

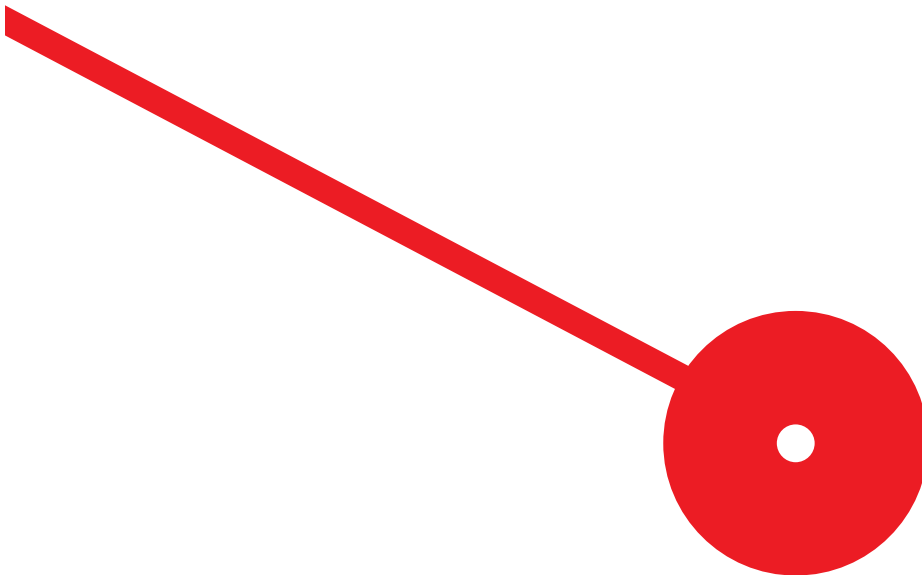


Elysian: Get your cultural game on

Luana Daniela Teixeira Marques

09/2021

Final version. *This version contains the jury's input and suggestions.*





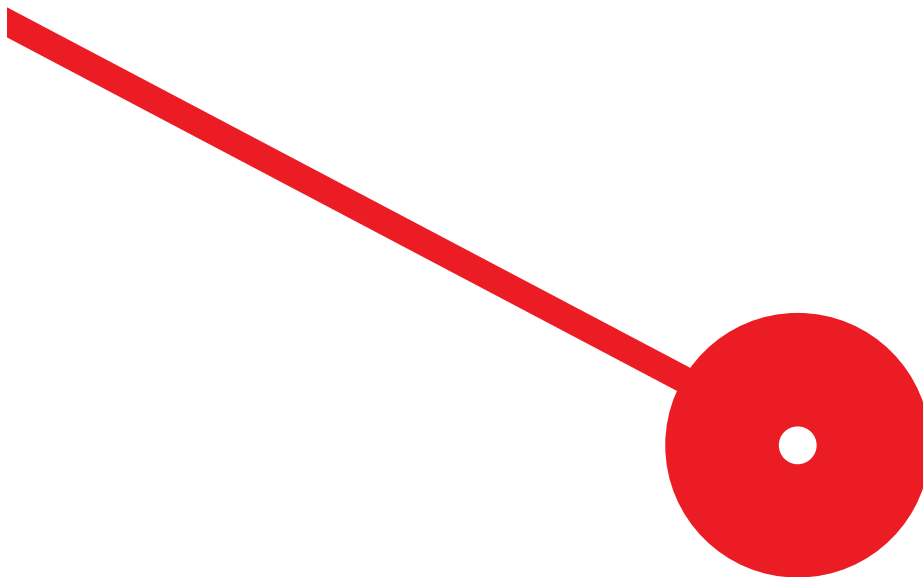
Elysian: Get your cultural game on

Luana Daniela Teixeira Marques

Project Work presented to Instituto Superior de Contabilidade e Administração do Porto / Porto Accounting and Business School to obtain the Master's Degree in Intercultural Studies for Business, under the supervision of Professor Clara Maria Laranjeira Sarmento e Santos and Professor Marco Aurélio Ribeiro Lamas.

Luana Daniela Teixeira Marques. Elysian: Get your cultural game on.

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Dedication

To my family and friends for the unconditional love and support.

Your actions and words throughout this journey will never be forgotten.

*There is no path.
There's no path 'till you walk it,
and you have to be willing to play the fool.*

Ethan Hawke, 2020

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Resumo:

O mundo do futebol está a tornar-se cada vez mais diversificado, devido à interação entre diferentes culturas. Este é o resultado da evolução, da globalização e da migração, estando ao mesmo tempo ligado às novas características empresariais e comerciais do desporto. As equipas de futebol modernas são o derradeiro exemplo de uma bolha multicultural, com culturas diferentes a coexistir num microambiente encerrado sobre si mesmo. No entanto, as ferramentas fornecidas aos profissionais confrontados com contextos culturais dissimilares ainda são insuficientes em vários aspetos, pelo que não se alcança a necessária competência intercultural.

A presente dissertação apresenta questões contemporâneas no mundo do futebol, principalmente relacionadas com a cultura e outros problemas sociais, analisando simultaneamente os desafios e as vantagens que os indivíduos enfrentam para alcançar um equilíbrio estável e positivo entre trabalho e vida pessoal. Ao identificar as principais questões socioculturais, esta dissertação oferece uma solução viável através de uma ideia e conceito de negócio inovadores, com o seu enfoque principal no contexto português. O projeto “*Elysian: Get your cultural game on*” pretende melhorar os processos de integração e inclusão intercultural experienciados pelos indivíduos no futebol moderno, beneficiando todos os envolvidos. Esta dissertação apresenta não só a empresa e o seu propósito, mas também os planos por detrás da mesma, desde a sua conceção à sua possível implementação.

A cultura do futebol moderno engloba valores como a igualdade, a inclusão e a diversidade cultural. Assim sendo, pode funcionar como uma ferramenta educativa e tornar-se uma grande influência nas sociedades contemporâneas. No seu todo, o objetivo desta dissertação consiste na exposição da questão intercultural emergente no mundo do futebol que tem sido amplamente negligenciada, podendo assim gerar uma discussão mais ativa. O futebol tem potencial não só para se melhorar a si próprio, mas também a todos os que o seguem.

Palavras-chave: Futebol Profissional; Globalização; Transição Cultural; Integração; Inclusão.

Abstract:

The football world is becoming increasingly diversified, due to the intertwining of cultures. This is the outcome of evolution, globalization, and migration, while also being connected to the sport's new business encounters. Modern-day football squads are the ultimate example of a multicultural bubble, with dissimilar cultures coexisting in a self-enclosed microenvironment. However, the tools provided to individuals facing odd cultural contexts are still lacking on many aspects, therefore the necessary intercultural competence is not achieved.

The current dissertation presents contemporary issues in the world of football, mainly related to culture, and other societal problems, through the simultaneous analysis of challenges and advantages faced by professionals to achieve a stable and possible balance between work-life. By identifying the core sociocultural issues, it offers a possible solution through an innovative business idea and concept with a main focus on the Portuguese context. The project “*Elysian: Get your cultural game on*” intends to improve the intercultural integration and inclusion processes experienced by individuals in modern football, thus benefiting everyone involved. This dissertation presents not only the company and its purpose, but also the plans behind it, from its conception to its possible implementation.

Modern football culture encompasses key values such as equality, inclusion, and cultural diversity. Hence, it can perform as an educational tool and become a major influence on contemporary societies. Overall, the aim of this dissertation is to expose an emerging issue in the football world that has been widely neglected, thus generating a more active discussion. Football has the potential not only to improve itself but also everyone that follows it by being an example and playing as a game changer.

Keywords: Professional Football; Globalization; Cultural Transition; Integration; Inclusion.

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List of Abbreviations

- **BMC** – Business Model Canvas
- **EPL** – English Premier League
- **FA** – Football Association (England)
- **FCP** – Futebol Clube do Porto
- **FIFA** – Fédération Internationale de Football Association
- **FPF** – Federação Portuguesa de Futebol
- **LP** – Liga Portugal, Liga Portuguesa de Futebol Profissional
- **PEST** – Political, Economic, Social, Technological
- **PSS** – Product-Service Systems
- **SCB** – Sporting Clube de Braga
- **SCP** – Sporting Clube de Portugal
- **SLB** – Sport Lisboa e Benfica
- **SWOT** – Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
- **TMS** – Transfer Matching System
- **UCL** – UEFA Champions League
- **UEFA** – Union of European Football Associations
- **UNESCO** – United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
- **UPF** – União Portuguesa de Futebol
- **WFA** – Women’s Football Association (England)

Despite its mysterious origins, football is now present all over the world. It has created its own language and subculture. During the birth of modern football in the 19th century, this now global game was based upon pure entertainment and viewed strictly as a hobby, mostly for the middle classes. However, football turned into a business along the way, especially with its major growth throughout the 20th century. In fact, the main European sport was forced to adapt itself to survive in contemporary times, mostly in business terms. This was not only a consequence of natural development, but it also derived from globalization and modern technological advancements. Thus, the sport's business model changed drastically and began highlighting features such as commercialization and internationalization. Moreover, the sport's popularity has also been growing exponentially. The spectacular performances and high competitiveness of football are attracting fans all over the world, which also allows the business to expand to other markets. This new culture surrounding football has led to a significant expansion in many other areas, including an increasing cultural diversity. Hence, the sport now faces both advantageous and challenging situations due to the intercultural encounters fostered by football. This relation between sports and culture has led to the subject that is going to be analysed in this dissertation. The main purpose is to explore sociocultural issues and their impact on football professionals, while also providing the theoretical framework behind all the notions and concepts that it involves. Moreover, that same relation has led to the creation of the project "*Elysian: Get your cultural game on*", which may become a viable solution to overcome cultural obstacles in both professional and personal contexts. This business project intends to become a pioneer one and an example to other entrepreneurs, in order to fight for a more inclusive community through the individual's integrational process. This thesis intends to expand scientific knowledge on the chosen subject of sociocultural barriers, while also proposing a newer and more effective platform to tackle them. Hence, the project can have a significant impact on multiple perspectives, including the football industry, the academic world, and society in general.

Within the last few decades, contemporary football has witnessed a massive and rapid evolution. This has had a significant impact on its identity and transformational process. Nowadays, the sport encompasses multiple variables that are simultaneously crucial characteristics of the modern world and its societies. Football is now acknowledged as a global game, both on and off the pitch, thus displaying a greater sense of inclusion and integration. Ancient and preconceived notions have been replaced by an

up-to-date understanding of the world's circumstances, with a higher emphasis on the blending of cultures and genders, towards a united and equal industry. In addition to that, the core of football was modified in order to adapt itself within a business context. As commercialization and internationalization established their roots in the industry, the responsible entities and related organizations displayed greater efforts to maximize its potential from an economic perspective. Hence, new revenue streams – such as transfers, media and image rights, or even international commerce – took on a major role to enhance the sport's ability to generate huge profits. Moreover, football has learned how to use its entertainment side to increase financial gains, mostly through individual and collective branding. From both an economic and business perspective, football grew exponentially and triggered changes in other areas, especially the sociocultural one. Modern squads represent environments with a culturally diversified component. This has presented many advantages, due to the combination of strengths and shared experiences. But such cultural diversity has also brought along even more challenges, mostly as a result of the dissimilarities found in terms of integration and inclusion. Sociocultural issues are real and strongly present in the football world, thus possibly affecting the professionals' performance and personal life. Although the responsible entities and organizations – especially clubs – have been providing some tools to ease the transition between cultural contexts, the chosen tools are not enough to sustain a positive and effective integrational process. Consequently, professionals are faced with a limited level of adaptation that falls under the negative scope of such transitions, which leads to more problems. The money flow witnessed in the football industry cannot surpass the individuals' well-being and these obstacles present a threat to both sides. However, the loss is more significant to the working individual rather than to the employing identity, since it jeopardizes both the personal and professional lives.

The current dissertation was born with the premise of exposing sociocultural problems in professional football and building a new solution in the form of a project, which is depicted through all its four chapters. Chapter I – *The new age of football culture* – explains the past and current encounters of professional football, while also analysing its business framework with commercialization, internationalization, and the transfer markets as the major references. This first section also explores the relation between football and culture, from multiculturalism to interculturalism, with all its challenges and advantages. Thus, it emphasizes the sociocultural concerns faced by professionals in the

football world and presents possible paths to take the most advantage of its new cultural traits. Chapter I contains two main subtopics, *Understanding professional football* and *Football VS Culture*. Within the first subtopic, contemporary football is addressed in all its forms, including both men and women's football. As for the second subtopic, it provides theoretical information on multiculturalism, interculturalism, and intercultural experiences. Those key elements are directly linked to cultural difficulties, such as cultural transition and adaptation, assimilation and integration, acculturation, intercultural communication, and culture stress. Every topic is contextualized in the football world, while also showing the impact of foreign professionals in domestic leagues. Chapter II – *Discovering Portuguese football* – focuses solely on Portugal and deconstructs the sport's history in the country. It provides the historical background of Portuguese football, by explaining its beginning and development, and details the characteristics of its modern version, including the impact of the Euro 2004. Moreover, this chapter highlights the link created between football and other markets, while also exposing the differences within the sport mostly related to amateur tiers and gender issues. Essentially, Chapter II provides a tour through Portugal and its football culture. Its main subtopics are *Historical background* and *Modern Portuguese football*. This chapter presents the evolution of Portuguese football and its contemporary system, focusing on the country's context. The purpose is to identify Portuguese features that have a direct impact in professional football, which can also affect immigrant athletes from other contexts, cultures, and countries. From Chapter II to Chapter III, the dissertation shifts its structure from a theoretical to a practical one, as it transitions to its original project. Chapter III – *Elysian: Behind the concept* – uncovers the project that has emerged as a result of the previously mentioned research. It presents all the elements that make up the company such as branding, services, products, among others. This third section introduces the project's identity and purpose – through its positioning, branding, products, and services – while also exploring how the company will perform on both its initial and advanced stages – through its marketing strategies and the use of glocalization. In sum, the third chapter displays the project's main features and further analysis, while evidencing its key traits. The main goal of this section is to understand how the business structure tackles the real market, how it can succeed, and its strategical approach to find a viable proposal. In addition to that, Chapter III also addresses the identity of “Elysian” as a future glocal company, in order to sustain its transition to foreign markets, rather than being limited to the Portuguese market. Lastly, Chapter IV – *Elysian's Business Model Canvas* – presents

the company's plan by using the blocks created by Osterwalder, in order to evaluate its effectiveness and possible success in the existing markets. It explains in detail all the components that constitute the commonly used visual representation, known as "*Business Model Canvas*", from the project's value proposition to its revenue streams and cost structure. Scrutinizing all these points is crucial to assess the project's strong and weak points. In addition to that, it includes an investment plan and possible funding options to kick-off the company. In sum, the four chapters explore theoretical notions within the sport's context, while also providing the historical background of football, and present a problem followed by a solution, which can be crucial to the development of the industry but also to contemporary societies.

The project "*Elysian: Get your cultural game on*" consists of the creation of a consulting company, with the main purpose of improving the integration and inclusion of professional football players, managers, and staff in different cultural environments, both male and female. This new platform serves as a means to trigger changes within the industry and to find new strategies to tackle sociocultural matters, by facilitating the process of cultural transition faced by individuals. "*Elysian*" focuses on the creation of a well-structured community, firstly in football and secondly in general society, through an original and creative platform. The project's goal is to improve the current systems used by individuals and provide new strategies to change them, mostly based on education and counselling. Its activity begins in Portugal and may possibly transition to other cultural settings in the future. By creating a broader network, constructed around knowledge and shared experiences, "*Elysian*" intends to combine academic research and the football world. The company was born to help people who are faced with cultural barriers. As previously mentioned, these problems – such as assimilation, acculturation, culture stress, among others – can lead to more severe and negative effects on any human being, like isolation, mental distress, and loss of identity. But it can have a particular backlash on professionals in the football world who are continuously confronted with a repetitive transitional process in dissimilar cultural contexts. "*Elysian: Get your cultural game on*" is a project that offers new solutions to the existent systems, focuses on providing personalized services to fulfil the needs of every client, and demands a greater discussion to protect individuals, whether on a professional or a personal level. More than anything, it is crucial to understand the people, as well as to highlight their needs and hurdles – such as racism, stereotypes, exclusion, among others – rather than disregarding the existence

of difficulties, focusing only on obtaining profits. This is as relevant to modern football, as to societies around the world. Hence, “*Elysian*” can act as a bridge to accelerate the evolutionary process in modern football and present a more effective solution that benefits everyone, both on and off the pitch.

