this definition is the notion brought by Gahler et al. in 2023, that sets three major features for experiences: subjective, directed, and multidimensional.

From all these perspectives, is important to highlight that these definitions reflect one key characteristic of this concept, customer-centricity.

Customer experience is subjective, directed, and multidimensional (Gahler et al., 2023) hence complex and difficult to manage, and for this reason requiring a detailed study of the customers' assessment of the company's offering.
Here is where the customer journey shows up as a relevant analysis tool to better map and identify the experiences' strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities to better manage any potential threat on a company's offer.

2.3 Customer Journey

The customer journey approach sprouted as a tool for practitioners in the services design and services management fields, and it can be understood simply as the process or path through which a customer accesses a service, taking into account a customer-centric perspective. (Følstad & Kvale, 2018)
Halvorsrud et al. (2016) described it as a managerially oriented concept that tells the story of the relationship between the customer and the product, service or brand.

In the marketing field, several studies picture the CJ as the path a consumer takes through their decision process, studying the different steps of the buying or usage process, like, pre-purchase, purchase, and post-purchase, most frequently articulating it with customer behaviour or service process theories. (Følstad & Kvale, 2018; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016; Tueanrat et al., 2021)

The term "customer journey" emerged from practice, firstly mentioned on case studies, and reported experience from public services research, present in the work of Parker & Heapy (2006). The term lacked unified use in academic research, being used as a metaphor or as an instrument of analysis of the provided service. The term was from then on, many times, associated with the study of the broader concept "customer experience", as the tool that help

researchers picture and understand the user experienced service. (Følstad & Kvale, 2018; Halvorsrud et al., 2016; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016)

This concept is widely studied alongside customer experience, and just more recently it has gained relevance as a standalone concept, in focus, for researchers that try to summarize the state of the art for this concept. (Følstad & Kvale, 2018; Tueanrat et al., 2021)

Customer journey brought a bigger perspective for the customer experience research, that did not find all the explanation on service blueprinting framework (Bitner et al., 2008; Patrício et al., 2011) to fully understand all the variables that impact the experience, such as, customer behaviour, service quality, customer satisfaction, service design, omnichannel or multichannel management.

So far, we could understand that the customer journey is the analysis framework that allow us to understand the use/purchase from a customer point of view, allowing the researcher/manger to do it starting from the information search stage until a post-experience stage. The moments found relevant to analyse, are named "touchpoints", comprising multiple points of contact across multiple channels (Følstad & Kvale, 2018; Patrício et al., 2011)
Touchpoints are the moments on which there is an interaction between the customer and the firm. These can be of four categories: brand, customer, social-external or partner-owned. (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016)

These four types represent the ownership the touchpoint. Brand-owned touchpoints are all the brand-initiated actions like advertisement, logo, packaging, social media, web site, essentially everything that is under the brand control. In this case, all the club actions are brand-owned touchpoints. (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016)

Customer-owned touchpoints are related to customer-initiated actions, like the self-reflection on their buying decisions, or even user generated content or word-of-mouth initiatives starting from the customer.(Lemon & Verhoef, 2016)

Social-external-owned are also a case were word-of-mouth plays a part, but this time when the customer in the journey is influenced by it. (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016)This third dimension of touchpoints shows the importance of others in the journey, and their actions, which supports the social dimension impact. (Hamilton et al., 2021)

Finally partner-owned, is every touchpoint designed jointly with another entity, in this case a good example is a sponsor-joint action with a club, or the competition promoter.

Touchpoints are the basic unit of the journey, they are service/product encounters initiated by stimulus of different sorts and initiated by multiple stakeholders, which will compound in a set and bring together the customer journey. (Barann et al., 2022; Becker & Jaakkola, 2020; Lemon & Verhoef, 2016)

2.4 Emotional Marketing

The study of emotions and the relationship with the marketing field is known to be extensive, with multiple studies taking a close approach to psychology theory (Consoli, 2010; Huang, 2001) to study this variable impact. The impact of emotions on marketing related studies were applied to different industries such as tourism (Santos et al., 2022), retail (Kim & Sullivan, 2019), cosmetics (Hashem, 2020) or customer satisfaction (Bagozzi et al., 1999). As such, this research variable was also applied to the field of customer experience and behaviour (Akgün et al., 2013; Bastiaansen et al., 2019), in some cases studied in a sports-related setting, (Kwak et al., 2011) which makes it relevant to consider this variable on a customer journey study. It is important to understand what emotions are and what is their influence on emotional branding.

2.4.1 Emotions

Bagozzi et al. (1999) is one of the most cited authors in the emotion-marketing research, (Gaur et al., 2014) and he defined emotions as "a mental state of readiness that arises from cognitive appraisals of events or thoughts". (Bagozzi et al., 1999)

Emotions are described as short-period valanced responses to stimuli, associated with physiological reactions, action tendencies and expressions. (van Kleef & Côté, 2022)

Emotions researchers do not agree in what extent one might distinguish one emotion from the another. Multiple theories name multiple emotions to describe these "reactions to stimuli". Ekman, (2016), set to assess the current consensus among the researchers in this field, presents us two theories from the academy that are most relevant, the discrete emotions theory that goes back to Darwin, agreed by many, that considers them as separate units. On the other hand, the theory from Wundt that defines emotions through dimensions on an axial representation between positive-negative and high-low dimensions. (Ekman, 2016)

Wundt (1896) later proposed a combination of these two perspectives, and that was agreed by most of the respondents from Ekman study. Ekmant then named five emotions with high degree of agreeableness: anger, fear, disgust, sadness, and happiness.

Emotions are a highly discussed theme in psychology, later borrowed by marketing, as shown in several works that give a broader overview of its study (Consoli, 2010; Gaur et al., 2014; Huang, 2001) thus making our approach follow a similar path in what this variable concerns. Having in mind these considerations, this variable is set to be used a moderator of the consumer behaviour through the customer journey.

Ekman (2007) adds to the basic emotions described above, (anger, fear, disgust, sadness and happiness) surprise and contempt. Considering the definition summed by van Kleef & Côté (2022) on emotions, we stress the value of understanding the action tendencies triggered by emotions on this customer journey process.

2.4.2 Emotional branding

Emotional branding started showing particular importance as a relevant variable in the brand management landscape, in the beginning of the 21st century. (Thompson et al., 2006)

Emotional branding is a brand strategy approach characterized by its relationship building, long-term and customer-centric attributes, based on emotional stimulus that aim for a strong emotional connection between the customer and the brand. (Akgün et al., 2013; Kim & Sullivan, 2019; Thompson et al., 2006)

This approach stands for an essential emotional brand-customer connection, engaging with customers through strategies that appeal to their ideals, values, aspirations, looking to convey messages that the customer find relatable to their feelings, lifestyle, goals and dreams (Akgün et al., 2013; Thompson et al., 2006) Emotional branding looks to inspire passion in the customer, a rare attainable connection for brands. (Thompson et al., 2006)

The research in this field has brought to light some interesting conclusions to practice and researchers in the branding fields. Many of these authors studying emotional branding (Kim & Sullivan, 2019; Thompson et al., 2006) go back to Fournier original study from 1998, that later was replicated or applied to a different setting, supporting that, emotional relationship are significant, giving room to new findings such as emotional branding. It is an important driver of loyalty, brand attachment, higher levels of competitive advantage, customer satisfaction and evaluation (Akgün et al., 2013; Bian & Haque, 2020; Kim & Sullivan, 2019; Thompson et al., 2006) and it has a close relationship to emotional brand attachment concept. (Bian & Haque, 2020; Thomson et al., 2005)

To this extent, it is understood that a brand can have a greater impact on a customer aiming at emotional attachment, which can be created through experiences. Experiences play a key part as a driver to create emotional reactions, as opposed to product or service features, that have a shorter time related impact (Kim & Sullivan, 2019)

It is relevant to notice this statement showing that the customer experience built by companies/brands, has one of its' competitive advantages in emotional connections.

> *"Companies deploying emotional-connection-based strategies and metrics to design, prioritize, and measure the customer experience find that increasing customers' emotional connection drives significant improvements in financial outcomes." (Zorfas & Leemon, 2016)*

Given the customer journey value as an instrument to correctly measure a company's experience, (Gilliam et al., 2022) it is by this means intended to analyse the impact of emotions and emotional branding, across the different stages of the journey.

2.5 Consumer Communities

Pointed out by Hamilton et al. (2021) there has been an acknowledgment of the social dimension by CJ researchers, although portrayed an independent factor.
In a hyperconnected world, as we have never experienced, people are most of the moments of their day in contact with others whether it is physically or digitally, so their argument stands for the continuous presence of the social dimension along the customer journey, showing influences from social others, individually or as a group, highlighting that a journey can occur simultaneously for more than one individual, moving together in that journey. (Hamilton et al., 2021)

This vision of the customer journey sheds light on the importance of understanding brand communities and consumer tribes, since the population here in study is a fandom. (Dionísio et al., 2008) As Ay & Kaygan (2022) stress, football fans are increasingly viewed as consumers due to a raising commoditization of the sport and all the activities surrounding it, like media impact, television broadcast, (EY, 2022) merchandise, services (Ay & Kaygan, 2022) or even museums. (Brochado et al., 2021)

2.5.1 Brand communities

Literature on brand communities emerged from studies focused on relationship marketing and loyalty in the beginning of this century, with Muniz and O'Guinn (2001) defining the

theory foundations, bringing to light its main characteristics. (Bhattacharjee et al., 2022) Their study set the foundation through which literature evolved, identifying the main characteristics of brand communities, and modelling it. The main characteristics of these communities are a shared consciousness, moral responsibility, mutual rituals and traditions. Additionally, brand communities are defined as "specialized, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relations among admirers of a brand."(Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001)
They have also set the first model of brand community which establishes a relationship customer-customer-brand. To this model was later introduced the customer centric dimension (McAlexander et al., 2002) that placed the customer at the centre interacting with others, such as customers, brand, product and marketer.

McAlexander et al. (2002) showed the importance of brand mediated events and the importance of the marketer as the one that could facilitate the development of the community. Through their study, it was possible to reaffirm the main characteristics of a brand community referred by Muniz & O'Guinn, and it was possible to unveiled loyalty as powerful result of participation in the community.

Building on the first evidence that brand communities are deeply involved through rituals and tradition Belk & Tumbat (2005) could further conclude that consumers devoted to brands could consider them as their religion.

In a recent literature review on brand community Bhattacharjee et al. (2022) identified the main theoretical foundations, finding that Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1979; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) is the most used framework. According to Tajfel et al. (1979) individuals make a definition of the "self" based on a social identity, categorizing different groups, making comparisons between them, leading to a sense of belonging. The comparison made by these subjects leads them to view their "in-group" in a more favourable way. This theory framework helped brand community researchers explain how consumers identified themselves as being part of a brand community and their behaviour towards both the community and brand. (Bhattacharjee et al., 2022)

2.5.2 Consumer tribes

Given the phenomenon of sports having passionate, undeniably devoted fans, it was of relevant importance to understand the roots of tribal consumers and communities. Tribal marketing, consumer tribes and related concepts were first developed by the works of

Bernard Cova (1997;2002) that searched for an, not exclusively individualistic and value driven, explanation for human consumption and grouping phenomenon's related to consumption. (Cova, 1997; Cova & Cova, 2002)

Instead, the author advocates for the re-socialisation phenomenon in society, searching not only for valuable products and services but also for a "linking value", that can happen associated to consumption. This view, gave important insights to what are considered neo-tribes and their characteristics, that were defined by Cova & Cova (2002) as: "a tribe is defined as a network of heterogeneous persons - in terms of age, sex, income, etc. - who are linked by a shared passion or emotion; a tribe is capable of collective action, its' members are not simple consumers, they are also advocates".

This perspective brought to light the notion of tribal communities that are loyal and passionate, although, unlike brand communities, not specifically to the brand but to a shared interest or passion. Cova & Cova (2002) chose the ethnosociological approach to explain this social phenomenon, being the focus of this approach to understand the element that bonds individuals and that explains their collective action.