Football is now recognized as a global sport and one of the best entertainment shows of contemporary times. It has created somewhat of a fantasy world, which attracts more and more people every year. Modern football also mirrors current-day societies in many ways, especially regarding its diversification on a cultural level. As it portrays this worldwide development, the sport presents the same difficulties faced by all individuals on their regular daily lives. Hence, using football to understand sociocultural issues and finding new strategies to deal with them can be essential to societies. The sport can take on the role of a crucial informal educational tool and provide an insight on what can be done to overcome these problems. In addition to that, the growing popularity of football demonstrates its impact and influence on people, which can be an important asset to disseminate knowledge. It can be used to raise awareness on intercultural problems and to educate people. Globalization has changed the game for both the sport and societies in general. The sport’s multicultural features are key to its evolution and the same can be done from a societal perspective. Transitioning from multiculturalism to interculturalism, while also understanding how this process can be beneficial, unlocks a set of new opportunities to the football industry and to anyone that follows it. If this shift is used properly and seen as an advantage, it can play an important role towards a more diversified, inclusive, and equal world. The question relies on how sociocultural issues really impact modern football and what can be done to overcome those obstacles, while also making football relevant to society in general. First, it is essential to understand what is wrong in the football world and how it is affecting its professionals, thus also limiting the industry’s growth. After that assessment, the analysis must move on to what is missing and that could potentially avoid all the unnecessary problems that have been identified. Lastly, and most importantly, the change must arise. As this project addresses the unspoken cultural difficulties faced by sports professionals, while highlighting their impact and presenting new strategies to combat them, “*Elysian: Get your cultural game on*” might be the ultimate and much-needed answer to all those questions.

CHAPTER I – THE NEW AGE OF FOOTBALL CULTURE

The origins of football are uncertain in historical terms. From China and Japan to Rome and the United Kingdom, the game suffered many changes and was built around different encounters. In the 2nd and 3rd centuries B.C., there are reports of a similar Chinese game called “*Tsu’Chu*”. This version consisted in shooting the ball to a net positioned in between 2 bamboo sticks (Neves, 2013). Following that, emerged the “*Japanese Kemari*”, which is still used nowadays as practice. This exercise gathered a group of people, within a circle, who had to pass the ball without letting it fall to the ground. However, modern football is acknowledged to have had its birth in Great Britain, during the 19th century. There were many versions of the game being played throughout England (Pifer et al., 2018). To distinguish the sport from others and establish it as a safe game, the Football Association was created in 1863, alongside proper rules and laws. As the magic of football spread throughout Europe, other countries began establishing their own national associations. At the same time, major governing bodies, such as FIFA and UEFA, appeared to boost the sport and expand its greatness, while also growing the level of competitiveness. The European football system might sound very complicated but its application in other continents is proof of the contrary, as well as the global fan base it acquired over the years.

Football, as it is known today, encompasses a different framework from its almost ancestral beginning. Along the way, the game went from pure entertainment to serious business on and off the pitch. Despite its constant growth since the 19th century, the burst of worldwide evolution in the 20th century took the sport to unimaginable levels. Globalization and technological advancements marked modern football’s breakthrough. It completely shifted its business model, with high bets on commercialization and internationalization. This expansion created somewhat of a new culture. Alongside that, it began gaining multicultural encounters and it is now a pool of cultural diversity. From the 1990s up until now, football skyrocketed to achieve the title of “*global game*”. As it expanded its borders, it has not just simply seen advantages. There have been more and more challenges, with little or no solutions. Engaging in a different cultural environment, especially with such a big monetary weight and fast movements, can raise questions. Professionals in the football world are still learning on how to deal with dissimilar people in forced intercultural experiences. Not much attention is given to the issues individuals, and consequently their families, can face if they do not acquire the necessary set of skills. Both personally and professionally, the constant relocation of professionals can take its

toll. The transition is difficult, and it can trigger certain complex processes, such as integration, adaptation, or acculturation. Obviously, everything has its positive and negative effects. It is important to understand what changed, what is wrong and how to solve it, for the sake of the game and everyone involved in it.

Nowadays, football has become the ultimate sport. Whether it is for its entertainment side or for the high values it reaches, it is almost impossible to let it just pass by. Indeed, it has gained a legendary status all around the world. Modern football is also an example of how developed and diversified the world is. These new characteristics are important since they mirror the difficulties faced in current-day societies. It is also essential to understand what can be done in order to tackle contemporary issues. Moreover, those multicultural features help in the development of football. Thus, they have a massive impact on the industry and influences those who follow the sport unconditionally. Globalization has changed the game completely, for both its professionals and supporters. Raising awareness to intercultural problems through football is extremely important, no matter what the issue is. The sport is an important platform to educate people, if used properly. In addition to that, football is now a culture on its own and it embraces values that are necessary to everyone. It is a catalyst of equality, inclusion, and general acceptance of diversity. Welcome to the new age of football culture.

1.1. Understanding professional football

Football is an easy game to understand but its system is not so much. Throughout the years, the world's game saw many changes and its main characteristics got defined. For instance, it can be distinguished by gender or age. It can also be divided in amateur or professional, with semi-professional also coming into the picture at times. In addition to that, there are several domestic leagues, with each country having more than one, and multiple competitions, whether at a club or at a national level. For the purpose of this dissertation, the main focus will be directed to European football and its professional encounters. Professional football encompasses all athletes whose job is the game itself. This description accounts all professionals who have a written contract and are paid to play a part in the sport (Hamidani & Castro, 2019). Essentially, professionals are actual employees of a company/identity that is registered in the higher and governing associations of the hosting nation. Any football professional is nothing more than a common worker withing the so-called labour force, with a paycheck at the end of the month and taxes to pay.

Even though modern football is known for its astronomical monetary values and high wages, which are only possible in professional football, that has not always been the case. In its beginning, football was nothing but an amateur sport with a strictly pastime purpose: “The development of modern football was closely tied to processes of industrialization and urbanization in Victorian Britain” (Rollin et al., 2020, para. 5). The sport grew mainly with the purpose of leisure, especially for the working class, throughout the 19th century and centred in Great Britain. As its popularity expanded, more people wanted to watch games and some clubs or associations began charging entries (Rollin et al., 2020). Unknowingly, it was the first step towards professional football. This revenue stream allowed amateur clubs to actually pay their players, even though it was not permitted by the Football Association. At the same time, it provided them with a strong weapon to attract others, whom they perceived as possible assets towards more success. Eventually, clubs won this ongoing fight with their governing body. Around 1885, professional football came into place and the system began being developed due to it: “Professionalism also sparked further modernization of the game through the establishment of the Football League [...] A lower, second division was introduced in 1893” (Rollin et al., 2020, para. 7). After that, many other countries followed the English

system through the creation of similar leagues. From Ireland to Germany, professional football increasingly took place and marked the turn of the century.

The evolution did not stagnate there, with football even being included in the Olympics as of 1900. In Europe, there are 2 main organizations who oversee the sport and that emerged throughout the 20th century, those being FIFA and UEFA. Alongside that, two major competitions were founded, FIFA World Cup and UEFA Euro, taking professional football to a national level. Over the years, more tournaments appeared so that European clubs could compete against each other. Those include the UEFA Champions League and the UEFA Europa League. At this point in time, the sport was still seen as exclusively male. Women only began to gain some recognition later on, even though their presence has been reported throughout different centuries. The process of development was similar to men's football, but women suffered a banning stage in multiple countries, in between the 1920s and 1950s (Taylor, 2019). It was not until the later part of the 20th century that organizations acknowledged the evolution of women's football. Step by step women began receiving their deserved equality, even though it is far from complete. Tournaments like the World Cup, the Euro, the Champions League and even the Olympics now have female encounters. The implementation of professionalism in women's football has been easier, since the format and systems have already been established due to men's football. However, its preestablished stereotype that it is a "man's game" restrains a proper evolution. Prejudice leads the audience to lose interest, or never gain it, with the preconception that women cannot play football. Underestimating females does not allow the sport to grow to the point of complete equality. In fact, it restricts its development and, consequently, investments are done in a poor manner. This disparity also forces women to give up on any career linked to the sport. Even though women's football has seen an increase in popularity, it is marked by gender issues and inequality.

European professional football has a much more extensive and complicated system that goes beyond its main tournaments. Each country has its own football association, which is consequently tied to the main organizations, FIFA and UEFA: "A football association is typically responsible for both professional and amateur leagues, as well as overseeing a country's national team" (SBNATION, 2014a). Currently, there are 55 national associations connected to UEFA (UEFA, 2021a), with some exceptions that are not considered European or at least not perceived as such. Normally, each association

has the full control of its domestic leagues and system. This encompasses every aspect related to the different competitions, such as the domestic cups or even the national team. Although the format is consistent all over Europe when it comes to the top tier, it differs in the following leagues: “Depending on population size and the number of clubs, divisions will either remain nationwide or eventually split to become regional” (Bundesliga, 2021, para. 5). The scheme is somewhat like a pyramid. The best can only go up and the worst can only go down, thus constantly changing the teams present on each league/division. Promotion is every team’s goal, in order to reach the top tier, step by step: “Moving up the pyramid often results in greater revenues for a club, through sponsorship deals, TV rights and increased ticket sales” (SBNATION, 2014b). However, clubs also face relegation if their results are poor. Avoiding the bottom of the table is another goal because it can have very negative consequences: “Players will leave, less money will come in, and the club could well start a long slide into obscurity” (SBNATION, 2014c). Although European professional football has a complex system, its massive evolution and popularity have never stopped attracting supporters from all over the world. One of the main reasons is the fact that people tend to pay more attention to only a few countries and especially their main leagues, without any interest in the subsequent ones, whether professional or not. A good example is the creation of the term “big five” to refer to England, France, Germany, Italy, and Spain, known as the top European leagues.

Modern football also has other key features, mostly related to multiculturalism, business, and migration. Present-day squads are a consequence of worldwide issues, within the spectrum of globalization. Constant and increasing waves of migration diversified societies and their working force. Football squads are now composed by multiple nationalities, on and off the pitch, especially after the 1990s, with the addition of the Bosman Ruling of 1995. The Bosman Ruling of 1995 refers to the unilateral freedom of movement in Europe, based on the Treaty of Rome. It allows football players to leave their clubs without any transfer fees, as long as the contract has ended. This crucial turning-point transformed football forever. In 1990, Jean-Marc Bosman and his club, RFC Liege, had a feud. The midfielder’s contract was coming to an end and another club placed an offer to buy him. However, the fee proposed did not match the club’s expectations: “Before the Bosman ruling, a player could not leave at the end of their deal unless that club agreed to let him go on a free, or that club received an agreed fee from a

buying club” (Brand, 2015, para. 6). The players could not decide or negotiate, thus creating an unfair relation. After the club’s denial to let Bosman go free, the Belgian took the case to the European Court of Justice. After 5 long years, the player won, and football was revolutionized. Before the initiative of Jean-Marc Bosman, the movement of players was very restricted. Until then, clubs were only allowed to have a limited number of foreign players working for them. The Bosman Ruling of 1995 made that rule illegal and the commercialization of players blew up:

The cultural diversity of European football teams increased considerably after the European Court of Justice decided in 1995 that football is an economic activity [...] This decision [...] gave clubs the ability to hire EU citizens without restrictions. As a consequence, the labour market of football teams became truly global. (Maderer et al., 2014, p. 216)

Since then, European football has become extremely diversified, and business driven. Not only does the percentage of imports keeps growing every single year but branding and external commercialization has also become a must: “It is not one single product, service or entertainment that a football club offers. We can tentatively consider the following possible "offerings": (1) football game, (2) merchandise, (3) players, (4) team and (5) the club” (Dolles & Söderman, 2005, pp. 10-11). Clubs have become increasingly thirsty for profits, mostly in order to compete in a growing industry and its international market. Alongside the element of entertainment, the main weapon has been branding, for both the club as a single entity and players as individual “products”. Elite players such as Cristiano Ronaldo add an extra flavour to the game, by being an asset to the team on the pitch and highly profitable off the pitch. With these new equivalences, clubs began expanding their own sub-culture to the entire world and gathering bigger audiences. Football has also taken advantage of technological advancements, such as social media, to maintain the bond even at a distance. Nowadays, it is not just about the game and the side-lines are no longer the limit. As the legendary Rinus Michels, former player and coach, once said: *“Football is business and business is business”*.

1.1.1. Contemporary football

As a sport that is played in almost every country in the world, football has become a global game. Over the past few decades, the phenomenon has grown substantially due to different aspects such as globalization and commercialization. With worldwide advancements, football was forced to adapt to new demands in order to survive. From just a simple and fun sport to full-on business mode, the main European sport completely shifted. These new encounters, such as globalization and technological advancements, led the football world to a core-based change. Especially financially speaking, a need to restructure business models, management ideals, and marketing strategies urged. Nowadays, the sport is seen as any other business in the industry spectrum.

Globalization triggered many changes in the entire world, with football not being an exception. This term is vastly discussed, as it holds several characteristics and divides opinions. It can be addressed within its many forms, including economic and geographical for example. According to Irani & Noruzi (2011), while citing Nilson (2010), the notion of globalization addresses “the process by which different economies and societies become more closely integrated” (p. 216). Yalcin (2009) adds that it “can be defined as an extensive network of economic, cultural, social and political interconnections and processes which goes beyond national boundaries” (p. 1), while citing Yeates (2001). Football became intertwined with the notion of globalization, due to its expansion and the emergence of increasing migration routes. Another crucial point was the Bosman Ruling of 1995, as previously mentioned and explained. It highlighted the subject of labour migration in sports. The term refers to the move of sportspeople/professionals, whether at a national or international level. As time went by, the issue arose due to the irregular waves of migratory influx, which were the outcome of the free-flow movement and other world crisis:

The internationalization of football teams has several reasons. Weak national economies and financial crises cause the movement of playing talent from Africa, Latin America, Asia, and Eastern Europe to the West (Lanfranchi and Taylor, 2001). (Maderer et al., 2014, pp. 216-217)

European football is a sweet temptation to anyone living in poor conditions, with little or no means. Since the financial power is tremendous, and has kept a rising curve, clubs have a certain leverage and can (usually) offer high wages. Thus, the modern system provides and sustains a more dignified life, for both the professionals and their families.

It is an opportunity hard to miss, which makes Europe the go-to destination for any ambitious person. If everything is converged, the outcome is somewhat of a parallel universe with multiple cultures, identities, and personalities in the exact same bubble. This change has led governing bodies to perfect regulations, after detecting a major increase on the influx of people from all around the world. At the same time, football found new ways of getting income. The growing interest in the sport expanded its activities. These include e-commerce, media rights and other investments, which have opened many doors to the industry. Through branding, clubs built strong identities and that specific move maximized their profits. By creating a specific and unique culture, associations and organizations are able to attract both supporters and investors.

Contemporary football is an example of multiculturalism and entrepreneurship. It illustrates all the new advancements of the 21st century, including international business and relations. It developed a successful and renewed business model, thus showing a new side of the sport. At the same time, it began presenting multicultural encounters on and off the pitch. This search for global expansion depicts the world's evolution, while also portraying its consequences. Alongside that, the football world was able to keep up with that same evolution by indulging in numerous technological activities. It has adapted itself to the times and assessed the right ways to profit with it. Even though nowadays the focus is on the money, football has achieved a lot more than that. It has now learned how to take advantage of all its new tools and resources, mostly on a sociocultural level. Despite its setbacks or controversies, modern football is working to close all the gaps. The progress may be slow but its capability to evolve has already been proven multiple times.

1.1.1.1. Men's football

Football has always been seen as a male sport due to its extensive history, which included violence at times. As previously mentioned in this chapter, the origins of the game are attributed mostly to the Chinese version, known as "*Tsu'Chu*". However, the modern version is credited to England in the 19th century. Football was the main pastime for the working-class and students, at both schools and universities, with little or no rules that diverged from place to place:

Initially, the sport consisted of a mob of participants moving the ball from one end of a field to another, and it was usually played by students at schools and universities. However, the game was rough and informal, and it seemed as though each group of participants had a different interpretation of the rules. Some, such as the school at Rugby, allowed the ball to be carried by hand and tolerated the more aggressive features of the sport such as tackling and tripping. Others, like the school at Cambridge, disallowed the use of the hands and placed more emphasis on the technical ability of the participants. (Pifer et al., 2018, pp. 4-5)

Since it was seen as leisure, or an activity within a similar frame, there was no big interest on how it was played out. Using the game as pure daily entertainment did not require any set of rules. However, this perception made football somewhat ambiguous. It was not until 1863 that existing organizations decided to act, as a means to properly establish the sport. This initiative led to the creation of the Football Association. With a real and common governing body, came laws and regulations. Soon others followed and began replicating the English steps, thus establishing their national associations as well. The following challenge was the introduction of professionalism, due to the FA's resistance. After achieving that goal, men's football began to take its modern shape. Throughout the years, global and continental organizations appeared, such as FIFA and UEFA, and so did major tournaments, those being the FIFA World Cup and the UEFA Euro. These are the biggest events in the football world, especially for Europeans. The men's World Cup was first held in 1930, with Uruguay as its winner. Every four years, the world stops to see the best of the best. However, there was an exception due to World War II (Tikkanen, 2021). Between 1938 and 1950, the event stopped completely. According to the FIFA website, the idea

of having an international tournament was born out of a group of French administrators during the 1920s (FIFA, 2021b). One of those was Jules Rimet, the then president of FIFA, whose name was embedded in the trophy until 1970. Since its beginning, the World Cup has conquered major numbers. In its first year, the final game had an audience of 93,000 spectators (History.com, 2019). Over the years, the tournament gained popularity and surpassed other major sports events, thus being considered the ultimate sporting show:

During the 2014 World Cup in Brazil, an estimated 3.2 billion people tuned in to watch the 64 matches that were played throughout the tournament, with 1 billion of those viewers tuning in to watch the final alone (FIFA, 2014a). To put these numbers in perspective, the 2014 edition of the National Football League's (NFL) Super Bowl was watched by 160 million viewers worldwide (Both, 2015), and the opening ceremony of the 2012 London Olympics garnered a global audience of 900 million (Ormsby, 2012). (Pifer et al., 2018, p. 6)

On the other hand, the Euro, also known as European Championship, only had its beginning in 1960. However, the idea originally “dates back to 1927, when the French Football Federation’s administrator Henri Delaunay first proposed a pan-European football tournament” (FootballHistory.org, 2021, para. 3), decades before its inception. During its existence, the men’s tournament evolved on a constant basis, mostly with changes in the number of participant teams. The first edition of the competition featured only 4 teams, while the latest one had 24. Although it is still behind the World Cup in numbers, the Euro keeps increasing its followers and its popularity has not stopped rising. According to a USA Today Sports’ article (2016), and based on a UEFA’s report (2016), the last tournament had a major improvement in audience. The total live audience accounted for almost 5 billion viewers, with 2 billion following the tournament on television. As for the final game, the average in-home global audience was 284.4 million, with around 600 million watching even just a part of it.

In addition to that, male European football hosts two important competitions at club-level, with UEFA as its “godfather” organization. Those are UEFA Champions League and UEFA Europa League. The UCL was born in 1955-56 and it is a yearly competition, composed by 32 teams and played over five

rounds. As every other format, some changes were made along the way with the main one being doubling the number of teams in 1960 (Kruskic, 2019a). Throughout the years, the Champions League became the ultimate title for European clubs. Not all teams can qualify to the UCL, so there is Europa League almost as a second chance. This competition has been around since 1971 and is composed by 48 teams from all over Europe, with six rounds to play. Unlike the Champions League, Europa League suffered many changes along the years. For example, the tournament began with a 64-team, then cut down to only 40 and expanded to 48. It also had two games, or two legs, to dispute the final until 1997 (Kruskic, 2019b). The Europa League is not only important as the second most desired European club-competition but also as a path to get a spot on Champions League, without having to worry about the domestic championship and its classification.

Men's professional football has grown to the point that it is seen as an industry of its own. The sport became a business, now focused on expanding more and more every single year. Its development keeps attracting investors, which only adds to the game's evolution. Evolving from amateur to professional brought to light certain business aspects, such as commercialization and internationalization. Clubs have become brands and continuously search for ways to make them profitable, thus sustaining the new lifestyle surrounding them. From high wages to high-end facilities, men's football is betting it all on the complete show it can pull off, whether on or off the pitch.

1.1.1.2. Women's football

The history of women's football is yet to be completely uncovered. Unlike men's football, there are very limited records and information regarding the emergence of women in the sport. Sandra Costa (2017) states that there are traces of women participating in "*Tsu' Chu*", during Han's Dynasty. The author also mentions the evidence of versions played by women around the 15th century, in France and Scotland. However, the official beginning is attributed to the 19th century and with a British spotlight. Most of the acknowledged and recorded first games between women appoint English and Scottish protagonists: "Edinburgh quite possibly witnessed the birth of international fixtures when, late in the 19th century, a team of English women crossed Hadrian's Wall to face a home side led by Helen Graham Matthews" (Taylor, 2019, para. 19). The biggest breakthrough was the creation of the British Ladies Football Club, in 1894, by Nettie Honeyball and Florence Dixie (Simkin, 2020):

Nettie saw it as a business opportunity and was keen on turning young middle-class women into professional footballers. Florence, on the other hand, used her privileged background to speak out on a range of topical political and social issues [...]. (Hessayon, 2015, para. 12)

Nettie Honeyball began building a team from a simple add in the newspaper. After gathering a considerable number of players, the British Ladies Football Club had an opening match. The game between North and South in London, back in March of 1895, marked the beginning of women's modern football (Costa, 2017), with an astonishing audience of over 10,000 people (Hessayon, 2015). The female presence in the game saw a growth throughout World War I, since most men were sent off to combat. Women began assuming bigger positions in the working world and football spread as a past-time between them. Thus, new clubs emerged such as the legendary Dick, Kerr's Ladies F.C., known as a factory team (Taylor, 2019). Even after the war ended, the popularity just kept rising. According to Taylor (2019), in the Boxing Day of 1920, a game between Dick, Kerr's Ladies and St Helens Ladies gathered an audience of 68,000 people, with 15,000 of them having their entrance denied. Although there was a clear evolution, the Football Association, England's governing body, banned women's football in 1921. Other countries, that were

also experiencing the same phenomenon, later followed that idea: “France banned it in 1932, West Germany in 1955, Norway in 1931 and Brazil from 1941” (Taylor, 2019, para. 32). In 1969, the Women’s Football Association (WFA) was founded with 43 members (FA, 2021).

The major breakthrough happened in 1970, with the first ever feminine World Cup, although it was an unofficial one, sponsored by the Italian beverage company Martini & Rossi (Clarke, 2019; Monkhouse, 2018). Its format was repeated in the following year. The next two decades were extremely important for the development of women’s football, regarding efforts made towards equality and recognition. Between 1982 and 1984, UEFA presented the first European Competition for Representative Women’s Teams, now known as Euro. It was composed by 16 teams and the ultimate winner was Sweden. Following that, in 1991, FIFA hosted the first official women’s World Cup. It took place in China, with 12 teams, and the winner was the United States (FIFA, 2021d). FIFA’s archive shows an average of 3.8 goals per game and an average attendance of 19,615 per match, with its total being 510,000. The final game attracted 65,000 people. Since then, FIFA Women’s World Cup is held every four years. Another advancement was made in 2001, with the creation of the UEFA Women’s Cup, now known as UEFA Women’s Champions League (UEFA, 2021b).

Over the last decades, women’s football saw a skyrocketing growth. Not just in popularity but also in regulations and worldwide expansion. Countries all over the world now have feminine leagues, with many competing at a professional level. There are still issues to tackle regarding working conditions, in order to reach proper equality. Koukiadaki and Pearson (2019) stated that “a professional football career for women is hard to sustain in the face of low pay, a lack of contractual support, and commitments away from the pitch” (para. 2). Although there is still a major gap between both genders, women’s football keeps improving its system every single year. The next challenge is to increase interest in investors and generate proper opportunities for it to grow, thus providing women with the exact same advantages as men.

1.1.2. Business framework

The football world keeps increasing its status and growing its place in the business game. Its international fame has skyrocketed in the past few decades. Alongside that increase of popularity, football slowly adjusted itself to a brand-new business model. Nowadays, its business framework is centred around commercialization, internationalization, and the infamous transfer market(s). This business upgrade was the ultimate step to maintain football as financially competitive, while also evolving to a wider area of possible public/audience.

Earlier on its history, football was nothing but entertainment. Clubs had no interest in achieving any profit and recognition. However, throughout the 1990s, generalized interest in the game began its ascending curve with high business prospects. International conglomerates and worldwide media showed new paths for revenues (Finance4Football, 2021). Over the last few decades, football clubs developed a new business model focused on generating profit, thus going from local to global. The transition from non-profit associations to complete enterprises encompasses reformed ways to get better and bigger revenues, through specific channels: “In general, the four major revenue sources for any league are broadcasting, gate, sponsorship and merchandise” (Wagner, 2020, p. 8). Commercialization was the first step to create a new revenue stream, based on advanced branding. Match-day profits, including the broadcasting of games which englobe media rights, proved to be a strong investment for both parties. Following that, the saturation of domestic markets triggered internationalization in football. After gaining more and more global recognition, alongside massive monetary flows, the transfer markets grew exponentially. Trades, loans, and further market features allowed clubs to have some sort of financial security, especially when other sources are not as successful.

Understanding how the business side of football functions unravels modern challenges, never faced before. This major influx of money is directly connected to the movement of professionals, which presents advantages but also difficulties that need to be addressed. Football’s business framework was, and still is, a major catalyst for the presence of multiculturalism. This intertwining of cultures, with all its values, beliefs, and traditions, has fuelled the sport on both its good and bad side. The main question relies on how people are working towards a balanced state within it.

1.1.2.1. Commercialization

In football, commercialization includes all economic activities of a club from the game tickets to merchandising. Essentially, it “denotes the collection of economic and financial activities that are linked and fully associated with the main football outcome” (Bhandari, 2016, p. 21). Throughout the past few decades, the football world has changed drastically in business terms. Clubs felt the need to change the game outside the lines. Dolles & Söderman link this shift to “the clubs’ need to cover costs, a desire to raise as much revenue as possible and to generate profits wherever practicable” (2005, p. 8). A team’s success on the pitch stopped being the one and only goal for clubs. Football’s business models began changing as an attempt to expand the market and raise competitive advantage. In a broader spectrum, revenues can be divided in 3 main channels, with those being commercial, broadcast and matchday (Srinivas, 2020). These are linked to key features such as the development of branding and the international transfer market, that hold a significant level of importance: “In terms of modern economic theory, the sports market is thus a multi-sided or platform market—i.e. a market where platforms bring together different groups of customers” (Huveneers, 2014, para. 7).

Commercialization was among the new strategies, and everything could become a source of income, from game tickets to merchandising. The main step was to turn football clubs into major brands. Linked to that was the commercialization of elite players. Players like Cristiano Ronaldo, Lionel Messi, Zinedine Zidane, Luís Figo or David Beckham were, and still are, powerful individual brands on their own. This gets clubs important sponsors and publicity deals, thus creating long lasting partnerships and earning them massive sources of income. Such players also add to clubs’ revenues through the sales of merchandise linked to them, especially jerseys:

In recent years, football clubs have become commercial enterprises that operate according to market economy criteria from which other industries may benefit as well. Sports and apparel manufacturers such as Nike or Adidas earn millions with fan merchandise such as the jersey from various clubs. (Ronald & Jean-Pierre, 2019, p. 11)

Other key factors in football's commercialization are the transfer fees and the broadcasting revenues. When it comes to transfers, the values have been consistently rising over the years. Millions can be generated from a simple transfer and those are sometimes used as a means of survival. Many clubs find themselves in poor financial situations and end up giving up their players to balance the accounts. Any transfer can have a huge significance to the clubs, even though it may not seem like it. On the other hand, broadcasting has one of the most important roles in modern football. For instance, Mariotti claims that "the massive injection of capitals in football can be seen as an outcome of a growing interdependence with media companies" (2014, p. 15). TV rights have become increasingly important to clubs and organizations. Although it was seen as a possible threat at first, broadcasting revenues are now essential to everyone's business model in football. There was a generalized fear that transmitting games on television would decrease people's desire to actually go to stadiums, thus consequently affecting another part of their revenue streams (Mariotti, 2014). This stagnated the evolution of broadcasting in football, but it did not stop it. Throughout the 1990s, the connection between both grew exponentially alongside technological advancements such as satellite and cable. According to Hoen and Szymansky (1999), as cited in Mariotti (2014), "the development of pay-TV, satellite, cable and pay-per-view increased the revenue generation into the hundreds of million" (p. 14). Since then, broadcasting has only increased its status in professional football, by gathering more and more audience each year.

Football clubs, associations and organizations have now become "*glocal transnational corporations*" as stated by Krabbenbos (2013, p. 9), while citing Giulianotti and Robertson (2004). Commercialization is crucial to maintain competitive advantage, thus consequently influencing the business' performance on and off pitch. The influx of money in football has now become the key to success and its international encounters keep growing on a yearly basis. Without it, modern football does not exist.

1.1.2.2. Internationalization

Internationalization is a term that addresses a broad range of situations. In its core, it defines the expansion from a domestic market to a foreign one: “Internationalization is mainly thought of as outward movement [...] adapting their product to a foreign market, to increase its attractiveness” (Wagner, 2020, p. 6). Internationalization is always the result of an ambitious vision, thus searching for ways to maximize the profits of a company, brand, or product. However, this transition from national to international must be justified, in order not to lose any unnecessary resources and financial input. With the ongoing merge of football with business, the notion became a crucial point in clubs’ strategies: “Due to technological advances, mass media, and globalization, the ability for professional football clubs to reach new markets has largely expanded” (Maderer & Holtbrügge, 2018, pp. 410-411). The game’s popularity saw a massive increase, especially in the case of European football’s notoriety overseas. These new encounters have encouraged the football world to enlarge its areas of operation:

Due to the growing global interest in football via the creation of global fan communities and the saturation of the domestic football market, football clubs are looking to transcend the traditional structure of football business by relying on their internationalisation strategy as being an important growth driver. Finding new revenue streams and monetizing international brand recognition is the ultimate goal. (Ernest, 2020, para. 2)

As football clubs grow as companies, it is only natural that many pursue a worldwide expansion in business terms. Through commercialization and branding, clubs can strategize an effective way to build a solid bridge towards global fan communities: “Fans have unprecedented access to foreign leagues and their teams, which allows them to form bonds with teams and players across the globe” (Maderer & Holtbrügge, 2018, p. 411). Targeting international markets has its challenges but it also provides enormous rewards. When taking the next step, after conquering the national market, a club must define clear marketing strategies in correlation with its already established branding. A club’s identity triggers the birth and growth of a sub-culture, mostly sustained by fans or supporters, which maintains the base secure in international markets. Boosted by commercialization, everything

has to be adapted to fit foreign tastes, without losing its origins. This link can be made by a number of activities such as international tournaments, pre-season tours overseas and even facilities or shops in promising markets (Ernest, 2020; Maderer & Holtbrügge, 2018). At the same time, this international status can go through the acquisitions made by the clubs. Imports have high significance, whether for being individual brands or for their nationality. Nowadays, nothing is completely focused on skills but rather in how certain businesses can improve the club's identity and its financial income:

Sport managers often try to enhance their team's global brand profile by hiring foreign, high-level players. They may act as ambassadors of their native country and enhance the popularity of the club outside its domestic market, thus attracting the support of passionate fans in the foreign players' home countries (Kerr and Gladden 2008). In addition, internationally recognized and popular head coaches can improve a football club's image, which may lead to increased merchandise sales (Gladden and Milne 1999) and TV revenues (Desbordes 2012). In particular, players from emerging markets hold great potential for gaining fan bases abroad. (Maderer & Holtbrügge, 2018, pp. 412-413)

Internationalization is one of the key factors in the growth of professional football. As new strategies emerge to tackle new markets, the more the industry expands itself to every corner of the world. Additionally, clubs and organizations are now structuring themselves around this specific element. To continue its growth curve rising, football has to conquer as many supporters as it possibly can. Internationalization allows the sport to establish a presence in unthinkable locations, most of the times without even an actual physical location. Thus, it illustrates the importance of internationalization on football's global evolution. Modern football's business model would not have its advantages maximized if internationalization was not a part of its framework.

1.1.2.3. Transfer markets

In its business framework, modern professional football has a key activity known as the transfer market(s). It is now more essential than ever since it can generate millions to clubs. A player's transfer can even be the synonym of financial survival. Once again, its massive evolution and expansion was another outcome of the Bosman Ruling of 1995. Throughout the last few decades, the market has grown significantly with single transfers reaching millions. For example, in 2017, the Brazilian player Neymar was transferred from Barcelona to Paris Saint-Germain with a fee of €222 million (Doyle, 2021). It is the biggest football transfer so far, making him the most expensive player ever. Not only are the values increasing rapidly but the system has become better, faster, and simpler. But what is the global transfer market and how does it work?

The transfer market is a practical space where contracts are negotiated and finalized between player and club and/or club and club. It is also the theoretical space where monetary values are attributed to players by clubs and estimated to be as accurate as possible for the sake of minimizing expenses and maximizing profits. (Schmidtke, 2019, para. 2)

FIFA has established regulations and created a specific system called the Transfer Matching System, or TMS, which was implemented in 2010. It is described as “an online system that makes international transfers of players between clubs quicker, smoother and more transparent” (FIFA, 2021c, para. 1). Schmidtke (2019) adds that it is “digital database where every single transfer or player acquisition is registered” (para. 5). The goal is basically to maintain records and secure the data's security, thus protecting everyone involved. At the same time, it simplifies the entire process. Usually, there are two periods of time in which transfers can be made. A smaller one, during winter, and a bigger one, during summer. However, in some countries or continents, those periods can be different because their annual calendar is also dissimilar to the European one. According to the FIFA website, each member association must define its transfer periods for both men and women's football, although there is already a more commonly used system.