Consumer tribes are this way groups that arise with no influence of marketeers or other influencing parties, take their participation in the group because it is a part of their identity, their values, passion, emotional connection or ideals. (Cova & Cova, 2002; Lamberti et al., 2022; Meneses & Lima, 2014) They do not devote to a particular brand, being in fact capable of diminishing brand equity. (Lamberti et al., 2022)

Consumer tribes characteristics are also identified as being multiple, playful, transient and entrepreneurial. (Canniford, 2011) They are multiple because people may be part of multiple tribes more or less active members, and that does not dominate their self-expression. They are playful because they seek linking value through a myriad of marketplace resources not feeling the moral responsibility of attachment to a specific thing as long as they serve the tribe. They are transient because some tribes emerge and disappear fast, given a change in the combinations of its members or resources.(Canniford, 2011) Finally, entrepreneurial, once the three previous characteristics gives people of a certain tribe willing power and conditions to generate innovation and societal disruption. (Canniford, 2011; Goulding et al., 2009)

2.5.3 Football, fandom & it's communities

Taking on the example that a brand might be object of devotion, (Belk & Tumbat, 2005) it was also discussed by the authors the distinction between brand related concepts and the devotion sports fans feel for their teams. The main difference between them relies on the fact that sports fans will give higher importance to the play or players rather than products from the club. Nonetheless, a sports team could be seen to light that, a club is also a brand, (Kerr & Emery, 2011) hence, making it critical that literature on brand communities was explored.

Sports tribes feel a higher connection to their sport, not being particularly connected to a specific product. Yet, they feel some brands are welcome to their tribe because in a way they contribute to the sport. (Moutinho et al., 2007) Brands serve the tribe (Cova, 1997) such as the case of merchandise and sponsorship to the club (Dionísio et al., 2008; Moutinho et al., 2007)

Adding to this, if a fan is unhappy or frustrated with the club, they may boycott club's products to "express frustrations and influence the club management" (Ay & Kaygan, 2022)

2.6 Conclusion

This chapter presented the main theoretical concepts that support this research. Four main fields of study were presented, customer experience (CX), customer journey (CJ), emotional marketing and consumer communities.
Inside these last two main concepts were discussed sub-concepts that were the base for, derived, or originated from the broader concept in question, sustaining the variables that are expected to affect the fan customer journey.

Based on these theoretical inputs, it is now possible to lay-out a conceptual model that allows the research to be developed and applied on the field.
Customer journey will be the analysis tool that will allow the researcher to understand the impacts of the social dimension and emotions on the user experience of this sporting event. The model lay-out on chapter 3, captures the main relationship expected to observe through the usage of the service.

This conceptual model is presented on the next chapter 3.

3. Conceptual Model

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter is reflected the main objectives and research questions proposed to be answered, rising from the previously presented research problem, framed on chapter 1 and later developed in literature review.
Based on what was previously presented in chapter 2, section 3.3 presents the conceptual model that supported the creation of data collection instruments and subsequently the data analysis and conclusions to this study. This section also demonstrates the relevant concepts supporting the conceptual model built.

3.2 Research problem and research questions

Depicted on chapter 1, the research problem here in study focuses on defining the typical customer journey of the football fan, taking into account the emotion and community variables as a mediator of behaviour, experience and future decisions.
Having identified this, the problem can be expressed as follows:

How is the fan customer journey affected by the emotional and social dimensions of football?

This problem rises from the inability to find insights on customer journey knowledge gathered on sports events, and additionally, we looked to understand the impact of emotion and the social dimension, being these two concepts understandably related to sports consumption, specifically the case of European football fans. This problem formulation then led to the development of the following research questions:

R.Q.1:

How does emotion affect the fan customer journey in the highly emotional context of football?

R.Q.2:

How does emotion affect the emergence and development of communities in the highly emotional context of football?

R.Q.3:

How do communities affect the fan customer journey in the highly emotional context of football?

The major goal of this study is to fill in the gaps in the customer journey literature, which lacks a sports setting overview of customers' journey and experience. To better attain this target a set of objectives were defined to guide data collection and to answer research questions:

- Identify main touchpoints along the CJ in the context of football
- Identify key emotion-triggered-events along the CJ in the context of football
- Identify community impacts across the different consumption stages of the CJ in the context of football

3.3 Conceptual model

Considering the questions raised previously and the objectives set, a conceptual model was conceived based on three main literature concepts: Customer journey mapping, Emotions and Community. These concepts are inter-connected on the questions and the model.

3.3.1 Customer Journey Mapping

As presented in chapter 2 customer journey mapping is the most reliable tool to portray customer experience through user own eyes. This approach will help to collect statements from participants own steps when experiencing a football match, whether it is on the television or at the stadium. For this purpose, the CJ model adopted reflects the 3 main stages considered for any service/product to be subject of study, pre-purchase, purchase and post-purchase. (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016) In this case, we have adapted the expression "purchase" to "event" given the nature of the service in study.

3.3.2 Emotions

Football fans are known for their passion, advocacy and loyalty to their teams, with multiple demonstration of emotional reactions triggered by trophies, matches or plays during the game. Emotions are reactions to stimulus (van Kleef & Côté, 2022) in which the sport is

rich, both on the pitch and out of it, this way making it essential to understand their role in the experience of the fans and the community.

3.3.3 Community

The social dimension of football is inherent to the venue it takes place. A stadium is a built to accommodate large number of people to watch a game, in which they will be in contact with and possibly be influenced by or make an influence themselves. This would make at least one part of the journey, the "live-event", always influenced by others, hence having a social dimension. (Hamilton et al., 2021)
On a next step, it observable that football-fans interact in groups and have a sense of belonging to a group, a shared passion, creating even extremist groups. (Dionísio et al., 2008) Community plays a part.

On the other hand, a TV broadcasted game could lead someone to view it alone, and that is also relevant to study, if this is the case for TV football-fans.

From this, Figure 1 shows a conceptual model based on Lemon & Verhoef (2016) work. It was laid out to show the expected relationships to observe between variables, that will help to understand the causes and effects on the main objective of the study, that is mapping football-fan customer journey.

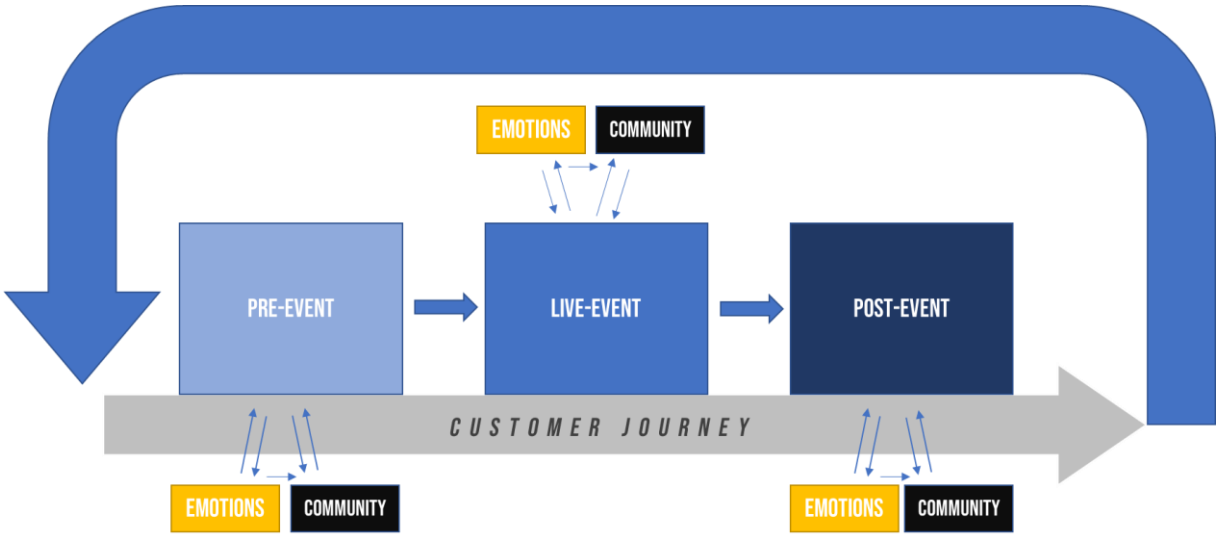


Figure 1- Conceptual model
Based and adapted from Lemon & Verhoef 2016

This model aims to picture, first, the sports customer journey main phases – pre-event, live-event, and post-event. Second, it shows the relationship between the two variables in study

that might influence the sports customer journey, emotions and community, that may play a part in all the three phases. Third, reflecting the second question raised, it is expected to understand the impact of emotions on the community. Finally, the model shows the continuity of the journey as a repetitive process, due to the nature of the event.

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter identified the research problem, the questions raised to answer it and the main objectives set to be achieved at the end of the research. Having that defined, the result was a basis conceptual model that sums all the questions to be answered and guides data collection and future work.

4. Methodology

4.1 Introduction

This chapter starts by describing the methodology used on this research work and explains why it is the correct fit for this study. Next, the data collection method and sample are described and characterized, and finally, the data analysis method is reviewed.

4.2 Methodological approach

Based on the research problem defined previously and the type of questions raised, the methodology most recommended and used by researchers is the qualitative approach. (Creswell & Creswell, 2017)

The problem posed indicates that an explanation of the subject is necessary, hence there is the need to get in-depth answers, collected through interviews and open questions that allow participants to be extensive in their answers.

Only this way we will be able to understand behavioural patterns, reasons and the "how" questions, in this case emotional and community impacts on customer journey. The open character of the questions also allows participants to be free to tell the interviewer their personal and perhaps unique way of consumption of a live football match in a stadium or TV setting. (Creswell et al., 2007)
As a subject that lacked research applied to this industry, although empirical and observational data might give hints to the investigator, an exploratory study was found to be the best route to take. It will allow in-depth answer, flexibility to address parallel subjects or address important examples during the interview, not restraining the possible answer. (Creswell & Poth, 2017)

This way, the interview guide was built in a way that the participants went from "start to finish" in their journey, being the interviewer responsible to interconnect the variables in study along the different moments, pre-event, live-event and post-event.
The aim of research was to have a supporting base model that allowed and promoted the rise of new perspectives, concepts derived from participants experiences, adding to the researcher expected outcomes and results of the interview. (Charmaz, 2014)

This choice is not free from its' disadvantages, since a qualitative study is more time-consuming, more difficult to reach to a large number of participants, hence diminishing the validity of the results, adds complexity to the analysis and it may reflect biases from the researcher. (Creswell & Poth, 2017)

Finally it is important to mention that this study followed the content analysis method during three phases, as we could see there was a pre-analysis that led us to a model based on literature and on which we based our data collection instruments. Later the information gathered was transcribe, coded and analysed, and finally it was interpreted to build conclusions from it. (Bardin, 2016)

4.3 Data collection

In order to answer the "how" questions raised on chapter 3, it was necessary to have an instrument of data collection that allowed the interviewee some flexibility to explore their thoughts on the questions asked, allowing them to be spontaneous.
This way a semi-structured interview was the selected method for data collection. An interview guide was created in order to address the three research question and to reach the objectives set, since this is an exploratory study, looking for in-depth answers.

A guide was this way built looking to collect knowledge on the emotional impact on the customer journey, the impact of emotions on the fandom and also the impact of the community on the customer journey.
When setting up the interview guide, the goal was to make interviewees describe their habits, describe their most usual journey when watching a live football game, and to make them talk about the mediating variables along this journey.
All of the interviews were made and recorded via phone-call, from the start guaranteeing the confidentiality to the participants, the purpose of the study was stated, and the later usage of this data explained (see attached Appendix 1). The appeal for the maximum transparency and truthfulness of their answers was requested at the beginning of the conversation.

Sample

A total of 20 valid interviews were gathered based on a purposive sample method. The main criteria searched in participants were that they were fans of "Primera Liga" football clubs specially clubs that have a higher reported number of fans, this way Sport Lisboa e Benfica, Futebol Clube do Porto, Sporting Clube de Portugal, Sporting Clube de Braga, Boavista

Futebol Clube, Vitória Sport Clube and Rio Ave Futebol Clube fans were interviewed. It is worth mentioning that the focus on the big 3 (Benfica, Porto and Sporting) and Braga fans were the focus of this data collection, with a bigger representation of interviews made to these fans, that are the major reported consumers both on TV and in the stadium. When a theoretical saturation of information was achieved, the interviews were concluded.