Transfers can happen in a variety of ways, such as a purchase, a loan, or on a free. In fact, unlike what the media emphasizes to the public, most of the transfers are actually made without any fee, due to the players having already reached the end of their contract. FIFA's global transfer market report (2020), regarding 2019 and men's professional football, reveals that those mediatic transfers represented only 11.6%. On the other hand, the transfers of players on a free represented 64.3%. The report also shows two main transfer streams, although there are more. The main routes happen between Brazil and Portugal or within the United Kingdom, whether England-Scotland or Wales-England and so on. The migratory route from Brazil to Portugal is very famous, as it is one of the easiest ways to enter European football and progress to the biggest leagues. Although football is a global game, Europe has a clear dominance, and it is usually the ultimate destination for anyone with big aspirations. The same report (FIFA, 2021a), this time regarding 2020, shows similar numbers. Mediatic transfers did not see any changes, with 11.6%, and transfers on a free suffered a slight decrease, going down to 62.5%. As for the migratory routes, Spain appears more in streams with England and Portugal. The movement of players between Brazil and Portugal still remains the main route. Despite the media focusing only on transfer with enormous fees, the actual market is not based on that, and it does not even characterize a quarter of it.

Transfers can be seen as a set of advantages, which is why those periods are extremely studied or planned by clubs and followed by most fans or supporters. By gathering players with different skills, squads can try to englobe all details to form somewhat of a perfect team. At the same time, elite professionals can become a big phenomenon outside the pitch. Thus, they became major assets on all fronts and increase the club's value, as well as financial income. Nowadays, the international transfer market is seen as a business opportunity, and it is one of the biggest revenue streams for clubs.

1.2. Football VS Culture

*Some people believe football is a matter of life and death, I am very disappointed with that attitude. I can assure you it is much, much more important than that.*¹

– Bill Shankly

Time has led football to become its own subculture and a global game, on all its aspects. With the help of globalization and the Bosman Ruling of 1995, the sport grew exponentially when it comes to cultural diversity. Over the past few decades, the imports in domestic leagues have dominated entire football teams on and off pitch. Although this new characteristic was beneficial to the sport's culture, it also unleashed new issues or highlighted their existence. Understanding the direct link between football and culture can present a complicated process, since it may encompass a variety of interpretations. However, it is clear that the sport has changed considerably from the 1990s onwards. The number of foreign professionals in domestic leagues increased exponentially, which boosted sociocultural problems. Different cultural perspectives can generate a more effective and broader approach, but it can also be challenging to encapsulate everything in the same small environment:

After the Bosman ruling in 1995, the cultural diversity of professional football teams in Europe has increased considerably. Recruiting players regardless of their nationality allows football clubs to make use of a global talent pool and to combine the specific strengths of individuals with different cultural backgrounds. At the same time, it confronts them with the challenge of having players who speak different languages and who have different football philosophies ingrained in them. (Maderer et al., 2014, p. 215)

Football squads are now one of the greatest examples of multiculturalism. However, this interaction between several cultures within the same environment triggers certain issues. As Matthew Maclachlan (2010) stresses in one of his articles, football lost its geographical borders but gained cultural ones. Many barriers can be found in those situations, such as linguistic, religious, or simply cultural. Despite the efforts being made, by both the institutions and the individuals, it is still visible the confusion between adaptation and integration. Nowadays, clubs (usually) provide the means for their professionals to easily find a house or resource to foreign language classes. Nevertheless, these tools are not enough to achieve a positive, complete, and full integration within an

¹ Hunter, S. (2012). "Bill Shankly: In quotes". Retrieved from Liverpool F.C.'s website: <https://www.liverpoolfc.com/news/first-team/124781-bill-shankly-in-quotes-1>

entirely dissimilar environment. In fact, such efforts only provide a specific and limited adaptation. This can have negative backlashes, as it can affect the professional's performance. In their paper on multicultural football squads, Maderer, Holtbrügge and Schuster (2014) state that clubs hire imports as a means to "benefit from the specific strengths of individuals with different cultural backgrounds" (p. 217). Although the game has the same rules everywhere, it is not played in the same manner. Each country has added its input over the years. Some countries have a tactical football culture, while others have a technical one. That diversity brings an extra flair to the game, when used properly. However, it can also be challenging to the professionals involved. Matthew Maclachlan (2010) remembers that not much attention is given to the integration of football professionals in other countries. Individuals are somehow expected to succeed almost immediately without any cultural knowledge and background. It is all about the business and nothing about the people, placing them in risky positions that can jeopardize their lives both personally and professionally.

Understanding the link between football and culture provides a better insight on what type of issues can arise. Although it may seem like a hard connection to make, the last few decades proved it otherwise. The transformation of football from entertainment to business mixed things up, with a higher movement of people. Different cultures and backgrounds are now regularly seen in modern squads. This evolution might seem like it created a sweet combination on the pitch, especially when clubs are extremely successful. However, the opposite also happens both on and off the pitch. Success is simply expected, disregarding the fact that modern squads are inconsistent and artificial. Normally, the same professionals do not work for long periods of time together, especially the players. Therefore, individuals are forced to go through the same transitional, adaptational and integrational process repeatedly. It can have adverse effects. In this case, issues or unpleasant situations are usually dismissed or blamed on the professionals, without any background information. To avoid such circumstances, the connection between football and culture must occur. Its acknowledgment and consequent comprehension are crucial to a more effective and positive evolution.

1.2.1. Multiculturalism in modern professional football

The term multiculturalism implies the coexistence of different cultures within the same space, environment or just society in general. It embraces many things, “where culture includes racial, religious, or cultural groups and is manifested in customary behaviours, cultural assumptions and values, patterns of thinking, and communicative styles” (Chu et al., 2020, para. 1). From a societal perspective, it can be beneficial to encompass a variety of values, beliefs, and traditions. By intertwining different perspectives, a newer and better society can emerge with the improvement of many of its lacking fields and characteristics. On the other hand, multicultural environments present several challenges since it indicates a separation of cultures. David L. Sam (2006) states that it describes “the situation in a society where the different groups are encouraged to maintain their ethnic distinctiveness” (p. 20). This critical positioning easily triggers many conflicts such as prejudice and others, which can evolve into unwanted levels of distress. The differences are accepted but there is a certain avoidance of any interaction, due to possible conflicts:

Multiculturalism is a judgment of existence: in a same physical or conceptual space, different people coexist, from different cultures (in terms of memories, options, references, values, preferences, projects, expectations, experiences, practices, and attitudes), but – under ideal circumstances – they mutually recognize the right to live in common. Multiculturalism preaches not only the right to share a territory, but also the obligation to live in it according to the cultures of those various groups and communities. (Sarmiento, 2014, pp. 606-607)

In modern professional football, multiculturalism has now become one of its key traits and contemporary squads are one of the greatest examples of this notion. As previously mentioned in this chapter, football has lost its borders and has now a global canvas. The presence of varied cultures in a single squad introduces many advantages and, consequently, challenges. Different cultural perspectives can generate a more effective and broader approach, but it can also be challenging to encapsulate everything in the same small environment. It is a misconception that individuals from dissimilar cultures can easily integrate with each other. An individual who is faced with an opposite culture and does not have the skills to integrate in it can be overwhelmed. Such challenges can have a negative effect or trigger an unwanted reaction. Thus, it can jeopardize a professional’s performance and goals or destabilize the individual to the point of low productivity.

At the same time, combining all these differences and finding a balance through exchange of knowledge can lead to greater outcomes. If individuals are culturally aware and open-minded, especially to learn and understand others distinctive traits, while still maintaining their origins with all it encompasses, success may come more easily. Another crucial factor is that multiculturalism can lead to interculturalism and effective integration. By working as a team, professionals must communicate and find their common balance to achieve a specific goal. Thus, it provides a third space where both parties share their cultures: “The socializing role of sports participation is well recognized [...] participation in sports may reinforce understanding of and respect for cultural diversity and foster migrants’ integration in multicultural societies” (Berry & Sam, 2013, p, 155). In an increasingly diversified world, it is important to build strategies to work towards integration and inclusion. These notions are highly important to have a positive environment, mainly constructed around a sense of community and belonging: “Becoming part of a team with a coach who creates feelings of esteem and community, to find a space and an activity to be shared, or to have role models and like-minded companions can be life changing and affirming” (Lundvall & Walseth, 2014, p. 9). The development of such a strong social or collective identity through football is essential. It allows individuals to grow with a more expanded view of the world, while acquiring a variety of means to deal with unexpected situations.

Multiculturalism in modern professional football is complicated, with a tricky ambivalence. Despite that, it is essential for the game and the business surrounding it. Whether it presents challenges or advantages, multiculturalism is in its evolving stage and professionals are learning daily on how to deal with it. This process takes time, and its key features need to be assessed, in order to create new strategies that facilitate the interaction between both worlds. In addition to that, the rewards generated by multicultural environments surpass its challenges. All it takes is individuals who are willing to learn, respect and share mutually. The people involved must make certain efforts to sustain the experience and make the best out of it. As awareness on such subjects progresses, so will its advantages. On the other hand, its challenges will be solved little by little, thus presenting less and less barriers along the way. Multiculturalism holds the key to interculturalism – the core of modern football – and it is important to understand major sociocultural issues, especially in order to tackle them effectively.

1.2.1.1. Cultural transition and adaptation

Moving from a cultural comfort zone to an unknown one implies a long and challenging process. Since for every action there is a reaction, this shift can trigger both positive and negative reactions. From feeling like everything is amazing because it is new to communication issues, cultural transition and its consequent adaptation can be a true rollercoaster. It is an important process that requires a varied set of skills, which can be complicated to acquire due to inexperience:

Individuals are called upon to learn new skills to operate effectively in an unfamiliar cultural environment, to resolve tensions between differing cultural perspectives and worldviews, and to manage the stresses associated with significant changes in daily life (Ward and Szabó, 2019). In addition, it is critical that individuals establish and maintain social support networks that enhance resources for meeting these demands. (Bethel et al., 2020, p. 1)

The steps of cultural transition and adaptation are not strange to the football world. With the increasing movement of people in the industry, such notions are necessary in practical terms to understand how they affect individuals. It is extremely important to go through a smooth transition and a positive adaptation: “The production of mobility and adaptation to a changing context in cultural transition are crucial for initiating and maintaining the transnational career” (Ryba et al., 2016, p. 1). If ineffective, professionals’ careers and personal lives can be highly affected. It can lead to multiple issues, from psychological to sociocultural ones, such as culture stress or acculturation.

The process of cultural transition and its consequent adaptation is important in order to detect and fix present-day issues, especially with migration and globalization involved. In football, these characteristics are more common than ever before and trigger issues that can threaten the individual’s daily life. By understanding this natural transformation and teaching people how to deal with it, many issues can be solved, and people’s lives can reach a better or higher level of stability.

1.2.1.2. Assimilation VS Integration

The position of an individual in a different cultural context can raise many issues. While going through an adaptational process, everyone is faced with two possible outcomes: assimilation and integration. However, there are always side-effects on both whether positive or negative. When in a new and completely different culture, an individual may fall into assimilation. The concept addresses the substitution of an individual's heritage by the one of the hosting nation, although not completely as a separation. Lechuga and Fernandez (2011) describe assimilation as “the immigrant's decision to supplant behaviors and beliefs from the heritage culture with ones from the receiving culture” (p. 2). Katarzyna Bujalska (2019) adds that “immigrants cease to distinguish themselves culturally and socially from the host society, by becoming part of the host country” (p. 12). On the other hand, there is also the possibility of an effective integration by an individual in a completely different cultural environment. This concept presents a comfortable clash between an individual's heritage and the one from the hosting nation, thus maintaining a healthy and positive balance. In their article, Lechunga and Fernandez (2011) refer to integration as “*the decision to accommodate both cultures*” (p. 2). Katarzyna Bujalska (2019) goes further by stating that it is “the process through which foreigners establish permanent relationships with members of the host society and participate in different areas of their life” (p. 12). While also remembering that “they do not resign from their national identity”, which means that individuals search for a balance between both cultures.

From a theoretical perspective, integration is the preferred process, including in football. Modern squads are so diversified that it is important that all professionals find a certain balance. Moreover, each club has its own culture, even within the same country. This leads to many challenges, since it forces football professionals to adapt on multiple levels. However, clubs and their structures are not used to think that far ahead. Even though there are more and more efforts being made to accommodate professionals, the mainstream idea is that they can adapt and integrate themselves easily and fast. Thus, no

follow-up is made, and the tension only rises when individuals do not correspond to previously generated expectations:

Although they may be talented and talked about as the next Cristiano Ronaldo, without the player feeling part of the team and accepted by their new team mates, it's very unlikely they will be able to live up to this heightened expectation of them. (Lepore, 2021, para. 4)

Assuming that professionals can adjust to new environments, whether that refers to another country, city, or club, is outrageous. When going through a change, every individual faces a period of adaptation simultaneously. The situation in itself does not matter since it is just human nature and its processes. Football triggers such shifts repeatedly, and this constant movement makes it harder for professionals to find their own balance. Lacking a sense of belonging or the inability to self-identify with specific environments, especially cultural ones, can restrain individuals. In addition to that, it can force professionals to step-back in their original and previous progression that had sparked interest in them. This can only have a negative effect in a job such as football, that requires teamwork and high levels of interaction:

According to psychology literature, the need to belong is considered a fundamental human motivation, suggesting that if individuals do not feel like they belong, this may negatively influence their behaviours, emotions and thoughts. This becomes particularly important for football teams, as team members need to be able to effectively work together in order to produce positive performance outcomes. Therefore, in situations where players perceive themselves as not belonging to the team, this will inevitably affect their feelings of being accepted by the team, leading to a possible change in the way they play on the field. (Lepore, 2021, para. 11)

The process of integration in football has become more essential than ever. Not just for the club's success but for the stability of its professionals, whether personally or career-wise. It is important that organizations spread awareness in the field, mostly to prevent certain situations from happening so frequently. In addition to that, such matters are related to mental health issues faced in professional football. A lot can be avoided if there is more interest in the people, instead of the money.

1.2.1.3. Defying acculturation notions

Acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups. (Redfield et al., 1936, as cited in Rudmin, 2003, p. 3)

Throughout the decades, the term acculturation suffered many changes. Thus, new paths derived from the notion. John W. Berry (1997) reinforces the idea that acculturation has a greater impact or effect on only one side of this exchange. However, the field of research has expanded alongside global evolution. New concepts, such as integration, assimilation, or segregation, emerged and fused themselves with the original meaning of acculturation (Berry, 1997). At the same time, the notion began appearing in contexts where it would not be expected, such as football. Different variables can lead to new conclusions, especially when applied to unexpected situations. With its many versions and meanings, acculturation has simply demonstrated how tricky human relations and interactions can actually be. In addition to that, it raised even more questions on how it should be addressed, or which new consequences have been generated by this modern globalized world.

A multicultural squad is constantly faced with its differences, which can have both a positive and a negative impact. Each individual has its own identity, whether personal, social, national or cultural, and others may misinterpret a reality that it is unknown to them. The regular contact with another culture can have a very specific effect, which is known as acculturation. According to Elbe et al. (2016), while citing Berry (2003), the notion can be described as “the process of cultural and psychological change that follows intercultural contact” (p. 2). Further on, the previously mentioned authors affirm that:

[...] sport may facilitate the acculturation process by strengthening the bonds among members of ethnic groups or by enhancing interaction between members of different cultural groups, but may also highlight cultural differences, and foster ethnic controversy. (Elbe et al., 2016, p. 2)

Although it is usually perceived as a bad thing or addressed with some type of negative connotation, acculturation can also have important positive outcomes. Combining the different strengths of several individuals, while suppressing their weaker characteristics, are intrinsic to building a better team.

Professionals have the constant opportunity to maintain their greatest abilities, while also learning new ones or improving their poorest features with others. In football, possessing this dynamic is extremely important to reach collective goals and succeed as a team. However, it presents several challenges without the proper set of skills. Acculturation can signify a dominant cultural position over the other, for several reasons, such as numeral overpowering. Consequently, the other party involved may feel unwelcomed or left out. The lack of sense of belonging can trigger negative reactions or limit possible positive outcomes, thus affecting an entire group of people in the football world.

Modern football presents itself with distinctive shapes of acculturation. It is filled with successful and disastrous cases, thus illustrating its complexity. Depending on how individuals face a different cultural context and on what knowledge they have previously acquired, acculturation can appear in a variety of forms. In football, professionals have almost nothing to learn from, besides their continued experiences, which complicates the process. This specific characteristic tends to lead to more negative situations, although a lot is covered up not to show weaknesses to the public. At the same time, it influences an irregular pattern of reactions. Consequently, it makes it more difficult to assess the issues and provide effective solutions. Acculturation is very real and present in contemporary football, but it defies the notion due to its nonlinear fluxes.

1.2.2. Intercultural experiences: Challenges and advantages

The interaction between two dissimilar cultures provides an insightful experience, normally addressed as “*intercultural experience*”. In this context, the term can be adapted from Gupta’s definition of intercultural: “a cultural encounter that goes beyond the passive and the observational” (2003, p. 159). Intercultural experiences in football can lead to the creation of a third culture. Keebler (2011) explains it as the creation of interdependent meaning, thus merging the perception of both cultures within one. In the case of football, the game itself contains terms and rules that are globally acknowledged. Thus, it facilitates that multicultural or intercultural interaction: “Football becomes the third culture through which people of different cultures can express themselves, communicate with one another, and ultimately, understanding one another” (Keebler, 2011, p. 9).

However, this third culture bubble is not always effective since it does not encompass all aspects of human interaction. When in a foreign country, professionals face more than just the game itself. The relocation includes their common daily lives within a completely different culture that cannot be conveyed by football. This third bubble is pointless in regular activities, thus possibly generating issues. A negative intercultural experience outside the pitch can affect a professional’s career, through bad performances. Usually, bad performances or periods are not attributed to sociocultural issues. Thus, the problem of ineffective integration is not discussed. This presents a real issue, which can be avoided by encountering cultural discrepancies and solving them. It is important to tackle such situations sooner than later. Not just for the club’s purpose but also to secure their professionals’ stability, including their families.

Intercultural experiences can also have positive effects. In an increasingly globalized world, acquiring different sets of skills to deal with a diversified cultural environment is a must. It maximizes an individual’s ability to succeed, which in football benefits numerous individuals at once. Thus, it automatically has an impact on the sport and the industry. At the same time, it does not only affect the individual on a professional level but also at a personal one, which can be extended to the family. Such encounters with cultural diversity trigger a positive chain reaction. Intercultural experiences can be the core of equality, inclusion, and diversity, through the process of integration.

1.2.2.1. Intercultural communication

Intercultural communication has now become crucial to everyone's daily life, even though people may not recognize it properly or not understand exactly what it is. The 21st century emerged on an unprecedented technological evolution, which led to the intensification of human interactions, mostly due to a massive globalization. Now more than ever, individuals must be prepared to face different cultural circumstances, while also having new tools and resources to deal with them effectively. Intercultural communication is the main key to tackle these modern issues. The wide term is a creation of Edward Hall, from back in 1959 when he wrote the book "*The Silent Language*", even though it was never his intention (Rogers et al., 2002). According to Rogers, Hart and Miike's article (2002), the anthropologist and researcher began developing the notion in the early 50s with others. His first mention of intercultural communication occurred in 1955, on his published article "*The Anthropology of Manners*". However, it was only due to the popularity of Hall's book that the term was acknowledged and grew to become a new field of research. Throughout the decades, intercultural communication has developed into many forms and has been studied by multiple scholars. The interest in the notion kept growing steadily until modern days. Consequently, its definition has become more and more complicated. Milton J. Bennet described intercultural communication by stating:

Intercultural communication is the study and practice of communication across cultural contexts. It applies equally to domestic cultural differences such as ethnicity and gender and to international differences such as those associated with nationality or world region. Intercultural communication is an approach to relations among members of these groups that focuses on the recognition and respect of cultural differences, seeks the goal of mutual adaptation leading to biculturalism rather than simple assimilation, and supports the development of intercultural sensitivity on the part of individuals and organizations to enable empathic understanding and competent coordination of action across cultural differences. (Bennett, 2013, para. 1)

In the football world, intercultural communication is crucial when effective and properly applied. As previously mentioned, present-day squads englobe people that are more dissimilar than ever, with different cultures and contrasting values, beliefs, and traditions. Not only that but the language

barrier can also present a tougher challenge never seen before. The interpretation made by both parties involved can easily trigger miscommunication, thus causing consequent issues. In addition to that, professionals must work in consonance to achieve the exact same goal, which makes communication a key factor to clubs' success. However, the differences are not taken into consideration as much as they should because it all comes down to business:

Speaking strictly in terms of business, football and professional sports in general are one of the very few global enterprises in which players and coaches are brought from all over the world and put into a team which is then expected to communicate and achieve positive results immediately, regardless of cultural or linguistic differences. (Maclachlan, 2010, para. 3)

Not assessing an individual's integration in a foreign country can have a severe backlash to football clubs. Expecting someone to succeed without any cultural knowledge or background, especially in terms of communication, may cause more damages than adding any value. On the other hand, if well performed, that same communication can facilitate the interaction between 2 distinctive individuals with different cultural upbringings: "Intercultural training may help players from foreign countries to adjust to the new context more easily" (Maderer et al., 2014, p. 232). This claim by Maderer, Holtbrügge and Schuster (2014) can also be extended to managers and staff team, since the process is essentially the same. Throughout the intercultural experience, communication is key. To acquire such competences, professionals should have access to a structured system or platform that provides all the answers to their questions and shows them the next steps, by teaching them the main elements in each context.

1.2.2.2. **Culture stress: A threat to professional football**

Culture stress is the stress that occurs when you change to a different way of living in a new culture. It is what you experience as you move beyond understanding the culture to making it your own so that you accept the customs, becoming comfortable and at home with them. (Koteskey, 2021, para. 2)

Facing an entirely new culture can affect an individual in many ways, one of those being known as “*culture stress*”. The level in which one may experience this issue depends from person to person and on how dissimilar the situation is to the one experiencing it. Although this notion is generally linked to “*culture shock*”, or assumed as the same, it is not exactly the same. A shock represents something out of the blue and it is not a regular occurrence, whereas stress is a prolonged issue. Culture stress can be triggered through a variety of situations, linked to social and cultural issues.

In football, professionals face a series of key factors that can affect their mental health state, especially in terms of stress. Not only are individuals under constant pressure due to technicalities, but they are continuously relocated to different places. A cultural clash has to be expected. Some are able to adjust and find their path towards integration, while others cannot achieve it. Thus, cultural stress begins taking its toll on professionals and limits their lives on and off the pitch. However, it is almost somewhat of a taboo subject. Culture stress can have major negative effects, specifically in psychological terms. The problem is that such issues are still stereotyped as embarrassing or unreal, which complicates or prevents a specialized care development.

The football world is in constant change, with people repeatedly moving from one country to another. It is a global sport with a demanding international market that presents thousands of moves each year. Without the necessary set of skills, professionals suffer high risks of encountering mental health issues such as anxiety and depression. A new environment with a dissimilar culture can increase such feelings if preventive measures are not taken. Acknowledging the issue, researching more about it and building strategies to deal with it are mandatory.

1.2.2.3. Impact of foreign players, managers, and staff

Throughout the past few decades, exporting and importing professionals has become very common in the football world. In fact, it is a part of the clubs' modern business model, always accordingly to their financial possibilities. Thanks to the Bosman Ruling of 1995, movement of professionals in football increased exponentially. This development was seen as a major asset to clubs', thus triggering an intense search and high trades. If there was an element missing on the squad that any club spotted in another, they could just simply make an offer and try to get that key individual. However, this part of football's evolution has not always been welcomed by everyone. By importing so many foreigners, clubs received harsh critics for not nurturing domestic professionals, especially young players. Madichie (2009) reported that it "raised some concerns over their potential of taking over and by so-doing, extinguishing the potential development of home grown talent" (p. 32).

The reality is that this mix increases players' competitiveness, which ultimately presents advantages at a national and international level. Through the junction of multiple football cultures, the game becomes a little bit trickier, and it forces its professionals to acquire different sets of skills. Not only does this make football more entertaining, but it also turns its professionals into more competent and skilled individuals. For instance, the English Premier League holds some of the best examples that sustain the important impact of foreign players and managers. The EPL is known as the best and most competitive European league, due to its aggressiveness and unpredictability. One of its clubs, the Wolverhampton Wanderers Football Club, is now entitled as the Portuguese squad of England. With 21 foreign players, a foreign coach and an almost entirely foreign staff team, the Wolves have been thriving non-stop, since their promotion. Although it may be interpreted negatively by outsiders, the squad has adapted to its multicultural features and has embraced them. This attitude by the professionals allows them to retrieve all the good points and decrease the negative ones, thus progressing rapidly. Another great example is the Portuguese manager José Mourinho, who has changed football forever and especially English football. In a Muhammad Butt's article (2019), appears the following quotation by Sid

Lowe enhancing the manager's influence and importance: "Although he was so different when he arrived, he ended up feeling almost more 'ours' than foreign. His impact is gigantic, no doubt about it" (para. 17). Mourinho changed the game itself with his tactics, but his impact went off the pitch as well. The manager opened the way to other foreign coaches, found a peculiar way to interact with the media and even earned some trademark expressions that spread very quickly. With such great examples, the impact of imports is undeniable.

The impact of foreigners in modern football and their contribution to its evolution is now acknowledged as something positive. It is a key factor in developing every professional's skills. Cultural diversity is now a focal point in football, and it is relatively accepted as such. As previously stated, present-day squads are composed by very different people, with multiple cultures and opposing backgrounds. These multicultural encounters imply both challenges and advantages. By engaging in an intercultural experience, individuals have the opportunity to exchange views and opinions. This type of interaction can be extremely beneficial to both parties, as long as they are willing to acquire new knowledge and share their own. The previously stated examples are a clear proof of that. On the other hand, it has a downside which is that it requires a certain level of openness and not everyone has it. In such cases, there can also be a negative impact. Overall, both professionals and spectators have gotten used to multiculturalism in football. In fact, it is highly appreciated since it became the essence of the sport's entertainment side.

CHAPTER II – DISCOVERING PORTUGUESE FOOTBALL

*I see football as an art and all players are artists. If you are a top artist, the last thing you would do is paint a picture somebody else has already painted.*²

– Cristiano Ronaldo

Football is indeed an art and Portugal does its best to follow its current captain's words and actions. Portuguese football has been gaining popularity all around the world, whether in terms of fans or investors. The 21st century is the centre stage of this evolution of football culture, but the country faced a bumpy road up until this point. Unlike other European countries and their football, Portugal saw a slower and harder process of evolution. Not only was it difficult to establish that culture but also to find the proper means to help its development. The country needed to see good results to invest on the sport in a wealthier way. Having some reassurance would prove to be a game changer. Throughout the last decades, the country has seen a massive social and economic shift and that encouraged public and private institutions to invest more on the development of the sport. Sports, in general, have gained a growing direct impact on the country and its economy, which emphasizes their importance. While doing so, football, in particular, has also been embedded in the Portuguese identity. However, a complex struggle has been present in most of this process.

With its emergence in the 19th century, football also reached Portugal and soon began to take over as the national game. However, the country did not possess the proper tools to speed up its evolution. This led the sport to a stagnation point throughout the 20th century, despite some major developments. It was not until the 90s that Portuguese football started its journey to the top. Over the past few decades, Portugal has battled to keep up with the big European leagues, but never gave up. Even though the financial power cannot be compared, this small country is now considered the “*door to Europe*”, especially in football. Portugal is the crucial point of entry to achieve a successful career in the biggest leagues of the world. Simultaneously, Portugal is now one of the most attractive pools of talent, due to its domestic academies and young imports. By becoming a scouting paradise, it also levelled up to a higher multicultural environment. This increased the money flow and influenced the evolution of the market, whether related to transfers or to business in general. This unexpected growth welcomed a new link among multiple sectors of the Portuguese economy, such as the tourism industry. Football has

² Phillips, M. (2020). “*To Be Consistently Successful, Adopt the ‘Cristiano Ronaldo Effect’*”. Retrieved from Medium's mind cafe: <https://medium.com/mind-cafe/to-be-consistently-successful-adopt-the-cristiano-ronaldo-effect-cb21161d7281>

become a major asset for the country. With this expansion, the country has been able to improve its facilities and maximize its potential. All these factors combined just keep adding to the status of Portugal as a superpower and future leader of the football world.

In the present day, Portuguese football can be characterized through its versatile features. This modern version is the outcome of professionalization, European projection, and high investments. This is the result of a lot of sacrifice and hard work. In addition to that, the country's ability to create new strategies and innovate on all possible areas has led to a faster development. At the same time, the country improved its image as an appealing destination, whether to train or to scout professionals. The growth of Portuguese football has been a great benefit for the sport, the country and everyone involved. It presents more gains than anyone would have expected 30 or 40 years ago. Nowadays, the sport occupies a central spot at Portugal's core. It is a crucial part of the country's identity and of its nationals, thus playing a huge role in the culture and the Portuguese brand. Discovering Portuguese football is the same as discovering Portugal and its people. We are one.

2.1. Historical background

The emergence of football in Portugal dates back to the 19th century, as it happened with European football in general. From England to the entire continent, the game and its culture spread like quick-fire. Although there is no general consent on the exact origins of football in Portugal, there are two possibilities that are heavily discussed and referenced. Portuguese people most likely had their first encounter with football in 1875. It was at that time that Harry Hinton, who studied in London, presented the game in a casual way in Camacha, Madeira Island (Silveira, 2021b). However, according to Neves (2013), the true essence of the sport arrived in Portugal through two brothers who went to England to study. Their brother, Guilherme Pinto Basto, is recognized as the man who boosted the culture of football in the country, by planning a game somewhat like a demonstration or exhibition: “The match [...] opposed a team formed by Portuguese to an English team. The Portuguese won the match by 2-1. In this way, football began to attract the attention of high society, being marked by Portuguese and British rivalry”³ (Neves, 2013, p. 4). Similar to England’s path, football in Portuguese soil spread mainly as part of the school culture, thus leading to the creation of its first clubs and associations. As it progressed, Portuguese football began entering new grounds and displaying matches between cities. For instance, in 1894, Lisbon and Porto had their first encounter, with the royal family in the audience. The teams were composed by members of different clubs, such as Club Lisbonense, Carcavelos Club, Braço de Prata and Oporto Cricket Club, and they were competing to win their first ever cup (Acedo, 2021). Another great achievement was a match between a Portuguese club and a foreign one. In 1907, Club Internacional de Foot-Ball defeated Madrid Football Club (Neves, 2013), now known as Real Madrid Club de Fútbol and acknowledged as one of the best in European football.

With its steady expansion, Portuguese football began taking the next steps, with the creation of a national team and a national association. In 1914, the União Portuguesa de Futebol (UPF) was born and had its first formal encounters with FIFA (Federação Portuguesa de Futebol, 2021). This governing body had the goal of managing football in the entire country, thus being able to establish a proper competition at a national level. Moving forward to 1921, the Portuguese national team had its first international

³ My translation. Original text: “A partida [...] opôs uma equipa formada por portugueses a uma equipa de ingleses. Os portugueses ganharam o jogo por 2-1. Desta forma, o futebol começou por chamar a atenção da alta sociedade, sendo marcado pela rivalidade luso-britânica”.

encounter (Federação Portuguesa de Futebol, 2021). The pioneer squad lost against Spain but scored its first goal, which is still a major historical mark. Victory did not come until 1925, in a match against the Italian national team (Acedo, 2021). In between this massive evolution, during the year of 1926, the União Portuguesa de Futebol changed its name to Federação Portuguesa de Futebol (FPF), as it is known today (Silveira, 2021b). Without the World Cup or Euro in the picture, the Olympic Games of 1928 were the first “big” tournament in which the national team participated. At the time, Portugal achieved an incredible place in the quarter finals (Acedo, 2021). Even though it did not go past that, it was a historical moment. Unlike in other European countries, Portuguese football seemed to progress in a very slow manner. According to Silveira (2021b), the national team only had its debut in the World Cup in 1966, with the great Eusébio and an astonishing third place. In 1984, Portugal had its first participation in the Euro and was able to reach the semi-finals (Federação Portuguesa de Futebol, 2021). Despite its delay, Portuguese football did have an incredible breakthrough.

In recent times, Portuguese football saw a massive growth at all levels. The investments made in facilities and the emergence of academies allowed a progressive evolution. At the same time, Portugal followed other European countries in terms of new business strategies. Introducing the sport more and more through the media expanded both its popularity and money flow. Moreover, football and the world in general experienced the phenomenon of globalization, which was boosted in the 21st century. Portugal became the ultimate door to enter European football and, since the 1990s, the number of imports has increased exponentially. In addition to the domestic youth being more prepared, clubs from other countries took an uncommon interest in Portuguese football. As it solidified its brand as a scouting paradise, the country also had the help of emerging superstars such as Luís Figo and Cristiano Ronaldo, which triggered a wave of popularity. Another crucial point was the Euro 2004. Portugal was the hosting nation of the competition and reached the ultimate final. Although it lost the title to Greece, the year of 2004 became the turning point of Portuguese football. From then on, the European projection grew, and the Portuguese level of professionalization followed. Thus, it triggered the birth of modern football in the country. This subject will be fully explored further down this chapter in “The Contemporary Portuguese Context” (point 2.2.3.).