From the population in study 40% are women, the sample covers number of municipalities across the country being the most representative Matosinhos and Vila Nova de Gaia with 3/20 each, club wise the big 3 have the biggest representation 75% combined, being Porto the highest with 40%, followed by Braga 10% and then 1 participant attributed to the remaining clubs. The average age of the population is 31,4 years, 95% are employed and the majority 75% has a bachelor's degree or higher. From this sample 75% of respondents are single, and 9/20 said that they usually go to the stadium to watch the games.

Participant	Age	Gender	Education	Residence	Club
P1	63	Female	Secondary School	Ermesinde	Porto
P2	48	Male	PhD	Matosinhos	Porto
P3	22	Male	Secondary School	Vila Nova de Gaia	Rio Ave
P4	30	Male	Bachelor's degree	Valongo	Benfica
P5	25	Female	Bachelor's degree	Espinho	Porto
P6	27	Male	Bachelor's degree	Estarreja	Porto
P7	21	Male	Secondary School	Santarém	Benfica
P8	22	Male	Secondary School	Vila Nova de Gaia	Porto
P9	29	Male	Bachelor's degree	São João da Madeira	Sporting
P10	20	Female	Bachelor's degree	Vila Nova de Gaia	Porto
P11	26	Male	Bachelor's degree	Porto	Porto
P12	26	Female	Bachelor's degree	Ermesinde	Sporting
P13	62	Male	Bachelor's degree	Maia	Sporting
P14	24	Male	Bachelor's degree	Braga	Braga
P15	35	Male	Secondary School	Esmoriz	Guimarães
P16	35	Female	Bachelor's degree	Matosinhos	Boavista
P17	25	Female	Master's degree	Matosinhos	Porto
P18	32	Female	Bachelor's degree	Póvoa de Varzim	Benfica
P19	26	Female	Master's degree	Braga	Braga
P20	30	Male	Bachelor's degree	Lisboa	Benfica

Table 1 - Participants characteristics

It is worth noting that the sample used is not representative or it allows a generalization of results, since most of them are high-educated individuals with a close age range [20y-35y]

and that most of them are single. On the other hand, this can be a good example of this cluster.

Semi-structured Interview Guide

The interviews were conducted based on an interview guide divided in three main sections:

- The first section that worked like an ice breaker, set by three main questions aimed to understand if the interviewee was a regular spectator of football and their club, to understand if they were a usual stadium goer and if they did so with a companion.
- The middle section was the most extensive, focused on the customer journey, the impact of emotions and the social dimension of the event, capturing the whole experience for the participant.
- The final section was composed by two questions looking for participants thoughts on improvements both for experience and community build-up activities, to be developed by their club.

Pre-test

A pre-test was made to validate some of the questions and to understand how interviewees reacted and replied to them. Some adjustments were made to make participants have a deeper answer to them, having rejected the pre-test results.

4.4 Data analysis

Upon the conclusion of all interviews, the next step was to transcribe all of them into a Word file for each participant, listening to the recorded call and manually transcribing the interviews to attain a maximum trustworthiness in the transcription and to ensure a correct wording of the interview's recordings.
After this, an excel file was setup with all the social-demographic data from the participants to which was added an extra column to mark "Yes" or "No", if their usual way of watching the games was in the stadium.

After this, the word files were import to Nvivo 14 software into 2 different folders "TV" and "Stadium", together with the excel file that classified the participants. This initial organization later helped to code the interviews by type of watching method.

The next step was to code the answers according to the conceptual model from chapter 3, creating 5 main codes, 3 corresponding to the research questions, and two dedicated to capture the two customer journey maps for TV and Stadium.

During the process of coding analysis, new concepts were identified bringing new dimensions to the model and to concepts proposed earlier. This approach was based on the grounded theory, starting from codes taken from the conceptual model and creating new ones along the content analysis. Later, a revision through the codes was made to understand their possible relationship, the redundant codes, and a grouping of similar codes.

The next table represents the final coding tree, highlighting the ones created in the context analysis:

1. Emotion impact on CJ	From the analysis model
1.1 Brand hate	Created from of content analysis of the interviews
1.2 Brand love	Created from of content analysis of the interviews
1.3 CJ abandonment	Created from of content analysis of the interviews
1.4 CJ extension	Created from of content analysis of the interviews
1.5 Emotional-triggers	From the analysis model
1.6 Emotions	From the analysis model
1.7 Tribal behaviour	Created from of content analysis of the interviews
2. Emotion impact on communities	From the analysis model
2.1 Bonding	Created from of content analysis of the interviews
2.2 Community inner control	Created from of content analysis of the interviews
2.3 Community-engagement	Created from of content analysis of the interviews
2.4 Emotion-triggered behaviour	From the analysis model
3. Community impact on CJ	From the analysis model
3.1 Behaviour shaping	Created from of content analysis of the interviews
3.2 CJ Extension	Created from of content analysis of the interviews
3.3 Community engagement	Created from of content analysis of the interviews
3.4 Experience impacts	From the analysis model
3.4.1 Negative	Created from of content analysis of the interviews
3.4.2 Positive	Created from of content analysis of the interviews

4. Stadium fans	From the analysis model
4.1 Pre-event	From the analysis model
4.2 Live-event	From the analysis model
4.3 Post-event	From the analysis model
4.4 Community improvement suggestion	Created from of content analysis of the interviews
4.5 Most valued aspects	Created from of content analysis of the interviews
4.6 Experience improvement suggestions	From the analysis model
4.7 Away Game	Created from of content analysis of the interviews
5. TV fans	From the analysis model
5.1 Pre-event	From the analysis model
5.2 Live-event	From the analysis model
5.3 Post-event	From the analysis model
5.4 Most valued aspects	Created from of content analysis of the interviews
5.5 Experience improvement suggestions	From the analysis model
5.6 Community improvement suggestions	From the analysis model

Table 2- Coding tree

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter summarized all the methodological approach taken, characterized sample and data collection instruments, having also focused the analysis method to be employed and shown on the next chapter.

While qualitative methodology is not suited for a generalization of results, as an exploratory work, this study will focus on understanding and explaining the variables influences on the CJ. Although short and concentrated the interviewees replied deeply to the interview adding value to this research.

The approach for data collection and analysis followed reliable and common methods applied to a qualitative study.

5. Analysis and Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This chapter will present and discuss the results collected and analysed from the interviews. The chapter is divided in 8 main topics. The 5 initial topics regard the list of codes related to the chapter 4. Figures presented on these topics were extracted from Nvivo gathering all the relevant data coded to each concept. The size of the squares indicates a larger number of references taken from the interviews, establishing this way a hierarchy between the code. Topics 5.7 and 5.8 will present the two customer journey maps built. Finally at topic number 5.9 results will be discussed and related to the literature review.

5.2 Emotional impact on the customer journey

In this section we will review the main effects reported by the participants on the emotional impact on the CJ. The main goal to be answered by R.Q.1:

R.Q.1:
How does emotion affect the fan customer journey in the highly emotional context of football?

5.2.1 Emotional triggers and emotions at play

Having an absolute majority, 20/20 participants considered that emotions had impact on their journey and experience. None of the participants hesitated to say Yes when asked if emotions affected them when watching a football game. After the analysis it was possible to

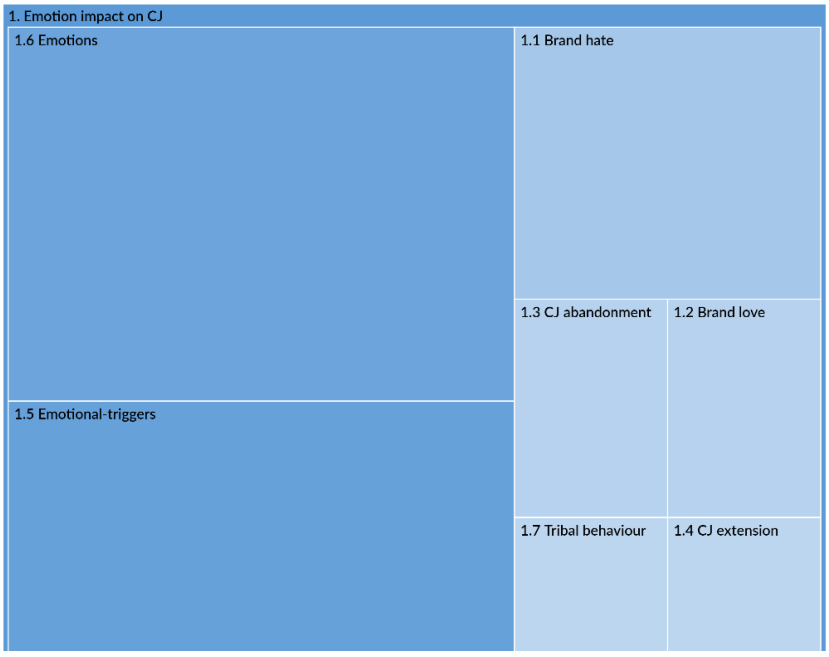


Figure 2 - Hierarchy diagram for emotional impact on CJ

identify key emotions felt and emotional triggers that are also related to the concepts later identified as Brand hate, Brand Love, Customer journey extension and Tribal behaviour.

On the emotion side the main emotions described were:

Table 3- Reported emotions

Emotion	Number
Emotional	11
Angry	5
Anxious	5
Nervous	5
Violent	3
Frustrated	2
Surprised	2

Overall, participants did not describe a certain type of emotion with a negative/positive impact, they started by expressing they feel "emotional". In some cases, throughout the conversation their example of this emotional state reveals a negative emotion being the one that they were describing like anger or anxiety.

Generally, negative emotions could be found mentioned by participants, when describing an emotional state.

These were many times triggered by: important games against rivals, the end of the competition, Champions/Europa league games, losing situations, player's bad performance or actions or referee actions.

"Emoções negativas acabam sempre por mexer com as pessoas e torná-las mais vulneráveis. Com a necessidade de camuflar essa vulnerabilidade, podemos reagir com mais intensidade que o normal" (P,2)

"Tenho casos de chorar em pleno estádio por festejo de um campeonato ou ganhar um jogo importante na Liga dos campeões, ou por tristeza depois de perder algum jogo importante, tipo a final da liga europa que o Benfica perdeu pela 2ª vez consecutiva! Nos jogos mais normais a emoção manifesta-se muito com os palavrões e as reclamações com o árbitro e os jogadores." (P,18)

5.2.2 Brand love vs Brand hate

This emotional state made some respondents react negatively towards the clubs, 8/20 participants gave examples of their anger, triggered by the opponent and sometimes by their own club.

> *"Depende de como esteja a correr o jogo, mas sim tenho algumas reações dirigidas ao meu clube ou aos jogadores, mas são apenas comentários entre as pessoas presentes." (P,9)*

> *"Quando os jogos são contra equipas rivais há uma tendência para verbalizar alguns insultos. Acho que isso acontece porque naquele momento é como se estivéssemos a defender o nosso clube, nem sempre da forma mais correta, mas…" (P,15)*

> *"Como referi anteriormente, fico chateada com alguns jogadores e acabo por ficar também com o treinador pela insistência nos mesmos. Se for uma serie de jogos maus seguidos, sou capaz de deixar de ver os jogos seguintes… (se não forem jogos decisivos) Sim." (P,12)*

In a curious example it is noticeable that when the tribe is together and isolated from rival companions, they can make a harsher internal criticism, but on the other hand, they will show love for their club, defending it in a rival presence.

> *"Critico os jogadores da minha equipa por vezes (…) Uma coisa é falares mal dum clube que é dos dois, em que podes falar de coisa internas e não levas a mal, não se fere o orgulho, estamos os dois do mesmo lado. Agora se um benfiquista fala mal de um jogador do Porto eu aí já vou "contra-atacar" com uma critica a um jogador do Benfica. Começamos a defender o próprio clube." (P,6)*

Some other participants prefer to focus on the support they give the team empowered by positive emotions:

> *"Acabo por gritar de felicidade a apoiar os jogadores, principalmente quando é golo, e canto músicas da claque. "(P,10)*

5.2.3 Tribal behaviour

Just following that mixed "love versus hate" example from participant 6, it was clear that the football fans are devoted to their teams describing the community as a religion or tribe. They

will express honour and trust to their team against a rival community, even if they have an internal criticism to make.

> *"Sim naturalmente que sim, eu chamo-lhe o espirito de tribo… é o nós contra eles digamos assim, exagerado às vezes… "(P,2)*

> *"Sim claro, é quase uma religião. Acaba-se por ter um ambiente mais unido sem dúvida." (P,6)*

> *"Sim acho que o futebol, querendo ou não, une as pessoas. Imaginemos um adepto que torce por uma equipa e outro também, essas pessoas já tem um propósito em comum, é quase como se fossem uma família, é quase como se fosse uma religião e eu acredito na mesma que ele." (P,3)*

5.2.4 Customer journey extension and abandonment

The customer journey of most of the individuals was similarly described for all the participants, whether watching on TV or in the stadium. Nevertheless, a curious phenomenon was identified in the stadium goers and tv watcher. For stadium goers, there is the chance to extend their usual journey if some conditions are together.

> *"Se for um jogo que tenha corrido bem e se estiver em grupo, há sempre tempo para socializar com uma ida ao bar fora do estádio." (P,18)*

> *"Se ganhar 3-0 ao rival faço a festa, quero é ir festejar e não vou logo para casa." (P,5)*

> *"Vou ao Instagram do Braga e acabo por ver os vídeos, resumo e assim, se estivermos a falar de estatísticas, as vezes tenho a curiosidade de ir ver. Se for um clube pequeno, ganhamos e acabo por não fazer caso. Se for um jogo importante e ganhamos acabo por ir ver, com a efusividade do jogo, o jogo acaba e ainda estou a vivê-lo, sim." (P,14)*

In the opposite way TV watchers may abandon the journey earlier than usual depending on the result.

> *"É claro que sim, tanto positivo como negativo, contudo, quando as sensações são negativas, prefiro deixar de assistir ao jogo." (P,13)*

"Sim admito que sim. Recordo-me da situação, em que o Benfica perde com o Porto com o golo do Zaidu aos 90 e tal minutos e eu fiquei tão chateado que fui dormir." (P,4)

"Se for uma serie de jogos maus seguidos, sou capaz de deixar de ver os jogos seguintes " (P,12)

5.3 Emotional impact on community

In this section we will review the main effects reported by the participants on the emotion effect on the communities. Emotion-triggered behaviours can be described under 3 different categories: Bonding, Community engagement and Community inner control. The main goal to be answered by R.Q.2:

R.Q.2:
How does emotion affect the emergence and development of communities in the highly emotional context of football?

5.3.1 Bonding

Emotional impact was described as helpful in creating bonding moments between members of the community. People would feel positive impacts on their experience when sharing happy moments with others belonging to their community, even if they do not know each other. Moments of loss can be overcome or softened by community bonds.

"Sim e vejo isso quando é um jogo difícil ou o golo custa a sair, quando sai as vezes eu abraço ali até pessoas que eu não conheço, é uma felicidade enorme, e sim esse espírito de comunidade sente-se muito." (P, 14)

"Quando estamos mais tristes com o resultado ou desenrolar do jogo, acabamos também por ser um apoio uns para os outros e tentamos fazer comentários positivos de forma a abstrairmo-nos do resultado." (P,1)

5.3.2 Community engagement

Participants described that it would create an easier engagement between them and others if they knew they shared the same club. Positive emotions are felt when finding a connection facilitated by a shared passion.



Figure 3 - Hierarchy diagram for Emotional impact on community

> *"Sim, considero que em diversas situações quando estamos com alguém que vimos a saber que é do mesmo clube que nós, há uma ligação positiva muito mais rapidamente." (P,15)*

> *"Há muitos amigos que se fazem por causa do futebol, porque é uma paixão partilhada por muita gente, é o refúgio de muitos, a paixão de muitos e isso acaba por ligar as pessoas." (P,3)*

5.3.3 Community inner control

Emotions come at play in difficult moments such as a defeat match, especially when it is not expected. These can be moments of tension between some members of the community and the club, with the fans expressing their dissatisfaction. These are moments where community inner control may appear, when a member's action is excessive or too powerful for the circumstances.

"(exemplo de mostrar lenço branco) Nunca tive um comportamento desse tipo. Lembro-me de num jogo no início da época o Braga perder um jogo contra uma equipa pequena. Havia um senhor já a abanar um lenço branco para o treinador. Eu tive de falar com esse adepto, eu estava irritado pelo jogo também, mas acabei a pedir para que não fizesse isso que ainda estavamos no início do campeonato, não se justificava, e o senhor acabou por parar." (P,14)

5.4 Community impact on the customer journey

In this section we will review the main effects reported by the participants on the community effect on the CJ. The main goal to be answered by R.Q.3 was to understand the community impact on CJ.

R.Q.3:
How do communities affect the fan customer journey in the highly emotional context of football?

5.4.1 Behaviour shaping

This was one of the patterns possible to identify during the data collection and its' analysis. The community/companion behaviour during the "Live-Event" phase of the customer journey can influence the behaviour of the journey participant in a negative or positive way, making them more enthusiastic, withheld, or more emotional.

"Sim, faz muita diferença. Quando vejo com amigos do mesmo clube há outro entusiamo e estamos todos a torcer e a gritar pelo mesmo, com pessoas mais efusivas até nos contagiam a festejar com mais entusiasmo." (P 18)

"Sim, sim. Fico muito mais violenta. Digo muito mais asneiras e parece que não estou em mim muitas das vezes. O que não acontece quando vejo em casa" (…) "Deixo-me levar pelo ambiente." (P 5)

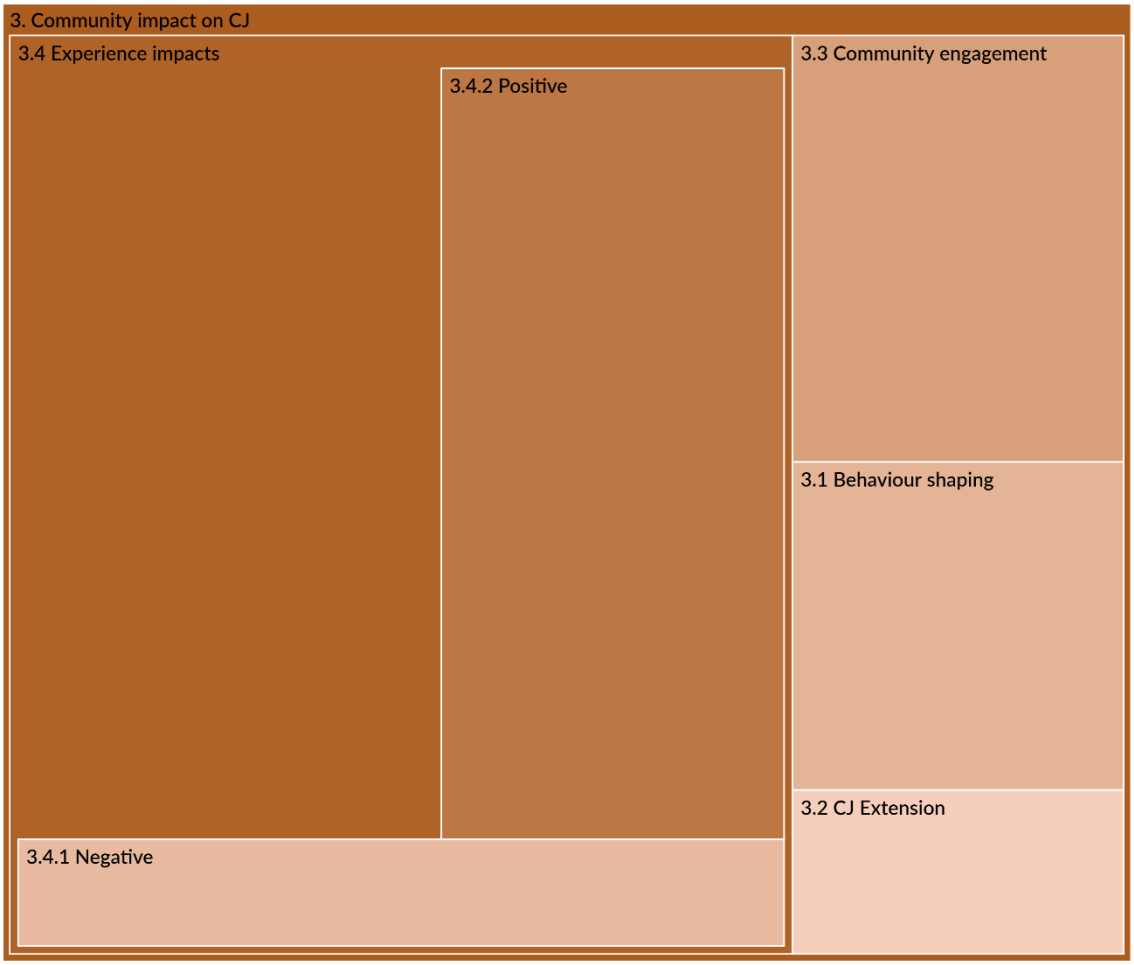


Figure 4- Hierarchy diagram for community impact on CJ

These two examples demonstrate a behaviour shaped by stadium atmosphere and companion presence in the journey. They can have two very different impacts on the person. On the other hand, an unusual companion might refrain a more emotional fan.

"Sim, normalmente quando vou com as pessoas habituais estou muito mais à vontade. Quando vou com pessoas de fora que por vezes não têm o contexto de ver jogos em estádio ou não percebem tanto de futebol tenho de me controlar porque é muito mais difícil justificar o meu comportamento. Alguém que não sabe o que é um fora de jogo e eu estou ali a berrar com o fiscal de linha… não tem muito nexo." (P 5)

This was also the case for tv viewers:

> *"Sim têm. Às vezes posso me enervar um bocado mais se a pessoa que estiver a ver o jogo comigo estiver sempre a reclamar. Mas aí enervo-me com a pessoa, não é com o jogo em si. Por norma com o meu pai chateio-me mais…" (P 9)*

5.4.2 Customer Journey extension

As seen on 5.2.4, there seems to be a strong relationship between the emotion and the community in extending the customer journey. Some participants confirmed that because they were in group, and after happy moments like a match win, there is room to extend the journey.

> *"Se for um jogo que tenha corrido bem e se estiver em grupo, há sempre tempo para socializar com uma ida ao bar fora do estádio." (P 18)*

5.4.3 Community engagement

The fans community have a big impact on the journey of the participants, engaging in conversations, moments of shared happiness and even "giving birth" to football-friends. The moments when the tribe is together are moments of bonding and sharing and it can boost customer experience.

> *"Sim, por exemplo quando vou a um café e é tudo malta do mesmo clube, quando é golo há sempre aquele ambiente, parece que toda agente se conhece, no estádio acaba por ser ainda mais, mas mesmo num espaço mais pequeno como um café também sentes isso." (P,7)*

> *"Sim, no meu caso eu tenho lugar anual, já tenho há muitos anos, tenho 24 anos e a primeira vez que fui aquele estádio devia ter 9-10 anos. Para além dos meus pais, as pessoas que estão ao nosso lado, são as mesmas também, ao longo dos anos viram-me crescer e são pessoas que estão ali desde que fui a primeira vez aquele estádio. Como é normal, já acabamos por nos cumprimentar e falar um pouco, até se nos virmos na rua já conhecemos as pessoas, e isto apenas de irmos ao estádio. Lembro-me da época de 2013-14 em que estávamos muito mal, eu acabava por ir muitas vezes sozinho porque os meus pais já não queriam tanto ir. Só de eu ir sozinho, um dos senhores que está lá há muitos anos à nossa beira, acabava por me dar boleia para casa, só por me conhecer do estádio." (P,14)*

5.4.4 Experience impacts

The community impact is felt across the journey and has significant power over the end experience. Participants felt more concerned when a possible confrontation with an opposing community was real, or even when a member of their tribe had excessively violent conduct toward others.

> *"Sem dúvida. Se for ver o jogo com alguém intempestivo, nem vou estar a conseguir usufruir do jogo por estar constantemente preocupada com o despoletar de alguma animosidade." (P 19)*

In another case, if the preference of the person is to watch the game alone, a companion might have a negative impact on the overall experience.