2.2. Modern Portuguese football

Despite its vast history, Portuguese football had little status in the European scene for most of it. Legends like Eusébio did force the world to look at the country from a different perspective but that was not enough to launch its brand. The Euro 2004 established the bridge between the “old” and the “new” Portuguese football, which influenced several markets in the country and their evolution. In contrast with other European countries and the spur of popularity linked to their football, Portugal faced many obstacles to achieve a proper and stable evolution. Although football had long been the national game, there were little or no means to establish a worldwide worthy culture. The last few decades have been the centre stage for the country’s evolution, whether related to the sport itself or to the business surrounding it. There is an increasing wave of investments that establish Portugal at the top of the football world, mainly related to training football. This feature has become one of the strongest characteristics of modern Portuguese football. For instance, in a UEFA report, Portugal appears in the top 10 countries with most money invested in athletes’ training. Portuguese clubs presented a €1.8 million budget strictly to invest in the development of academies and everything related to it (Lusa, 2020). Another good example is the construction of Casa dos Atletas – Cidade do Futebol, in early 2016. The infrastructure houses the headquarters of FPF and the first centralized training centre, strictly designed to accommodate all Portuguese national teams. This idea has highlighted the importance of football to the country and enhanced the need to provide the best facilities to Portuguese professionals. By doing so, Portugal can improve its abilities and attract more business opportunities. Other positive aspects to be considered are the creation of Canal 11 and Liga Revelação, which is a competition for the under-23 players. With such investments, the game and its related business encounters are used to enhance the country’s potential on all fronts.

Within the spectrum of European football, Portugal still lacks on some aspects. Unlike the situation in other countries, the domestic scene does not possess a considerable financial backup. As previously mentioned in this dissertation, money is now a crucial factor in the game. Without it, clubs cannot compete in the transfer market and have a lower chance to get the much-needed improvements. However, the Portuguese governing bodies and the clubs’ hire-ups have always done their best to transform the national competition. Their efforts did set the bar high, and the increased level of competitiveness has attracted more attention. The presence of Portuguese teams in European competitions

has been increasing, while results have been improving. This includes both the domestic clubs and the national team's performances, although a more relevant female presence has yet to come. Some great examples are the Europa League of 2010/2011 and the Euro 2016. In the case of Europa League, Portugal had entered the competition with four teams and reached the semi-finals with three still in the game: Sport Lisboa e Benfica, Sporting Clube de Braga and Futebol Clube do Porto. While FCP faced Villareal, Benfica and Braga played against each other with the later one moving into the final. With this incredible setup, the final ended up being between two Portuguese teams, FCP and SCB, with the first one reclaiming the title. In 2016, Portugal reached its peak in European competitions with its men's national team winning the tournament and making history in Portuguese football. With these factors combined, the market evolution has been astonishing. There are new record deals every year, which proves the quality of this small nation, and higher values circulating within the country, which benefits its economy. By improving the money flow, Portuguese football was also able to expand its grounds. This has led to the development of better facilities, which has a direct impact on its training football and academies. Thus, the country has become a scouting paradise. Not only that but it has also become increasingly appealing to young foreigners and has been emphasized as the "*door to Europe*". It is a country that offers lots of new opportunities, whether on its own market or as a transitional stage to other markets. Modern-day football is also characterized by its multiculturalism all around the world. Portugal has stepped into the scene with a vast mixture of cultures, mostly thanks to this status. This benefits not only to its professionals but also itself by obtaining an expanded set of skills. The combination of different football cultures is crucial to the development of Portuguese football. In addition to that, it has been working to achieve a more inclusive environment and women's football started its process towards an equal status. Although it took a while and it still has a long road ahead, the female presence in the game is now taking its deserved place. The opportunities for women have evolved massively in the past few years. Portuguese women can now dream of a proper career, even if the current investments will only show its full results in the future. In these contemporary times, it is important for the country not to fall behind on this evolution and to speed up its own development as much as possible. The current layout of the national football culture shows its massive growth and desire to be at the highest level, without lacking any important features.

Portugal has embedded football in its identity and maximized its benefits on all possible areas. Nowadays, nationals view Portuguese football as a mirror of Portugal's sociocultural features and economic power. Hence, the game serves as a bridge to emphasize the country's strengths and minimize its weaknesses. The sport has become a major focal point in the country's brand, both nationally and internationally. The modern image of Portuguese football includes men and women, while also focusing on the development of younger generations. Portugal has also established itself as a welcoming nation and the ultimate provider of massive opportunities for professionals to grow in the industry. When Portugal had its first ever foreign player, it was impossible to predict how that move would be mass-replicated in the later part of the century. In 1924, Mihaly Siska moved from Vasas Budapest to Futebol Clube do Porto and the public showed some reluctance (Nolasco, 2018). However, as years went by, Portugal realized that it was important to hire foreigners in order to achieve a proper level of professionalization. Hungarians, Brazilians, and other nationalities became increasingly welcomed. Alongside that, a different route emerged with the Portuguese colonies, which gave the country some of its icons like Eusébio, Peyroteo and Mário Coluna. These routes were boosted by the Bosman Ruling, during the 90s, and the number of imports just kept growing from then on to this day:

During the 1990/91 season, foreign signings made up 30.9% of all players. In the 2006/07 season, the number of foreign players exceeded home-grown players for the first time, a situation that has persisted, albeit with slight variations, up to the present. The Portuguese football league, at European level, is one that has a highest proportion of foreign players. In 2008, the percentage of expatriate players in the Portuguese Primeira Liga was 53.7%;⁴³ in 2015, this percentage increased to 55.6%. (Nolasco, 2018, p. 5)

In modern times, Latin Americans dominate in terms of imports in Portugal's market. Whether Brazilians, Colombians, Mexicans, or others, there is a clear trend that has been established in this 21st century. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the route between Brazil and Portugal is usually the most active, with more transfers back and forth. Also, African players remain an important advantage for Portuguese football, due to the thriving African route. A study from CIES showed that, in 2019, the top tier of Portuguese football was the second European league with most imports. Foreigners represented 63,6% of all players, a number that was only surpassed by Cyprus' first league (Lusa, 2019). In the season of 2020/2021, 312 out of 502 players in Liga NOS were imports, thus accounting for 62,2% (Transfermarkt, 2021). This intertwining of cultures has become a crucial

feature to succeed and survive in the football world, thus Portugal entered the trend to keep up with the rest and grow as a superpower. The more inclusive it becomes, the more attractive it is as a future leader in the football world. Portugal is a great destination to both professionals and investors, thus proving its market value. Within the last few years, the country was able to build a strong reputation through its players, managers, clubs, and national teams. Portuguese football is now acknowledged in both sportive and business terms. It competes at the highest level and with the best quality. Although there is still space to grow, modern Portuguese football is at its best and shows the world what this small country is made of.

2.2.1. Men's Portuguese football

The history of men's Portuguese football goes back to the 19th century, which enhances its importance in the country's history. As in many other European countries, especially its acknowledged founder England, football was first played and disseminated in schools or through the working class, mostly during the early 20th century. For instance, the first ever male competition to be implemented in Portugal was the Campeonato de Portugal, in 1921-1922 (Silveira, 2021a). The period in-between wars proved to be significant to the rise of its popularity, thus solidifying the game's culture in Portugal (Nunes & Valério, 1996). It was during that time that new competitions were born such as the 1st and 2nd divisions of the national championship, in 1934-35. A few years later, more precisely in the season of 1938-39, the Campeonato de Portugal was restructured, thus becoming the well-known and still existent Taça de Portugal (Silveira, 2021a). This growth led to the development of professional encounters in Portuguese football, throughout the 1940s and 1950s. As Nunes and Valério (1996) state, one of its main evidences was the recruitment of foreign players. Alongside that, clubs began exchanging players, thus opening a transfer system. The authors highlight the 1960s as the decade when professional football was fully established in Portuguese ground. From then on, its culture and system developed naturally with small changes, while maintaining its core. At the same time, Portuguese men's professional football evolved in business terms to keep up with fellow European countries. This transformation was expected due to its ties with FIFA and UEFA, who control and supervise the evolution and consequent development of the sport.

As the years went by, Portugal stepped up to the challenge and established itself as a football-driven country. The combination of a sense of innovation and relevant investments improved the country's level of competitiveness. Thus, it had a direct impact on the evolution of Portuguese football and enhanced its potential as a training paradise. Infrastructures such as new stadiums or academies and Cidade do Futebol have been built over the past few years, mostly to create spaces that maximize the sport's development within the country. Although the focus may usually be on players that developed their skills in the country, Portuguese managers are also taking over the scene with a strong presence all over the world. Portugal was able to maximize its financial power and expand its money flow, mostly through the classical learning process:

A league I love to watch was not probably the most famous League but you always see innovations, good players, good coaching, is Portugal. It's a really interesting league to watch. They have a proper philosophy, a lot of clubs do really smart things to educate and train and coach players. So that's really, really interesting.⁴ (Klopp, 2021)

Educating and training people became the ultimate tool to sustain this development. While doing so, Portugal began entering the top circle of European football. This position was granted through the success of both its teams and professionals, nationals or not. The amount of talent has been proved by household names such as Cristiano Ronaldo and José Mourinho. Alongside others, these major stars showed to their fellow colleagues in the sport Portugal could indeed become a superpower in both Europe and the world. Modern men's Portuguese football is the most competitive it has ever been, with a very well-structured pyramid system. Its main governing bodies are the Federação Portuguesa de Futebol (FPF) and Liga Portugal (LP), also known as Liga Portuguesa de Futebol Profissional. In Portugal, professional men's football encompasses 2 major leagues: Liga NOS and Liga Portugal 2, previously known as LigaPro. Besides that, men's Portuguese football hosts its own cups. It presents other 4 different tournaments: Taça de Portugal, Taça da Liga, Supertaça Cândido de Oliveira, and Allianz Cup. Liga NOS, now renamed as Liga Bwin, is the top tier of Portuguese football. It is composed by 18 clubs at all times. The so-called "big clubs" can be found in this competition. These include Futebol Clube do Porto (FCP), Sport Lisboa e Benfica (SLB), Sporting Clube de Portugal (SCP) and Sporting Clube de Braga (SCB). As in other European leagues, the top spots grant a presence in the highly desired UEFA Champions League. Below them, there are also a few available spots to enter the UEFA Europa League⁵. At the end of the season, the club with the most points is officially the national champion. However, the last 3 teams face relegation. 17th and 18th place are automatically sent to Liga Portugal 2, while 16th place gets a chance to fight for its position in a playoff. The second tier of Portuguese football is Liga Portugal 2, or Liga Portugal SABSEG, also composed by 18 clubs. Unlike the first league, the top clubs do not get direct access to European competitions. Instead, 1st and 2nd are promoted to Liga NOS, while 3rd place discusses its spot in the playoff. The last 2 teams are relegated, and they are substituted by the top 2 clubs of non-professional football. The layouts of modern Portuguese systems are highly appealing due to their

⁴ Retrieved from Liverpool FC's YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RkPrU8MZu8s>

⁵ In the next season (2021/2022), UEFA's new competition – Conference League – will have its first edition. The 5th and 6th place of the Portuguese top tier have been selected to enter its qualifiers.

simplicity and the increased level of competitiveness. This structure allows it to show more and more talent every year, while also demonstrating how it tackles the lack of certain means. This creativity and search for innovation makes all the difference, thus generating a unique type of interest from both spectators and professionals of the industry.

In Portugal, like in many other European countries, men's football has a culture of its own. The importance of its achievements, whether through domestic clubs, national teams, or simply Portuguese professionals, represents an entire community and its identity. It displays the hardships of the country but also its maximum potential. Although Portugal may still lack on some aspects, its football experienced a massive growth, and its reputation is at its best. The investments made to achieve certain levels of professionalization and competitiveness have become an advantage to the country. By betting on uncommon aspects of the sport such as the educational process, Portugal has been able to increase both its quality and status. Academies are now crucial for the development of Portuguese football, thus defining its place in Europe. The success of former trainees, such as Cristiano Ronaldo (SCP), João Félix (FCP, SLB) or Bernardo Silva (SLB), displays the standards in Portugal's training mentality. In 2020, a CIES study revealed that Portugal was the European country with more clubs in the top 10 of trainers (Diário de Notícias, 2020). On that list, the country was represented by SLB, SCP and FCP. A total of 53 exports from these clubs' academies were playing on the Big 5. If other clubs from outside of the top 10 were to be counted, the number would have grown to 74 homegrown players in the major European leagues. This comes to show not only the potential talent that can be found in Portugal, but also how the country can be a leader on the educational and training aspects of the football world. The intertwining of football and business created the perfect excuse to force Portugal to evolve faster and present viable solutions to its expected growth, thus not only benefiting itself but also the country. Its past with small glories is now finding the deserved spotlight. Some of the biggest achievements in Portuguese football were: European Champion Clubs' Cup (now known as UCL) by SLB (1961, 1962), Cup Winners' Cup (abolished in 1999) by SCP (1966), European Champion Clubs' Cup by FCP (1987, 2004), Under-20 World Cup (1989, 1991), Under-19 Euro (1961, 1994, 1999, 2018), Europa League by FCP (2011), Euro (2016), Nations League (2019), among others. Amid these titles, a few should be highlighted due to the importance they had later on. For instance, the under-20 men's national team that won in 1989, in Riad, and 1991, in Lisbon, is known as the "*golden*

generation” with big names like Luís Figo, Rui Costa and João Vieira Pinto. This was the same generation that reached that legendary final in Euro 2004⁶ in Lisbon, even though it lost against Greece. The glory would later be restored in Euro 2016⁷, in Paris. With an entire new generation and only 2 comebackers, Cristiano Ronaldo and Ricardo Carvalho, Portugal defeated France’s national team in the final and avenged the lost title. The domestic clubs also showed that the country could win international cups. From 1987 onwards, FCP did not stop winning in European competitions: Intercontinental Cup (1987, 2004), European Super Cup (1987), Champions League (1987, 2004), Europa League (2003, 2011) and even the Youth League with the under-19 team (2019). From Benfica getting the first international cup to the national team winning the Euro 2016, Portugal found its way to the top. Men’s football carries the spirit of an entire nation and depicts its culture, independently of who those heroes are at different points in time.

⁶ Euro 2004’s National Team: Ricardo, Quim, Moreira, Paulo Ferreira, Miguel, Rui Jorge, Nuno Valente, Fernando Couto, Jorge Andrade, Ricardo Carvalho, Beto, Petit, Tiago, Costinha, Maniche, Rui Costa, Deco, Figo, Pauleta, Nuno Gomes, Hélder Postiga, Simão, Cristiano Ronaldo. Euro 2004’s Head Coach: Luiz Felipe Scolari.

⁷ Euro 2016’s National Team: Anthony Lopes, Eduardo, Rui Patrício, Cedric, Vieirinha, Bruno Alves, José Fonte, Pepe, Ricardo Carvalho, Eliseu, Raphael Guerreiro, André Gomes, Adrien Silva, Danilo Pereira, João Mário, João Moutinho, William Carvalho, Renato Sanches, Éder, Nani, Quaresma, Rafa, Cristiano Ronaldo. Euro 2016’s Head Coach: Fernando Santos.

2.2.2. Women's Portuguese football⁸

The history of women's football is complicated all around the world, with Portugal being no exception. There is little or no record of its beginning and evolution. According to Carvalho (2018), Boavista Futebol Clube and União de Coimbra were the first Portuguese clubs to create feminine teams, during the 1970s. However, it still took some time to achieve professional encounters and a proper structure or system: "The women's game in Portugal started professionally with the 1985-1986 season [...]" However there wasn't a league structure, only knockout rounds until the 1993-1994 season" (Cole, 2018, para. 3). Even so, the feminine presence in the sport was never recognized and protected by Portuguese governing bodies until recently. With women taking over the football scene in the 21st century and portraying a massive evolution all around the world, the FPF finally decided to change the game within the female league in 2016. At the time, all the clubs in the first division of men's professional football were challenged to create their female teams and join the competition. Despite the efforts, not many clubs, especially the so-called big ones, adhered to the idea. Within the clubs known to have more means, only SCP and SCB decided to take that risk. In the following years, these two major Portuguese clubs took over and outshined any other club. SLB would only join them at the end of 2017. Although the progress made is fairly recent, the last few years have proved to be crucial by emphasizing the importance of women in the sport. Both domestically and internationally, the fight for the establishment of professional women's football continues.

In Portugal, professional women's football lacks in multiple features, such as wages, especially when compared to other European countries like England, Spain, or France. This struggle encompasses all clubs and players, also in the national team. Thus, the performances and results are still far from the expected or desired. The investments are low, and the progress is slow. It is still not possible for most female players to live exclusively out of football in the country. Consequently, they are forced to have other jobs and, combined with late-night practices, their performances are highly affected. And yet the love for the game keeps pushing them, as the Portuguese player Ana Borges enhances in the following statement:

⁸ The clubs mentioned in this sub-chapter may not all be recognized as fully professionals. There may be references to amateurs or semi-professionals.