> *"Sim penso que as pessoas têm influência na forma como vejo o jogo. Gosto de ver o jogo calado tranquilo sem me manifestar, sem conversar, e normalmente quando vejo acompanhado isso não acontece…" (P,4)*

Even though these impacts were documented, only 6/20 people reported these negative impacts, being that the community impact is much more positive than negative, with 16 participants giving examples of positive impact over their experience.

> *"Sim, se se estiver acompanhada há uma maior interação e reações com as pessoas presentes, se estiver só, não se é tão efusivo, por isso sim considero que têm influência." (P,1)*

5.5 Stadium fans

Focused on gathering insights to build a customer journey map, throughout the interview it was possible to collect evidence on pre-event, live-event, post-event moments, as it was for most valued aspects of the journey, and suggestions for experience and community improvements.

On this 5.5 sub-chapter, the focus will be put on the most valued moments and suggestions, since the customer journey map will be further explained on 5.7.

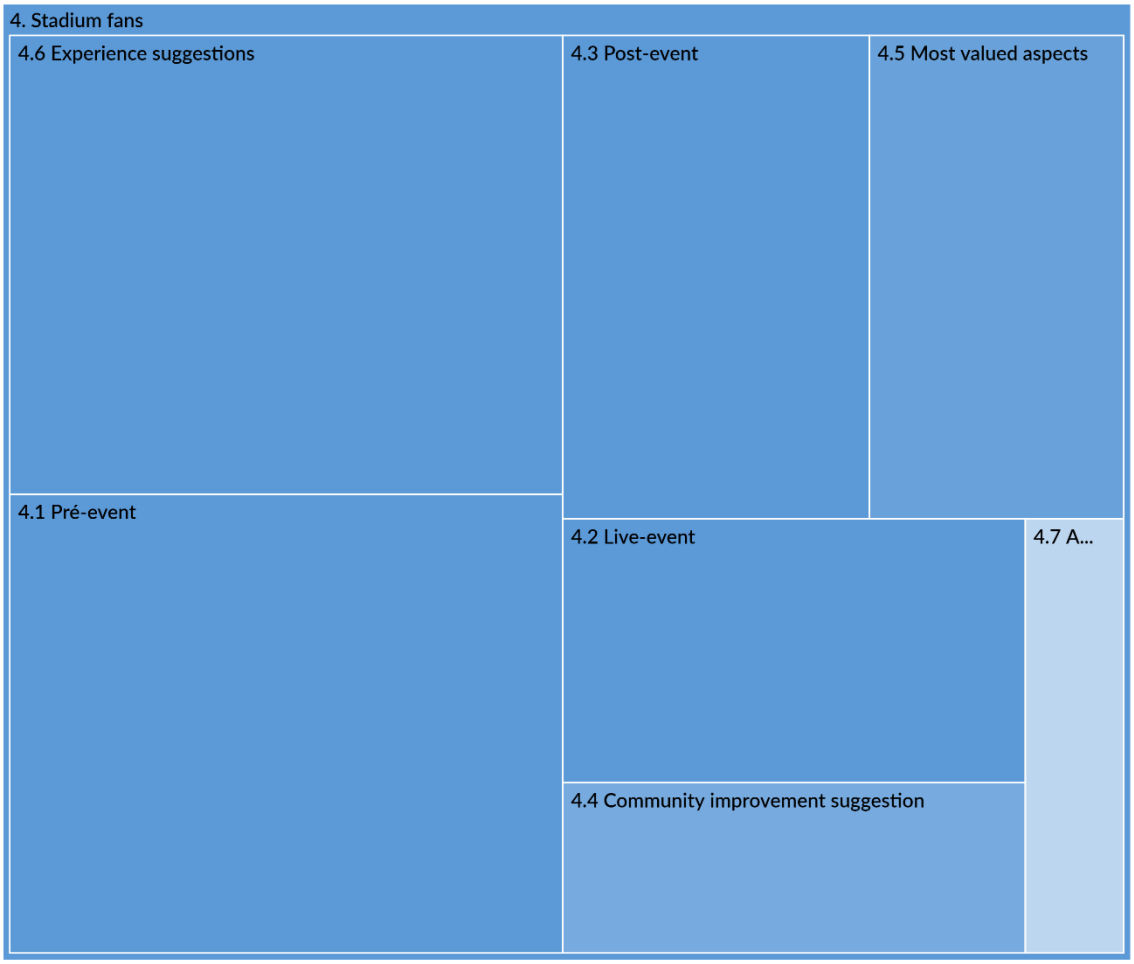


Figure 5 - Hierarchy diagram for stadium fans data

5.5.1 Most valued aspects

Most valued aspects were suggested based on stated preferences and must haves for the spectators, having influence on their overall experience. Things like the weather, security and safety, a well-played game, easy and fast entrance on the stadium, team performance moment, competition at play, social areas and diversified food and beverage offerings. Although these were mentioned in most cases they were not mentioned as an embargo to taking on the journey.

> *"No caso do Porto, valorizo a organização, o estádio como é todo aberto eu consigo ir ter com muitas pessoas que estão lá perto. Como há muitos bares e tipo de restauração, se não me estiver a apetecer uma coisa consigo ir para outra, não é aquele standard, percebe-se que é um clube maior, porque está mais preocupado contigo." (P,5)*

"O principal motivo que leva um adepto ao estádio, externo ao sentimento pelo clube, acaba por ser o momento do clube." (P,15)

"Aquilo que valorizo mais é a acessibilidades, estacionamento, localização, visibilidade, e a meteorologia que também conta para uma experiência mais agradável." (P,19)

"Segurança. Acho que é muito fácil entrar-se nos recintos desportivos com objetos perigosos." (P,20)

5.5.2 Community & Experience improvement suggestions

All the participants had something to add at the end of the interview when they were asked to reflect on their experience and ways of building a greater community spirit to their club. Experience wise, there were important inputs made, that clubs and the promoter should take into consideration, like the ticket price, the games schedule, accesses and parking. The facilities cleanliness was also a point focused by participants, complaining about the lack of proper cleaning.

"Talvez os acessos, estacionamento e horas de alguns jogos que são muito tarde. (…) Coreografias em mais jogos, não apenas jogos com os grandes ou Champions, espetáculos no início dos jogos e o estádio mais limpo." (P,11)

"As casas de banho são muito mal limpas, mas acho que isso é um problema geral dos estádios a que já fui aqui em Portugal" (P,14)

Preço do bilhete e horários dos jogos (P,15)

Community wise, the fans from the biggest clubs in Portugal, all reported that their clubs did in fact promote the fans gathering around the stadium 2h before the game with fan zones, promoting different food stands, giveaways, contests and stores. There was a recognition by two Porto fans that have visited Estádio da Luz previously, that Benfica is the one that creates the best ambience around before the game with a larger diversity of offerings and things to do, as well as having a real focus on the club.

"Se me fizesses essa pergunta há uns anos atrás sim, mas nos últimos anos o Braga tem melhorado essa interação com o adepto, acaba por abrir um fan zone 2h antes do jogo junto da alameda do

adepto, onde aparece a mascote do Braga, lojas de cachecóis, comida, e as pessoas podem interagir uns com os outros antes de o jogo começar."(P,14)

"Sim, acho que o porto tem aumentado bastante essa oferta com roulottes , musica, pinturas faciais, giveaways para participar na hora. No estádio da luz percebi que isso começa muito mais cedo, têm copos alusivos ao clube e não às marcas, mais direcionado para o clube, em comparação com Porto. Notei que as pessoas se juntam no estádio mais cedo porque as coisas estão abertas mais cedo. "(P,5)

In terms of the entertainment, people suggest a greater number of activities before the game starts and at the end of first half, following the example of NBA, creating choreographies, Kiss cam, t-shirt cannons and a better usage of the screens to engage with the public.

"Acho que por exemplo, entretenimento de intervalo, kiss cam, mandar t-shirts para interagir com o publico, Coreografias incentivadas pelo próprio clube, se não foram as claques o clube não tem essa iniciativa. As pessoas que não ligam muito a futebol têm uma experiência para além do jogo. "(P,5)

"O entretenimento no intervalo de um jogo de futebol. Tentar aproveitar o que se faz num jogo de NBA, por exemplo…" (P,19)

5.6 TV fans

As for the stadium CJ map, insights to build a customer journey map for tv watchers were collected. Throughout the interview it was possible to collect evidence on pre-event, live-event, post-event moments, as it was for most valued aspects of the journey, and suggestions for experience and community improvements.

On this 5.6 topic, the focus will be put on the most valued moments and suggestions, since the customer journey map will be further explained on 5.8 based on the codes shown on figure 6.

5.6.1 Most valued aspects

On one hand people praise the comfort and the ability to analyse the replays and the fact that it allowed them to watch the game even though they were far away. On the other hand, many respondents said that they would prefer to go to the stadium, but ticket prices were too high, or game schedules were late in the day or they were on weekday which made it hard for them to go.

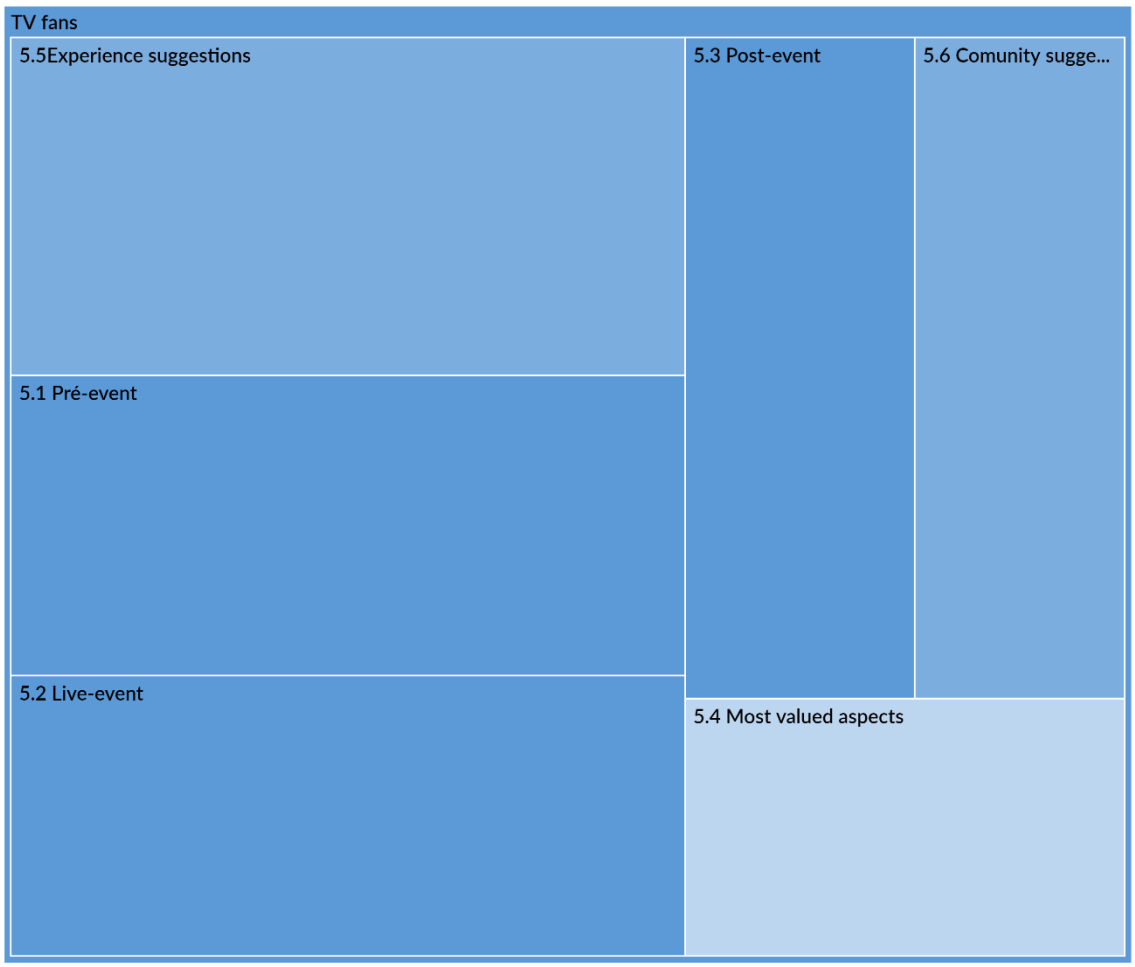


Figure 6 - Hierarchy diagram for TV fans data

> *"Cada vez mais sinto que o preço dos bilhetes está constantemente a subir e estando numa altura em que se torna necessário poupar, nem sempre existe a possibilidade de gastar dinheiro em ir ao estádio. Para além disto, o tempo que perco na deslocação é bastante e por vezes necessito desse tempo para tratar de outras responsabilidades." (P,10)*

"Como trabalho muitas vezes aos fins de semana impossibilita-me a ida ao estádio. Por outro lado, como tenho um filho pequeno é mais confortável e pratico ver na televisão" (P, 16)

"O conforto naturalmente e o preço dos bilhetes. Nem sempre os jogos são em horas decentes, acaba tarde, com crianças pequenas não é fácil." (P,2)

5.6.2 Community & Experience improvement suggestions

Here the replies from the fans converged even more than the stadium goers, with the suggestions made for experience and community both being very similar. 8/10 of the respondents said that a greater interaction via social media with the fans would be a nice improvement for both community and experience. Contests and prizes were the main suggestion. Giveaways, selfies contests, quizzes, auctions, phone call contest, were some of the named activities. With a higher focus on their own club community, fans urged that this was done on their own club broadcast channel.