I really admire the Portuguese player because many of them leave their jobs and still have that willpower, that joy. In many clubs they might train from ten to midnight. I think it is unthinkable in other countries, if they do not receive [any pay], to make this effort. And the Portuguese player is special.⁹ (Borges, 2018)

Faced with these obstacles, Portuguese women's football cannot progress in a stable and rapid manner. In fact, it demotivates women of pursuing a career in the sport, which ultimately stagnates its evolution. At the same time, a female position is still not fully welcomed. Not just in the world in general but also in Portugal. The stereotype is so strong that it can become a major obstacle. This discrimination enhances the gender issues faced in modern football. By being confronted with rejection and suffering constant attacks, women are more likely to turn their back on the game and exclude it as an option. However, recent developments present a common effort to erase such issues. The extermination of these preconceptions will allow a steadier evolution, so that females will feel comfortable and confident enough to bet on a career in football. It is extremely important to tackle problems like these to ensure a state of inclusiveness. Over the past five years, women's football in Portugal has evolved massively with the upgrade of its league, cups, and international tournaments. These include the Liga BPI, Supertaça, Taça de Portugal, Taça da Liga and Algarve Cup. The top tier of women's football is the Liga BPI. A sign of the inequality in modern football is the different format of the competition, which tends to be somewhat confusing. In the present season (2020/2021), there were 20 clubs fighting for the possibility of winning the trophy.¹⁰ Liga BPI presents 2 main stages: one to qualify teams to dispute the title and another to determine who is relegated. There are also 2 phases in the 1st stage, which is divided into 2 series (North and South) composed by 10 clubs each, to establish who moves on in the competition and who will face relegation. Among those 20 clubs, only the top 4 can discuss the title while the rest must fight to maintain its place. In the stage of relegation, clubs are also divided into 2 series (North and South). The bottom 2 of each series go down to 2nd division, while the following 2 places on each side have a play-off to decide which teams joins them in relegation. As for the title, another 4 teams join the ones already qualified and the team with the most points wins. This complicated and tricky system makes women's football unappealing to viewers, even to the most avid fans of the sport. Hence, its growth and rise

⁹ My translation. Original text: "Eu admiro muito a jogadora portuguesa porque muitas delas saem dos trabalhos e ainda têm aquela força de vontade, aquela alegria. Em muitos clubes devem treinar das dez à meia-noite. Acho que é impensável noutros países, se não receberem, fazerem este esforço. E a jogadora portuguesa é especial". Retrieved from Canal 11's YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cZZ8rLYRSfo>

¹⁰ The FPF will change the format for the season of 2021/2022 by reducing the competition to only 16 clubs.

in popularity have been slower than the expected. When it comes to the main national team, the investments have proved to be effective with the achievement of their first ever Euro 2017 qualification in 2016¹¹. Despite not passing the group stage, the Portuguese women's national team showed its massive evolution and left a good image in the European scene. Its development within such a short period time and with low investments was a huge statement. This historic performance was an incentive to create more options and open new paths for females in the Portuguese football scene. By investing in proper facilities, women's football can become more competitive and attract more girls and women, thus ensuring a massive evolution and a future where it is equal to men's football, not only in terms of financial power but also as a scouting paradise. The expected growth will maintain top players in the country and appeal to foreigners, thus doubling its benefits.

In 1981, the Portuguese women's national team had its first international game in Le Mans, France (Coelho, 2018). The scenario was similar to nowadays with players having to juggle practice and work. However, modern times have presented a massive evolution in the past few years. While there were only around 400 players back in 1981, that number went up to over 10.000 federated athletes in 2019. From 2010 to 2019, there was an increase of 85,5%. According to Mónica Jorge, FPF's director for women's football, this is the result of the federation's strategic plan and the collaboration from clubs, football associations, coaches, and commercial partners (Federação Portuguesa de Futebol, 2019). Major clubs like Boavista FC and CF Benfica also began investing in women's football, during times like the 90s when people still firmly believed that it was a "man's game". More recently, with top clubs following that same path, the visibility of Portuguese women's football increased exponentially. The beginners SCP and SCB were the first ones to have professional teams, thus presenting the possibility of expanding a female presence in the sport. In the season of 2020/2021, the teams playing Liga BPI were: Boavista Futebol Clube, União Recreativa de Cadima, Clube de Albergaria, Clube de Condeixa ACD, Futebol Clube de Famalicão, Fiães Sport Clube, Gil Vicente Futebol Clube, AD Ovarense, Sporting Clube de Braga, Valadares Gaia Futebol Clube, Sport Lisboa e Benfica, Sporting Clube de Portugal, GDC A-dos-Francos, Amora Futebol

¹¹ Euro 2017's National Team (Qualification): Neide Simões, Patrícia Morais, Jamila Martins, Carole Costa, Raquel Infante, Pipa Rodrigues, Matilde Fidalgo, Mónica Mendes, Ana Borges, Andreia da Veiga, Sílvia Rebelo, Fátima Pinto, Tatiana Pinto, Laura Luís, Amanda da Costa, Regina Pereira, Dolores Silva, Patrícia Gouveia, Cláudia Neto, Edite Fernandes, Suzane Pires, Carolina Mendes, Diana Silva, Chumbito, Solange Carvalhas, Vanessa Marques, Andreia Norton, Andreia Silva, Jéssica Silva, Joana Flores, Ana Leite. Euro 2017's Head Coach: Francisco Neto.

Clube, Clube Atlético Ouriense, Sport Clube Damaiense, Sport Clube União Torreense, Club Sport Marítimo, Clube Futebol Benfica, and Grupo Desportivo Estoril Praia. SLB ended up winning the championship with a total of 39 points. SCP was 2nd place with 34 points and SCB was 3rd with 27 points (FPF Resultados, 2021). The top scorers were Vitória Almeida (FC Famalicão, 23 goals), Paloma Lemos (Valadares Gaia FC, 18 goals), Raquel Fernandes (Sporting CP, 18 goals), and Telma Encarnação (CS Marítimo, 17 goals) (Gonçalves, 2021). As for the women's national team, it recently lost a spot in Euro 2022 when it was defeated by Russia in the playoff¹². Portugal dropped a few places in FIFA's ranking, and it now occupies the 30th position. Despite this result, the Portuguese team keeps working on moving up. Recently, it played a friendly match against the United States, which is the number one in the same ranking¹³. Portugal's national team suppressed the world champions and lost by one goal only, in fact a late goal. Portuguese women proved that they are up to the challenge and their results are an incentive for future options. By investing in women's football little by little, Portugal will grow its market and increase its presence through its competitiveness level. This will benefit not only the sport but also the country, because the future belongs to women too.

¹² Playoff's National Team: Rute Costa, Inês Pereira, Patrícia Morais, Diana Gomes, Sílvia Rebelo, Carole Costa, Ana Borges, Joana Marchão, Alicia Correia, Mariana Azevedo, Dolores Silva, Ana Rute, Cláudia Neto, Andreia Faria, Tatiana Pinto, Fátima Pinto, Andreia Jacinto, Ana Dias, Telma Encarnação, Andreia Norton, Kika Nazareth, Catarina Amado, Carolina Mendes, Ana Capeta. Playoff's Head Coach: Francisco Neto.

¹³ Friendly's National Team: Rute Costa, Bárbara Santos, Inês Pereira, Mariana Azevedo, Diana Gomes, Sílvia Rebelo, Carole Costa, Catarina Amado, Joana Marchão, Alicia Correia, Dolores Silva, Andreia Faria, Beatriz Cameirão, Tatiana Pinto, Fátima Pinto, Andreia Jacinto, Jéssica Silva, Telma Encarnação, Andreia Norton, Kika Nazareth, Lúcia Alves, Diana Silva, Melissa Gomes. Friendly's Head Coach: Francisco Neto.

2.2.3. The Contemporary Portuguese context

Modern-day Portuguese football is the epitome of evolution. Despite lacking the same financial power as other European leagues and countries, contemporary football in Portugal is highly competitive and becoming increasingly popular at an international level. Most of it is due to its growth as a scouting paradise. Its domestic academies and young imports attract attention from all over Europe. The value of transfer fees, whether for players or managers, keeps hitting new records every year. In 2019, the Portuguese football market witnessed its biggest transfer ever. João Félix went from SLB to Atlético de Madrid for a little over €127 million, at the age of 19. In the following year, Rúben Amorim moved to SCP with the most expensive fee ever for managers in Portuguese football. The transfer was done by €10 million and has also entered the top world transfers. At the same time, the millionaire football market is not the only one composing this growth. The sport became a major link between different sectors and markets. For instance, the clubs' stadiums are huge real estate assets and provide new ventures and business associations, such as the construction of nearby malls and partnerships with private hospitals. Some good examples are *Alameda Shop & Spot*, linked to FCP, and Hospital da Luz, linked to SLB. Both will be explained in greater detail further down this chapter in "Football: A valuable link between markets" (point 2.2.3.2.). Portugal has also increased its presence in European competitions, whether through domestic clubs or the national teams. While the women's national team made history with its first ever qualification in such competitions on Euro 2017, the men's national team has not missed a single qualification for two decades and even won Euro 2016. The top Portuguese clubs have also established their place in European competitions, with others following the same steps in the most recent years. For instance, Futebol Clube do Porto has in its record two Champions League's cups (1986/87, 2003/2004) and other two from Europa League (2002/2003, 2010/2011). This has been beneficial from a monetary perspective and for country and club branding as well. However, that was not always the case.

Before hosting the Euro 2004, Portugal struggled in many aspects to establish its international image. Despite having played an important role in the discovery of the world as it is known today, the country struggled to regain a position of leadership in modern times. Throughout the 90s, Portugal fought to make a statement of what was yet to come. This was mostly done by hosting international events, occupying important roles, and attracting worldwide attention due to some of its strong cultural features. Lisbon was

nominated European City of Culture in 1994 and hosted the World Exhibition Expo 98, in 1998. In that same year, José Saramago was awarded with the Nobel Prize in Literature. The 90s were also the continuation of UNESCO's recognition of Portuguese culture, which had started in the early 80s. These included the cultural landscape of Sintra (1995), Porto's historical centre (1996), D. Luís I Bridge (Porto, 1996), Monastery of Serra do Pilar (Porto, 1996) and the prehistoric rock art sites in Vale do Côa and Siega Verde (Guarda, 1998 – 2010) (Guerreiro, 2018). In addition to that, Porto followed Lisbon and became European City of Culture in 2001. When it comes to football, the 90s and the 00s were also decades of astonishing growth. Portugal was building its new foundations, after the legendary times of Eusébio. Although the icon Cristiano Ronaldo was not around yet, others were paving the way to show the country's true colours, such as Luís Figo who was working to become the best football player in the world. Other big names that trailed Portugal's path were icons such as Rui Costa, João Vieira Pinto and Vítor Baía, the later one being the player with most titles in Portuguese football to this day.

Despite this development, Portuguese teams still did not have the prominence of today in European competitions, not even the national teams. For instance, the men's first appearance was in the World Cup of 1966, and it took 20 years to accomplish it again. Although Portugal qualified in 1986, the results were not the best since the national team did not pass the group stage, with one victory and two defeats. Even in the Euro, Portugal only qualified for the very first time in 1984. In its first appearance in this competition, the national team achieved an incredible result by reaching the semi-finals. It was then defeated after penalties by France that would end up winning the cup. The country did not have a significant place in these competitions. It was not until 2000 that things started to shift. Since then, the Portuguese men's national team has always been on all Euro's and World Cup's. As for domestic clubs, the lack of success in European competitions was also an issue up until the 21st century. Although there were multiple presences over the years by Portuguese clubs in European competitions, which had their debut with SCP in 1955, most of their results were negative (Gonçalves, 2014). Over half of the teams were eliminated right at the first stage.

Nowadays, Portuguese teams are not only always present, but they also achieve good results¹⁴. Most of Portugal's growth is due to the Euro 2004's aftermath. The socioeconomic impact of hosting the tournament triggered a faster evolution, thus influencing not just the sport but also other structural parts of the country. Portugal was able to boost both its economy and tourism industry in the consequent years. In addition to that, the encounters of the competition led to an unexpected development in terms of job opportunities. The Euro 2004 was also the turning point regarding the Portuguese national and cultural identity, which was when football officially became one of its major symbols:

[...] most Portuguese seem to regard football, and its results, involving club teams and the national, as a safe indicator of the 'quality' and 'competence' of the country and its inhabitants. [...] Portuguese football is 'produced' as something extremely significant and representative of Portugal's value in the world. (Coelho & Tiesler, 2007, p. 580)

The contemporary Portuguese context is the result of multiple combined variables and their most recent evolution. Throughout the past few decades, the country has made all efforts to compete with the big European leagues and countries. It has found proper strategies to grow and slightly balance its disadvantages, such as the monetary inequality. Overall, and simply put, this development can be divided in 3 crucial parts: the Euro 2004, the link between multiple markets and the growing Portuguese presence in European competitions. These primary factors have benefited football and rewarded it with its best results ever. While doing so, it has also had an impact in the country on multiple fronts, whether socially, culturally, or economically. Despite its enormous development, the nation still has a long road ahead to reach higher levels. It is important to understand the key features that brought Portuguese football to where it is today, find new strategies to improve its effects and accommodate more modern ideas to achieve its maximum potential.

¹⁴ The men's national team reached the final of Euro 2004, the semi-finals of World Cup 2006, the quarterfinals of Euro 2008, the round of 16 in the World Cup 2010, the quarterfinals of Euro 2012 and won Euro 2016. As for the women's national team, it has only reached the group stage of Euro 2017. In the case of domestic clubs, FCP, SLB, SCP and SCB have the most appearances in European competitions, even though only FCP and SLB have won titles. SLB won the Champions League in 1960/1961 and 1961/1962, while FCP won in 1986/87 and 2003/2004. Also, FCP won the Europa League in 2002/2003 and 200/2011. Unfortunately, Portuguese clubs tend to end their journey at either the group stage or round of 16.

2.2.3.1. EURO 2004: The breakthrough

As referenced in this chapter, the Euro 2004 marked the history of Portuguese football. Not only did the country hosted the tournament, but it also reached the final game. Thus, the image of this small nation in the football world gained new encounters. During that legendary year, Portuguese football saw its breakthrough and took its development to another level. It was the beginning of contemporary football in the country. Adding all of this to other parts of its evolution, such as rising stars and the improvement of facilities/academies, 2004 was the year that began defining the Portuguese brand in football:

Although Portuguese football is reasonably well-known to international football fans, at least since Benfica and the national team of Eusebio & Co., the general idea abroad that Portugal is a ‘football country’ is much more recent (Euro 2004). It seems that, today, the country is known elsewhere particularly for its football and football celebrities. (Coelho & Tiesler, 2007, p. 578)

Its huge influence also changed the course of the country’s economy and tourism, with significant socioeconomic impact. The Euro 2004 was a major boost to the evolution of Portuguese football but also to the emergence of new touristic routes. Alongside the spectacle it provided, the event helped displaying the beauty of other parts of the country. It is normal for people to travel from all over the world to the hosting country, simply to support their national team and enjoy the show. Thus, this move forces them to visit a little bit of that nation and moulds a new insight into the hosting country’s culture. The same happened in 2004, when Portugal received a massive influx of tourists. Due to the multiple stadiums built all over the country, people spread throughout the territory instead of just focusing on the usual touristic destinations of that time. Hence, tourism began flourishing in other parts of the country such as the North rather than being restricted to Lisbon and Algarve. Consequently, people gained a new interest in the country and its evolution was quite rapid in the following years, which benefited the tourism industry. For instance, 170,000 people flew to Portugal exclusively due to the tournament (Carvalho, 2015). According to Melo (2007), the Euro 2004 attracted a massive number of tourists, 75% of which were visiting Portugal

for the very first time. This impact provoked in the tourism industry also affected the economy of the country. It led to an increase in production of about €184 million, while also creating an additional 4500 job posts which added up to €41 million in wages. Meanwhile, the investments made in the construction of new facilities or renewal of the existing ones led to an increase in job opportunities. Hence, the number of employees was also boosted by hosting the Euro 2004. Carlos Nogueira (2010) shared the statement of the event's general director, António Laranjo, in which he confirmed the creation of an additional 40.000 job posts and the enhancement of new professions and business areas. At the same time, the investments made in those infrastructures also generated an increase in production, which benefited the country:

In an evaluation of the economic impact resulting from the investments in infrastructures regarding the realization of Euro 2004, it is thus estimated that in the period from 2002 to 2004 an increase in production in the order of €1.9 billion was provoked, which means that the economic activity generated from the infrastructures created and refurbished on the occasion of this sporting event corresponds to about twice the amount invested in them.¹⁵ (Carvalho, 2015, pp. 23-24)

This impact was highly significant in the North of Portugal. According to Carvalho (2015), there was an increase in production of around €880 million, over 18.000 job posts were created and plus €170 million in rates of pay. Since then, the northern region has kept growing and became a great attraction for both domestic and foreign tourists. In addition to that, the Euro 2004 presented an opportunity to expand the country's image and brand. Such big events are always followed by mass media exposure, which can be beneficial to the hosting country. In relation to the Euro 2000, there was an increase of 20% in broadcasting ratings (Carvalho, 2015). Hence, Portugal got a lot more international audience than Belgium and the Netherlands, hosts of the previous Euro. This was a golden opportunity to paint a new image for the country and its main partners in international trade were watching. Lastly,

¹⁵ My translation. Original text: “Numa avaliação do impacto económico resultante dos investimentos em infraestruturas dizendo respeito à realização do Euro 2004, estima-se assim que no período de 2002 a 2004 foi provocado um aumento na produção na ordem dos 1,9 mil milhões de euros, o que significa que a atividade económica gerada a partir das infraestruturas criadas e remodeladas por ocasião deste evento desportivo corresponde a cerca do dobro do valor investido nas mesmas”.

hosting the Euro 2004 was the perfect platform to unveil all aspects of Portuguese culture. The hosting cities were the ultimate stage for a variety of shows, which combined with mass national and international audience led to an overall spread of the country's signature culture. Braga, Guimarães, Porto, Aveiro, Coimbra, Leiria, Lisboa e Faro/Loulé were the chosen cities to receive the games of Euro 2004. To do so, three stadiums were refurbished: Estádio D. Afonso Henriques, Estádio Municipal de Leiria – Dr. Magalhães Pessoa, and Estádio Cidade de Coimbra. In addition to that, seven other stadiums were completely rebuilt: Estádio do Bessa Séc XXI, Estádio do Dragão, Estádio Municipal de Braga, Estádio José Alvalade, Estádio da Luz, Estádio Municipal de Aveiro, and Estádio do Algarve. This accounted for an investment of €665 million made by public and private institutions (Lusa, 2010). For instance, the Estádio Municipal de Braga was the most expensive stadium with costs around €108 million. This value increases to €140 million if other constructions like the parking lots and accesses are included (Tribunal de Contas, 2005). The improvements made were necessary to get people to the stadiums. Up until the quarterfinals, those infrastructures had already received around 1.25 million spectators, which accounted for an average of 39.000 per game (Lusa, 2004). These investments also connected other areas such as architecture to football. In the case of the Estádio Municipal de Braga, the architect was Eduardo Souto de Moura, winner of the Pritzker Award of 2011 and highly influenced by Álvaro Siza Vieira, winner of the Pritzker Award of 1992. At the same time, a lot of the investments were linked to the entertainment industry and the promotion of the hosting cities, thus accounting for around €7.5 million (Tribunal de Contas, 2005). The Euro 2004 had a major impact on multiple parts of the Portuguese economy.