"… do género tira um selfie a apoiar o teu clube, tu que estas em casa, a mais inovadora ou a mais original ganhava bilhetes para ver o próximo jogo em casa, por exemplo. Uma espécie de concurso nas redes socias com prémios com uma Hashtag própria para o jogo a decorrer." (P,4)

"So se for tipo um passatempo, sorteio de bilhetes para o jogo a seguir, como por exemplo através de um giveaway de redes socias ou por exemplo puxar os adeptos para outras modalidades e oferecer um bilhete para o dragão caixa. Podia ser responsabilidade do clube puxar os adeptos do futebol para as outras modalidades do clube." (P,6)

Others suggested ways of getting a greater connection to their hometown community of fans, for clubs that were far away from their home, although expressing some concerns to how this should be done.

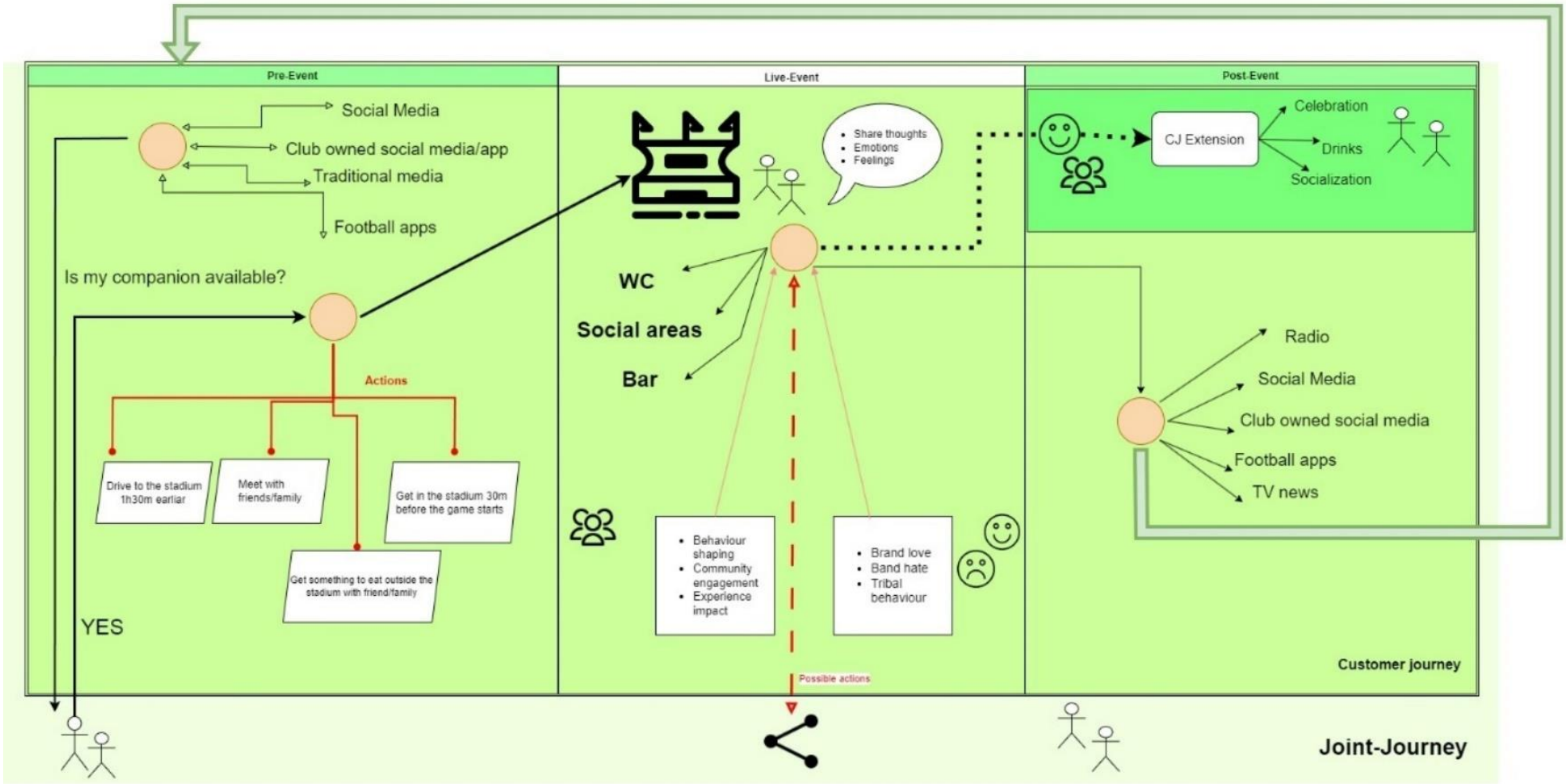
"Não sei até que ponto isto é verdade, mas a ideia que eu tenho é que, por exemplo, os núcleos, são ótimos locais para assistir aos jogos com adeptos do próprio clube. Pode ser preconceito da minha parte, mas sempre achei que os núcleos eram para homens e nunca me senti segura a entrar num sozinha. Eu não me sinto segura a ir a um núcleo sozinha e, pode ser uma estupidez, mas acho que

os clubes, não só o Sporting podia começar a pensar nisso, pensar em tornar os ambientes mais amigáveis para todos e quem sabe mais núcleos espalhados por todo o pais. A parte da comunidade é mesmo muito importante e o clube podia fazer parte disso, como por exemplo, ter a equipa fazer uma tour pelos núcleos do país, começar a desenvolver outras atividades nos núcleos, a criar espaços mais modernos e inclusivos…" (P,12)

Still on the community build-up, an interesting suggestion was made based on a F1 comparison, which shows that learning from good things made on other sports might be a good way of improving home viewers experience.

"A fórmula 1 tem aqueles meet and greet que as próprias equipas fazem mesmo que sejam virtuais. Candidatas-te online, a Williams faz isso, a Aston Martin faz isso, a Ferrari na altura da pandemia… candidatas-te fazes uma videochamada e estás ali 5 ou 10 minutos a falar com os pilotos, fazes perguntas, interagem e no fim mandam um boné para casa. Sendo um deporto emocional e ainda por cima o futebol é, acho que se consegue criar muita mais ligação com adeptos com estas pequenas coisas." (P,2)

Figure 7- Stadium Customer Journey Map



5.7 Stadium customer journey map

Based on all the results presented and interviews made the customer journey map here presented reflects the most standard journey for these fans. The dark arrow represents the regular path, the red lines represent regular actions taken by the customer. The pink lines represent the emotion and community impact on the live-event journey, the red dotted arrow represents a "possible action", which means only a few participants reported this, and finally the dotted dark arrow represents the possible CJ extension.

This map is focused on user interaction and actions, portraying the joint-journey character of the customer journey of a sports event.

5.7.1 Pre-event

First this stage shows the information search made by users. They will search or be notified, alerted, informed by different platforms. This can happen actively or passively, hence the arrows having two directions. This is the fan first touchpoint, usually representing the moment of when they get informed about the game scheduled time and day. After this, they will reach to their usual journey companion, which in turn, in case of positive confirmation will motivate the user to continue the journey.

Journey picks-up form this point, a few hours before the game. Most participants reported to drive 1h30min earlier to the game. At the stadium they would meet with friends. They will search for food and beverages establishments outside the stadium, have something and hang-out close by. 30 min earlier they head to the stadium to get in and watch the game.

5.7.2 Live-event

Inside the stadium, participants said that their main concern at the first moment was to go and find their seat and watch the game warm-up, check the lineups, and change thoughts with their companion.

In terms of services and facilities used by fans, they reported the use of restrooms, the bar and "social areas" where they could meet friends or engage with other fans that are staying in other areas from the stadium. As reported in 5.5.2, overall, fans are not satisfied with the cleanliness of the stadium or WCs and are only moderately happy with the diversity of food offerings.

Although mentioned by only one user (1/9) some may take a "possible action" of engaging with others via the several social media networks. In this case Twitter was mentioned as the main preference to exchange thoughts about the game with the online community.

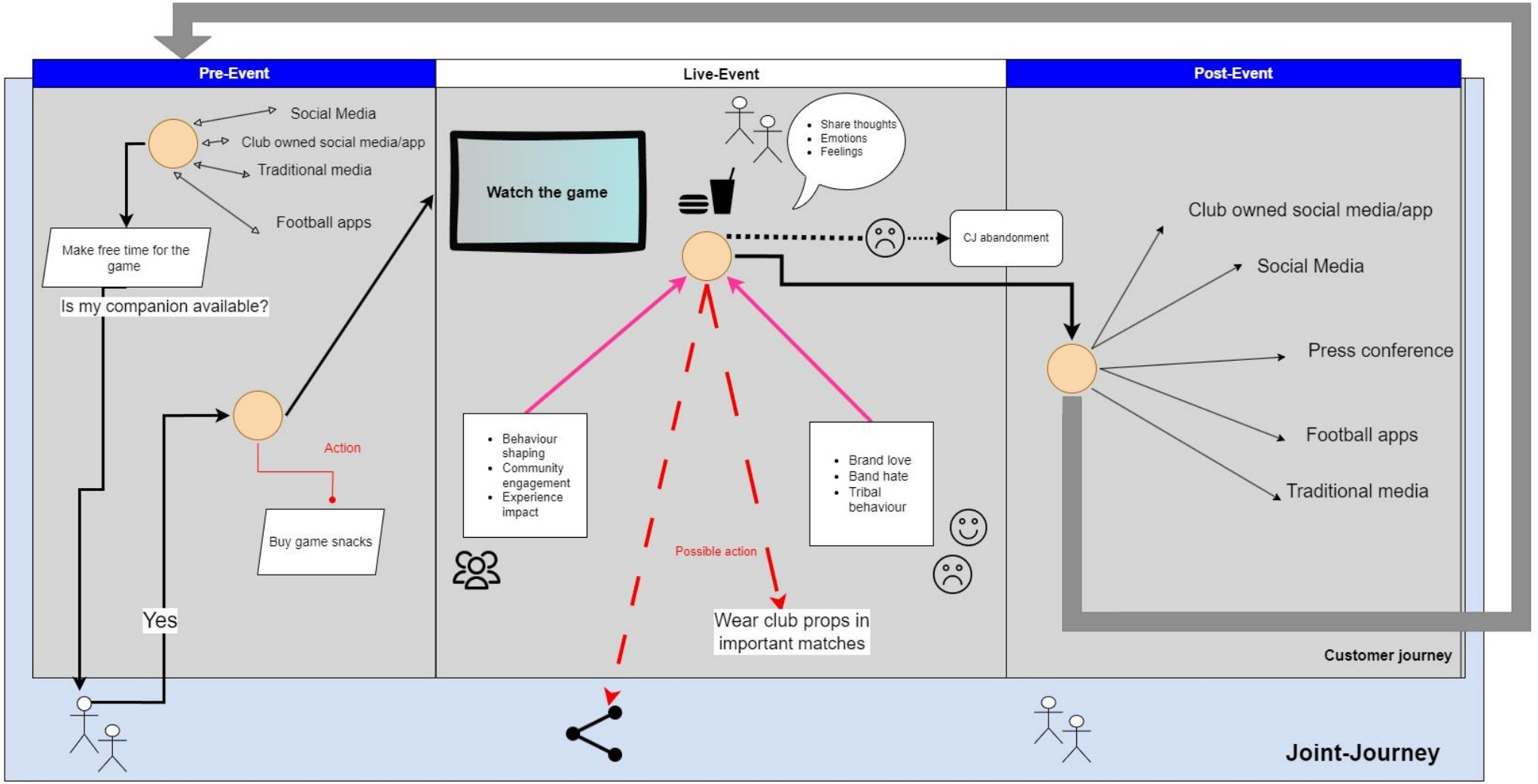
As shown in topic 5.2 and 5.4, community and emotions might have impact on the journey and that is reflected with strong mentioning on the live-event action.

From these already described reactions, there is one that is highlighted in the map, that is CJ extension. Both the fact of being with companions and having experienced strong positive emotion is enough to extend user's journey.

5.7.3 Post-Event

After the game most people said they would return home, engaging at a first moment with the car radio to listen to press conference. Other users also mentioned that club app would show this after the game and that was their first point of contact.
In a later stage, the social media, football aps, news and tv highlights would be their go to step after the game. The football apps were mentioned mainly to check statistics about the game.
Usually, this information search is made immediately after the game or in the next coming day.
Finally, the map shows the recurring character of the user journey.

Figure 8 - TV Customer Journey Map



5.8 TV customer journey map

As shown for the stadium customer journey map, here is presented the most standard journey for TV fans. The dark arrow represents the regular path, the red lines represent regular actions taken by the customer. The pink lines represent the emotion and community impact on the live-event journey, the red dotted arrow represents a possible action, which means only a few participants reported this, and finally the dotted dark arrow represents the possible CJ abandonment.

This map is focused on user interaction and actions, portraying the joint-journey character of the customer journey of a sports event.

5.8.1 Pre-event

First this stage shows the information search made by users. They will search or be notified, alerted, informed by different platforms. This can happen actively or passively, hence the arrows having two directions. This is the fan first touchpoint, usually representing the moment of when they get informed about the game scheduled time and day.

From this, it has been reported the concern of the viewer to "make free time" and agenda organization to watch the game, ensuring that they will be home to watch it or that they will be in a place that broadcasts the game.

After this, they will reach to their usual journey companion to understand if they want to join them, being in this case, family.

Friends were said to be invited at special games (derby) or if the viewer was watching the game at a café/bar.

The next action reported by users was to make sure they had their preferred snacks to eat while watching it. The most reported food options were salty snacks and beer.

The journey picks-up form this a few minutes before the game starts. Most participants did not report a big anticipation period before game start, about 15 minutes earlier to the start.

5.8.2 Live-event

While watching the game the user and their companion will exchange thoughts on the team performance, emotions and feelings at critical moments like a goal, "unfair" referee decisions, a dangerous attack, etc. This constitutes a convivial moment, accompanied by food and beverage.

Although not mentioned by most users (5/11) some may wear club merchandise during the game, but they have mentioned using them mostly if it is a Champions League game, derby

or a playoff game. Reported by a reduced number of users (2/11) engaging with others via the social media is an action made, again, Twitter was mentioned as the main preference to exchange thoughts about the game with the online community.
In fact, the phone usage was reported as being one of the things users avoided doing, looking to be focused on the game and not being informed by goals earlier than it is on the TV broadcast. Some football focused apps (Flashscore) show pop up notifications sooner than the broadcast and that can negatively impact the viewer experience. It was reported to take-out the emotion out of the goal.
As shown in topic 5.2 and 5.4, community and emotions might have impact on the journey and that is reflected with strong mentioning on the live-event action.
From these already described reactions there is one that is highlighted in the map, that is CJ abandonment. An unexpected result, a large disadvantage, or a suffered goal on the final minute of the game can make the viewer switch channel or turn off the TV and move away from the journey. Here a negative emotion is represented as the reason for the abandonment.

5.8.3 Post-Event

After the game most people said they would prolong the social moment and watch the press conference and highlights together being this the first post-game activity done by the users. Immediately after this the search happens in social media for videos and photos from club owned media or football apps for statistics. The traditional media platforms are touchpoints that are not search for, but that people contact with the rest of the week and also was mentioned as one moment to review the lived experience.
Finally, the map shows the recurring character of the user journey.

5.9 Discussion of Results

Having completed the analysis and presentation of the data gathered based on the conceptual model and posterior categories deriving from content analysis, now we must compare these results with literature review made on chapter 2.
This discussion will particularly focus on the objectives established at chapter 3, and the questions raised there. Concepts influencing customer journey maps will be discussed as well.

5.9.1 Emotional impact on the customer journey

The results showed a relevant and absolute confirmation that emotion has impact over football fans, and that it has impact over their actions while watching the game. Strong emotions may even make some individuals to make changes to their pre-planned journey. These are reactions to strong positive or negative stimuli that lead to elaborate actions(van Kleef & Côté, 2022), like journey extension or abandonment.
In other more common reactions customers stated having reactions, like swearing, gesticulate and feel anxious or surprised, which proves axial characteristics of emotions. (Ekman, 2016; Wundt, 1896)

Emotional branding literature was also helpful to understand and co pare the results, confirming some of their defining characteristics. Participants showed strong emotional connection to the brand, acting as ambassadors of the brand, a brand to which they show love, that they recognize has having shared value with them, that they are passionate. (Akgün et al., 2013; Kim & Sullivan, 2019; Thompson et al., 2006)

Finally, customer journey turns out to be a correct tool to assess customer experience and the emotional impact on their experience since this is a variable directly impacting their behaviour, something that service blueprinting could not capture. (Bitner et al., 2008; Følstad & Kvale, 2018; Patrício et al., 2011)

5.9.2 Emotion impact on communities

The results presented show evidence of a significant impact from emotions felt on communities engagement and bonding, leading to better experiences and, in ultimate cases, to a friendship relationship among customers. There is a sense of belonging reported by fans, feeling that they belong to a broad group of individuals sharing a passion, a religion, seeing their in-group in a more favourable way. Majority of respondents reported positively on being in the presence of their community, and this presence contributed positively for their evaluation their experience. (Belk & Tumbat, 2005; Bhattacharjee et al., 2022; Tajfel, 1979)

Rooted in consumer tribes Canniford (2011) supports that consumer tribes are multiple. This way, there might be violent sub-groups in this broader community that affect others experience as reported by some participants. This needs further explanation from this population, since it was not clear to which violent members they were referring, nor if they were isolated cases of one person losing control in a certain situation.

Finally, not well portrayed in literature (Dionísio et al., 2008; Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001)community inner control was one of the topics arising in content analysis, although in

an isolate case. Nevertheless, it is found to be important to explore further this phenomenon related to this population.

5.9.3 Community impact on the customer journey

Football fandom proved to be passionate, sharing a core value to their companions and building relationships and engaging with others based on that shared passion and a feeling a linking value. (Cova & Cova, 2002; Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001)
They reported having a better image of their club and to be advocates of it against other clubs, being capable of actions to damage other clubs' reputation or image in comparison to the one supported by them. (Cova & Cova, 2002; Lamberti et al., 2022; Tajfel, 1979)

The phenomenon described as behaviour shaping was not well described in consumer communities literature nor in it following concepts like brand community or consumer tribes, although this may be the reflect from the social dimension mentioned by Hamilton et al. (2021). This behaviour shaping effect should be further explored and information collected on this topic alone should help explain the phenomenon.

Finally it was possible to collect evidence of social presence along the journey (Hamilton et al., 2021) particularly focused on physical presence of others. The interview guide was not prone to understand digital presence of others, but I believe it would be beneficial for managers to understand if this is something that is usual for the football fan to do, involving digital companions at different parts of their journey.

6. Conclusion

This chapter sums all the knowledge acquired during this research and draws conclusions from the process, results, analysis, and maps built based on interviewees responses. The chapter will display the answers to research problem and questions, its' contribution to theory and management, and finish with study limitations and future research suggestions.

6.1 Answering the research questions

This dissertation study focused on knowing the impacts of emotions on the customer journey in highly emotional contexts, such it is a sport like football. This was researched applying a customer journey map building strategy, trying to capture emotional impacts and effects on the journey. The maps focused on the user steps along the way and not on the ticket buying journey.

The main goal was to capture business opportunities, customer engagement opportunities, community building opportunities happening across the different journey steps and phases. All the questions raised in order to guide the study have an answer capable of guiding experience managers into a next step in their offering.

R.Q.1:

How does emotion affect the fan customer journey in the highly emotional context of football?

Emotional reactions are mostly felt on the Live-event phase of the journey. This research only captured testimonials on the emotion impact while the person/customer was watching the game. This is experienced both at the stadium or watch it on the television. A majority of the participants said that emotion is a crucial part of their experience watching football. TV respondents said that, if they could, they would prefer to watch it at the stadium because there is "more emotion". This was described being true because the stadium atmosphere, the live action in front of their eyes made it more exciting. Later participants described reactions to emotion-triggers like suspense moments like, a dangerous attack, a violent fault, players bad conduct (opponents) or players brilliance at play. The referee actions were also mentioned. These moments led them to reactions like brand love, brand hate, own brand damage or again a fierce standing for their club, protecting their colours.

In another tone, the shared moments of emotion with companions and the rest of the community, were joyful moments described capable of enhancing ones' experience. Finally, strong positive or negative emotions are capable of changing a predetermined path, making the user extend or abandon their journey previously planned.

R.Q.2:

How does emotion affect the emergence and development of communities in the highly emotional context of football?

As they have impact on the journey, they have also strong impact in communities, especially for the ones going to the stadium. Emotional moments shared together will lead in some cases to an extended relationship outside the stadium, and even friendship. There were a few stories reported of such an interaction and one case of a participant that is a solo fan in his family, living far away from his club hometown capable of making friend because of football and shared emotions there. Emotion enables bonding moments and community engagement.
For the ones experiencing this away from the stadium it is also felt, being football an aggregator, a motive for getting together, giving each other support in defeat or celebrating together in victory.

Lastly it can also boost some community inner control actions from, being the moments of defeat more prone to that, due to the negative feelings felt by others around the user.

R.Q.3:

How do communities affect the fan customer journey in the highly emotional context of football?

Communities will impact the customer/user along the journey either by being physically present or remotely. Few users reported on this last example, but the ones who did were highly engaged to their online companions for match moments.
As seen that they are impacted by emotion, communities will create moments of engagement and a sense of belonging to fans, creating strong ties between the the club community and the person. The community will excite and motivate the customer.

In another view they can also be responsible for some concern and rage to the user, sub-tribes of their tribe or opposing tribes may pose a threat to ones safety, directly or indirectly

and dimmish experience value in that specific journey. Reports on this were made on live stadium sets.

Lastly, one may shape their behaviour according to their companion, with several testimonials saying that a regular companion makes their experience more "emotion intense", since they will behave more moderately if their companion is an unusual one, they will fell more constrained.

6.2 Contributions to theory

Social customer journey

The main contribute to theory withdrawn from this dissertation work is the confirmation of the social dimension (Hamilton et al., 2021) along the journey, turning it into a joint-journey. This new perspective into this marketing applied research tool, had now one more setting to which it was applied, bringing significant confirmation and proof over the social impact over the customer journey. Customer journey is not only taken solo, but it can also be experienced in the presence of others, and others will influence the user action. This is true on the physical side of interaction, lacking further proofing of Hamilton et al (2021) conclusion on the digital influence of others.

Additionally, it is relevant to stress that the emotional variable was proven to be a key factor as a booster of the social customer journey, being relevant to test this variable in other settings. Emotions and the social dimension acting together lead to an extended journey. The main lesson learned, is that the user journey of a sports fan is based on social interaction to start and that this dimension can change the pre-determined path, boosted by positive emotions.

Footbal fandom and its' community

Additionally, this study can help further explain and confirm (Ay & Kaygan, 2022; Dionísio et al., 2008; Lamberti et al., 2022) football fans behaviours, and give additional insights of this population to the academy.
Football fans, affected by strong negative emotions, may stop abruptly their journey and plan on boycotting future repetition of this journey, blocking their will to watch their club's next football match. This can be triggered by bad sports performance, player performance, coach options or club board management decisions.
Also, there is an additional proof of fans reporting the connection and the shared conscience

of belonging to a tribe, to regard their club with devotion, taking passionate actions because of it and towards it.

Lastly, this research revealed a trait not well document or phrased in such a way in the literature, that is the community inner control, performed by members unpleased with behaviours from member of their tribe. This was reported from stadium fans that passionately intervened against one member of its' community. This behaviour can have special importance for passionate members of a brand community, that can set order to a potentially inflammatory situation.

Emotions studies

It is also relevant to add this research setting to emotional studies (Bagozzi et al., 1999; Bastiaansen et al., 2019; Kwak et al., 2011) applied in marketing contexts to the academy and understand their effects on brand communities. (Bhattacharjee et al., 2022; Kerr & Emery, 2011; Kim & Sullivan, 2019)

Emotion proved to be a key variable affecting the customer journey in posite and negative ways. It boosted customer experience when positive emotions filled fans jpourney, giving place to journey extensions and a making them more lickely to interact with the club, advocate it and stand for it.

On the other hand, negative emotions can make the fan finish their journey earlier, and disengage with the club's actions, briefly if it is not coming over powerful motive, or over a longer period of time the fan was being subject to repetitive negative emotions.

6.3 Managerial Contributions

The problem laid out and described on chapter 1 shows that although football has great numbers of audience in Portugal, only a fraction of these are ticket buying fans. The mean occupation rate for Portuguese stadiums was 34% for the season 2021-2022 (the latest report available). From these, Benfica and Sporting are only getting 50% occupation rates throughout the year, and Braga who is also a strong team in the championship, averaging 26% of occupation rate. From all the teams in the championship, only 6 (FC Porto, SL Benfica, Sporting CP, Vitoria SC, SC Braga and Boavista FC) can get an average of 5000+ fans in the stadium, that in turn are also the ones with a better TV audience.

With such a large room for improvement in occupation rates at the stadium, this customer journey research appears as an important tool for Liga de Portugal, as competition promoter, to evaluate their results and act based on the insights revealed by this study.

Some of the less praised aspects of their offering were ticket prices, scheduled days and time for the matches to happen. These are product characteristics that the promoter needs to address and improve, based on fans feedback, since most of the participants reported that they would prefer to watch the game at the stadium. If it possible to build sustainable and feasible offers for the fans this will make football customer happier and more willing to engage in these kinds of live events. This in return will give a better image to the league and a higher media attention, something positive for the promoter.

There is also a confirmation to what was introduced this year by the official TV broadcaster, Sport TV. There was the need to engage further with TV viewers. Many of the interviewees said that some kind of contest would be a good way to intercat with fans at home, some giving the example of "a man of the match for the public". It is confirmed that "Herói do Público" action implemented by Sport TV for season 2023-2024 can be a good way of engaging with home viewers.

In what concerns the clubs, this research can help them identify the key moments of interaction with their fans, how their communities can become stronger and how emotions can affect their fans. It was also possible to identify their main concerns and improvement opportunities.

The game event can be more than just football. Some of the fans take the journey with a companion that is not that engaged with football, so these companions can expect additional elements of interest during the event. For this reason, the creation of extra activities like half-time entertainment, contests, kiss-cam moments or interaction via the stadium screens, can boost customer experience.
For the fans most engaged with football, having more entertainment is a plus, and for their companion it can be a nice motivation for them to take the journey with the football fan.

Furthermore, clubs should pay special care of their facilities, providing a safer, cleaner environment in their stadium, as these are key to the service offering. Clubs should bear in mind that the average journey for the customer is over 3h30min, making it key to provide comfort and a well-maintained venue to spectators.

Another take away is the fact that clubs should care about creating social areas for fans to engage and make available greater food options at affordable prices. Many fans did state that they would eat before the game, but this happens outside the stadium. These are potential customers, that could take on the journey inside the stadium, sooner. They could be spending this money in the club premises.

In another way of looking at this opportunity, clubs could create food and beverages offerings outside the stadium, mixing this with entertainment, contests, get to know the club moments, events in partnership with sponsors. All of this to grab the opportunity to participate in all the moments of the fans journey.

Finally, clubs should also own a greater responsibility in engaging with TV viewers, since they cover the biggest portion of fans (EY, 2022), making them more connected to what is happening at the stadium.
Creating social media poles, TV or social media contests, giveaways or any other form of interaction will contribute to create a better experience for them.
Being able to offer fans an experience at the stadium through these contests, can shift them "*in-loco"* and making them "a paying customer" directly to the club.

Lastly for the remote fans, that live far away to their team's stadium, creating clubs' delegation sites, like a sports bar, where the fandom can watch the game together, can create stronger club communities. It is an opportunity to make the community engage and bond, enhancing their passion for the club. These sites should be carefully managed by the club, supervising, and guaranteeing a safe and inclusive environment for everyone.

6.4 Limitations and suggestions for future research

This work was based on a customer journey approach to study a customer-centred experience on football events that usually attract crowds. The results and conclusion drawn on this research were based on a small sample, very strict to single young adults, out of which only 9/20 were stadium goers. This makes the results narrow in their conclusions, not significant or capable of a generalization to the whole football fandom in Portugal, and not capable of a real picture either for the stadium goer population or the Tv viewer population.

Furthermore, a qualitative study may be influenced by the interviewer ability, and the researcher personal biases in analysing the results.

The research was based on a research model that took into consideration emotions and the community to study the customer journey which may lead to have overlooked other important variables at play in the journey.

For the future, a quantitative approach to this topic would be beneficial to confirm the customer journey map laid out, the variables impacts', both for management and for literature.

For managers it would confirm and further demonstrate opportunities for their experiences, as it would reveal potentially overlooked weaknesses.

For the academy, it would validate further the social customer journey proposed by Hamilton et al. (2021) and help explain it in a richer way, likely as the emotional impacts on football fandom.

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Appendix: Interview Guide

GUIÃO DE ENTREVISTA

Esta entrevista tem como objetivo a recolha de dados que suportem o trabalho final de dissertação de mestrado em Gestão de Serviços pela Faculdade de Economia da Universidade do Porto, sendo que se garante que todas as informações recolhidas em formato áudio, vídeo ou escrito serão mantidas em estrita confidencialidade. O estudo tem como principal objetivo perceber e mapear a jornada do cliente do adepto de futebol.

As informações recolhidas através desta entrevista serão usadas apenas para fins académicos. Todas as informações fornecidas pelos participantes serão mantidas em sigilo e não serão compartilhadas com terceiro, daí que se pede que responda com total liberdade de opinião e profundidade.

Perguntas iniciais gerais

1. Costuma ver jogos de futebol da Primeira Liga? Considera-se um adepto assíduo? Qual é o seu clube?

2. Tem por hábito ir ao estádio ou geralmente vê os jogos na televisão?

3. Quando assiste a jogos do seu clube, costuma fazê-lo sozinho ou acompanhado?
   Explorar: amigos/família/grupos de adeptos do seu clube.

Se respondeu que tem por hábito ir ao estádio continuar aqui:

1. Que razões o/a levam a preferir ver os jogos no estádio?

Explorar: razões funcionais versus razões emocionais

2. Em geral, como é que se informa sobre o jogo? Costuma partilhar com outras pessoas a vontade de ir ver o jogo ao estádio?

3. Pode descrever a ida ao estádio no dia do jogo?

Explorar: modo de deslocação, antecedência da chegada ao estádio e o que faz antes do início do jogo

4. Considera que se deixa levar pela emoção quando assiste aos jogos? Pode por favor descrever alguma situação em que isso seja particularmente evidente?

5. Já alguma vez sentiu que essa (emoção X,Y,Z) o/a levou a ter um comportamento positivo/negativo direcionado ao seu clube? E em relação aos clubes adversários?

Explorar: forma como foi manifestado esse comportamento e se ele se aplica apenas no momento do jogo ou se perdura para o futuro

6. Acha que as pessoas com quem vai assistir aos jogos têm influência na experiência que usufrui?
Explorar: eventuais comportamentos diferentes se for acompanhado por amigos ou familiares

7. Sente que por ser um evento com uma forte carga emocional, isso leva a que se crie um espírito de comunidade mais forte entre os adeptos?

8. No estádio, o que costuma fazer?
Explorar: o que faz antes, durante a após o jogo (ida ao bar, compra de merchandising, conversa com amigos…)

9. Que aspetos valoriza mais numa ida ao estádio?

10. Após o final dos jogos, costuma procurar informações sobre o mesmo?

Explorar: notícias, comentários televisivos, vídeos de resumo do jogo, calendário para os próximos jogos…

11. Se pudesse o que melhoraria na sua experiência? (enquanto adepto que vai a um estádio de futebol)

12. Pensando no futebol como um evento de entretenimento, considera que deveria haver mais atividades relacionadas com o jogo junto do estádio?

Explorar: atividades de entretenimento adicionais, restauração, serviços adicionais…dê exemplos.

13. O que acha que o seu clube poderia fazer para melhorar a experiência dos adeptos quando vão ver os jogos no estádio?

14. O que acha que o seu clube poderia fazer para incentivar o espírito de comunidade entre os adeptos que optam por ver os jogos no estádio?

- **Se respondeu que tem por hábito ver na televisão continuar aqui:**

1. Que razões o/a levam a preferir ver os jogos na televisão?

Explorar: razões funcionais versus razões emocionais

2. Em geral, como é que se informa sobre o jogo? Costuma partilhar com outras pessoas a vontade de ver o jogo na televisão?

3. Pode descrever o que faz quando vê o jogo na televisão?

Explorar: se toma alguma bebida ou comida, se usa cachecol ou outros adereços, se consulta o telemóvel…

4. Considera que se deixa levar pela emoção quando assiste aos jogos? Pode pf. descrever alguma situação em que isso seja particularmente evidente?

5. Já alguma vez sentiu que essa (emoção X,Y,Z) o/a levou a ter um comportamento positivo/negativo direcionado ao seu clube? E em relação aos clubes adversários?

Explorar: forma como foi manifestado esse comportamento e se ele se aplica apenas no momento do jogo ou se perdura para o futuro

6. Acha que as pessoas com quem assiste aos jogos na TV têm influência na experiência que usufrui?
Explorar: sente que tem eventuais comportamentos diferentes se estiver acompanhado por amigos ou familiares

7. Sente que por ser um evento com uma forte carga emocional, isso leva a que se crie um espírito de comunidade mais forte entre os adeptos?

8. Após o final dos jogos, costuma procurar informações sobre o mesmo?

Explorar: notícias, comentários televisivos, vídeos de resumo do jogo, calendário para os próximos jogos…

9. Pensando no futebol como um evento de entretenimento, considera que deveria haver mais atividades relacionadas com o jogo?

Explorar: redes sociais, apostas, videojogos…

10. O que acha que o seu clube poderia fazer para melhorar a experiência dos adeptos quando optam por ver os jogos na TV?

11. E o que acha que o seu clube poderia fazer para incentivar o espírito de comunidade entre os adeptos que optam por ver os jogos na TV?

Dados sociodemográficos

1. Idade: _____

2. Género:

Homem ☐
Mulher ☐
Outro: _____

3. Estado Civil:

Solteiro(a) ☐
Casado(a) ☐
Divorciado(a) ☐
Viúvo(a) ☐

4. Escolaridade:

3ºCiclo ☐
Ensino Secundário ☐
Licenciatura ☐
Mestrado ☐
Doutoramento ☐
Outro:_____

5. Situação Profissional:

Trabalhador-Estudante ☐
Trabalhador ☐
Estudante ☐
Reformado ☐
Outro:_____

6. Local de Residência: _____

Agradeço todo o tempo disponibilizado, muito obrigado!