In the midst of all of this, the Euro 2004 improved the sport's evolution in the country and its international image. The investments made to prepare the country as a hosting nation plus its economic return proved that football can be an important asset. For instance, in June of 2004, regions began feeling the impact in tourism with Portuguese accommodation establishments registering around 3,4 million overnights. There was a slight decline in Algarve and Madeira, usually referenced as classical touristic destinations, mostly because

people went to other regions to watch the games. This led to a fall of overnights to -0,4%. However, and although Algarve and Madeira had negative percentages, -15,7% and -8,9% respectively, the North, Centre and Lisbon witnessed a massive increase, with 29,8%, 27,0% and 21,4% respectively (Instituto Nacional de Estatística, 2004). In that month, the number of foreign guests increased by 40% and the overnights grew by 70%, with the hotel occupancy rate rising by 7% (Ribeiro et al., 2004). Despite the mass investments and costs, the Euro 2004 became an advantageous attraction to the country. The month of June provided a national total of tourist revenue of €104 million, including tourists, excursionists, and members of the tournament's organization with 20% of that amount belonging to the Northern region. As previously mentioned, the North gathered and benefited the majority of profits generated by the European competition. In those 20% of revenues, tourists were the greatest contributors, accounting for 92% with €21 million (Ribeiro et al., 2004). In addition to that, these revenues were distributed by numerous sectors of the Portuguese economy:

As for the distribution of these revenues by sectors of economic activity, it was assumed that the tourist consumption was distributed as follows: 55% by accommodation and restaurant services; 23% for wholesale and retail services and vehicle repair services; 12% for transport, storage, and communication services; 6% for real estate activities, rentals and services provided to companies and 4% for other collective, social, and personal services.¹⁶ (Ribeiro et al., 2004, p. 29)

Not only did the number of tourists increase during the month of June, but there was also a clear growth in their average daily expenses. In the region of Lisbon and Vale do Tejo, the average was €184,36 per day, followed by the North region with €165,26, which can be translated in an increase of 51% between 2003 and 2004 (Ribeiro et al., 2004). All these numbers were a confirmation of Portugal's potential. This realization was crucial to speed up its evolution and influence bigger investments, mostly in proper infrastructures. By concentrating efforts to upgrade everything linked to the

¹⁶ My translation. Original text: "Quanto à distribuição destas receitas pelos sectores de actividade económica, pressupõe-se que o consumo turístico foi distribuído do seguinte modo: 55% pelos serviços de alojamento e restauração; 23% pelos serviços de comércio grosso e a retalho e serviços de reparação de veículos; 12% pelos serviços de transportes, armazenagem e comunicações; 6% pelos serviços das actividades imobiliárias, alugueres e serviços prestados às empresas e 4% por outros serviços coletivos, sociais e pessoais."

sport, Portugal was able to outdo its previous achievements. Better academies led to greater professionals and results. After the Euro 2004, the development of youth academies grew exponentially with new facilities such as Dragon Force (FCP, 2008) and Benfica Campus (SLB, 2006). In the case of Dragon Force, it has a massive number of national schools¹⁷ spread throughout the country and an international one, in Bogotá, Colombia (FC Porto, 2021). Benfica Campus houses one of the country's top facilities and includes: 9 football fields, 62 bedrooms, 16 changing rooms, 2 auditoriums, 2 gyms, 1 conference room, 1 dining room, 1 social room, plus technical and medical offices. This type of investment led to a larger circle of homegrown players and improved their performances through specialized training, which was sustained by the better conditions created. A good example is João Félix, who trained at both FCP and SLB. As mentioned, the Portuguese forward was the most expensive transfer to this day for a little over €127 million, at the young age of 19. By hosting the 2004 tournament, Portugal realized its potential and began investing more on its football, with a tremendous outcome. For instance, since the Euro 2000 and thanks to the progress made through the Euro 2004, the Portuguese men's national team has always been able to maintain its place in the final phase of the tournament. Also, the women's national team is beginning to see good outcomes, such as their qualification to the European Championship in 2016, and it is mostly due to these investments. This evolution turned the country into an attractive place within the football world. Over the past few years, Portuguese football saw a massive growth on all its fronts. The domestic scene has expanded in business terms, thus evolving as a whole in and off the pitch. Hence, its popularity in foreign markets has skyrocketed.

By hosting the European competition, Portugal provided an unexpected impact in its economy and tourism industry. Consequently, there were sociocultural changes in the nation. The most important of all was the enhancement of Portuguese cultural and national identity. Hosting the Euro

¹⁷ Belém, Cascais, Viana do Castelo – Neves FC, Penafiel (Academia de Rans), Constituição Park, Algarve (IC Almancil), Braga (ADC Aveleda), Colégio do Rosário, Colégio Novo da Maia, Ermesinde (Colégio de Ermesinde), Famalicão (AE Sport), Grijó (AD Grijó), Torre de Moncorvo (GD Moncorvo), Valadares (Valadares FC), Foz (FC da Foz), Rio Meão (JAR), Madeira (Clube Escola O Liceu), Marco de Canaveses, Gondomar (Gens SC), Viseu (CF “Os Repesense”).

2004 proved to have a massive impact on how nationals viewed the country. It was at that time that flags began to be seen on all windows and balconies as a sign of unity and hope. This sense of common identity around football also led people to know the anthem by heart. The entire country felt what it is like to be truly proud of its origins, while also feeling honoured to be a part of such a grand nation for the very first time. This turning point was only possible through football. It was at that time that Portugal, and Portuguese in general, realized that the country had the power to attract more tourism and visitors as a whole, and not just for its classical destinations, Lisbon, Algarve, and Madeira. The rest of Portugal also had the necessary attributes to be promoted internationally and desired by foreigners, thus increasing their search within the Portuguese touristic offer. Hence, tourism flourished and multiculturalism grew into a mainstream concept in Portugal, with thousands of foreigners becoming part of everyday life from North to South. Although it might be hard to believe for some, the game can change people's perspectives and improve a country on its own. As Nelson Mandela once said, "*Sport has the power to inspire and unite people*" (FIFA, 2016). Now more than ever, football is a symbol of Portuguese culture, and of how the nationals are able to identify and empower themselves.

2.2.3.2. **Football: A valuable link between markets**

In this contemporary world, sports in general have become a secret weapon to improve countries and speedup their evolution. The development provided by this unexpected tool has a significant economic impact, with some industries achieving greater value due to it. While doing so, it can also have a sociocultural impact through its services. Football is the greatest and biggest example of how sports can help in a country's development, due to its popularity and constant presence around the world. As stated by Gásquez and Royuela (2014), "sport, and football in particular, plays a non-negligible role in the economy of many countries, especially among developed nations" (p. 2). Football is recognized at a worldwide level as a millionaire market. The existent money flow in the game's world can sometimes be perceived as an exaggeration or even just simply ridiculous. However, the sport also provides an effective network between different markets and extends its profits to multiple sectors. Thus, not only does it benefit itself and other areas, but it also generates more generalized income at a national level. It is the ultimate link between unexpected sectors and markets.

Football is well-known not just for its entertainment side but also for its business encounters. The sport's millionaire market makes headlines every single year with its astronomical values. This is usually directly linked to the transfer market. Although football is seen as the "*global game*", Europe holds all the history, and it is where the sport is the most developed. The European transfer market is the most competitive and owns the highest values at a worldwide scale. In fact, it can generate millions, whether through clubs making a big single transfer or smaller but multiple ones. The country's geographical location is an advantage to Portuguese football, thus turning into a scouting paradise. By investing in domestic players and signing young talented imports with low transfer fees, the country ends up receiving a maximized return. This contrast allows a steady evolution in the national football market, which consequently provides a massive income to the country. In addition to that, clubs can get a bonus for certain achievements in both domestic and European competitions. For instance, the teams can receive millions by simply passing to next stage in the Champions League. A good

and fresh example is Futebol Clube do Porto and their performance in the competition this season (2020/2021). Although it was not able to reach the semi-finals, the Portuguese northern club ended up with an extra €73.5 million in its safe-deposit (Maisfutebol, 2021). The money generated strictly through the presence in European competitions is unbelievable. Clubs are also rewarded internally depending on their achievements in domestic competitions. To illustrate, in this season (2020/2021), Sporting Clube de Portugal won the Portuguese championship and an astonishing €2.5 million will be distributed by the entire team. The biggest winner is probably the manager, Rúben Amorim, getting an extra €3.3 million for securing a place in an European competition and conquering the domestic title (A BOLA, 2021). By adding all the variables and their values, it is possible to see why it is addressed as the millionaire market. This also includes the incredible results obtained by national teams in the past years. For instance, the men's national team had its highlight in 2016 by winning the Euro. That was followed by the conquering of the first ever Nations League in 2019. Such titles are extremely important for both the country's image and its economy.

At the same time, football adds a greater value to other markets. Some good examples are Estádio do Dragão, in Porto, and Estádio da Luz, in Lisbon. The best example is to look at a club's stadium as an asset and its connection to other markets. For instance, and as previously mentioned, a stadium can provide new partnerships and increase the value of commercial constructions nearby such as malls. Across the street from Estádio do Dragão, home of Futebol Clube do Porto, there is a mall called *Alameda Shop & Spot*. This closeness benefits both structures as real estate assets and increases the value of the surrounding areas. Although there is no direct partnership, the location forces somewhat of a relation between these 2 identities that are highly sought-after by people. Another real estate connection is the new housing project being developed in the former area of Estádio das Antas, which was the old stadium of the club. In 2004, it was demolished due to the new construction – Estádio do Dragão – to host Euro 2004. This residential hall, known as Antas Atrium, will now occupy the glorious place of Estádio das Antas and provide around 1100 new apartments (Silva, 2020). The real estate

fund Quântico/Albatross, which is a Portuguese and Spanish joint venture, is in charge of this project (Frias, 2020). The connection between football and different sorts of real estate has been growing, mainly due to its dual benefits as a highly profitable strategy. It has now become a key feature of the market's links that have emerged from the sport and its industry. Also, FCP has been displaying a major interest in art and in collaborating with Portuguese professionals, specially from Porto and fans of the club, thus providing them a broader platform to showcase their work. The club's branding is now resorting mostly to street art. For instance, the entry's ceiling of Museu FC Porto was painted by Mr. Dheo, a well-known Portuguese street artist who has been an active collaborator over the past few years (FC Porto, 2018b). In 2013, the artist painted a mural live on the stadium during FCP's presentation day/game¹⁸ and, in 2016, painted another one on the club's training centre (Centro de Treinos do Olival)¹⁹. In addition to that, FCP celebrated 125 years of existence in 2018 and launched a new collaboration with Hazul, also known as Hazul Luzah. The street artist created a piece that was used in the team's third equipment of season 2018/2019, sponsored by New Balance (FC Porto, 2018a). A few months later, Hazul painted a mural on the outside of Estádio do Dragão. Hélder Gomes, the man in charge of the club's branding, highlighted that the location was important so that people could appreciate the artist's piece, almost like a democratization of art (FC Porto, 2018b). As for Estádio da Luz, home of Sport Lisboa e Benfica, it displays what a successful partnership with private hospitals can become. Its link to Hospital da Luz, which provides the needed medical care for SLB, can be very beneficial for people as patients, while also being advantageous to the club. A good example is the discounts offered to patients that are members of the club. Since these members pay annual fees to the club, they can get multiple discounts at the hospitals of this network. For example, people can get 25% for check-ups, 20% for rehabilitation and permanent care, 10% for all services, among other benefits (Hospital da Luz, 2021). These links can also be highly profitable in other areas, such as merchandising and media, for both sides. Clubs can get goods and money by trading some space in their

¹⁸ Retrieved from FC Porto's YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JWX42BsHxY0>

¹⁹ Retrieved from FC Porto's YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3vgPR1SzcZM>

jerseys or platforms for advertisements, in a win-win situation. This marketing strategy and its range of exposure in football can be worth millions. A team or player's popularity can also increase the value of a partnership like this. Although a football icon might request a higher investment, a maximized financial return is guaranteed. This does not only refer to exposure through live matches, which are streamed on multiple means of communication, but also through social media, stadium billboards and interview backdrops.

By connecting football to other sectors, countries can advance at a faster pace and boost their development in a multisided way. The existent correlation between distinct markets has proven to be effective and advantageous, whether for countries, clubs, or companies in general. Although it was unexpected, football has become somewhat of a “*growth tool*” for economies all over the world, especially in Europe. In the last few decades, Portugal has learned how to turn its potential into reality. Through the game and its newer developments in business terms, the country created proper strategies to strengthen its economy and other sectors, by observing others and executing the most beneficial manoeuvres. The evolution of the markets and of football itself have become intertwined for the greater good of the nation.

2.2.3.3. The outcasts of modern football

Throughout the past few decades, football has evolved in many aspects when it comes to its inclusiveness. However, it is still lacking in terms of equality and the pandemic, COVID-19, highlighted those flaws. The sport has outgrown itself to accommodate more professionals and finally acknowledge the female presence. Despite such changes, modern football still presents significant discrepancies. The main issues are the economic and gender inequality, which have become increasingly visible and a source of concern. Such problems are highlighted mainly by low investments, bad markets, and unorganized systems. With the help of modern-day media, it is easier to expose what is wrong in the world of football. The comparison between professional football and amateurs or women has to be done in order to obtain a reasonable progress. By addressing the differences, solutions can be created to reach proper equality step-by-step. The current pandemic enhanced the issues faced in contemporary football, but it also opened the doors to fix them. Portugal was no exception, with amateurs, women and academies paying the ultimate price.

The last couple of decades witnessed a complete change in football, as it grew as a global phenomenon and mostly in economic terms: “The game embraced capitalism in the 90’s, and hyper-capitalism in the past decade” (Kunti, 2020, para. 2). This development triggered major inequality, with some getting everything and others nothing at all. As the years go by, those differences seem to have gotten bigger and not the opposite. The disparity is so significant that, unlike what the general public might think, the millionaires of football are actually a very reduced niche. Except from England, which is globally acknowledged as the wealthiest country in relation to football, most of the other European leagues are not as lucky. Even the top tiers can struggle at times, especially in countries where the evolution has been slower. Despite the growth in revenues, there is some sort of incompatibility because of the increasing values of wages and the money spent in the transfer market. Hence, the more money there is in football, the more it is spent, thus contributing to the disparity between big and small clubs. In Portugal, that variable makes the national championship highly predictable, with only 3 or 4 (rich) clubs

discussing the male title. Adding that to TV rights, which tends to favour partnership deals with the top clubs, the money flow increases exponentially and so does the inequality. Not only does it have an impact on poorer professional clubs but also on amateurs, whose resources are even lower. Much like women, amateurs face the struggle of looking at football mainly as a hobby. The inability to move up the ladder means less conditions, which consequently forces them to search for other opportunities. This is a clear outcome of low investments, thus portraying “true football” as a segmentation in the entire market.

Another issue is the gender inequality in the world of football. Although the gap has been shortened in the last few decades, there are still major differences between women and men. The disadvantages for women in football are extremely significant, including the low wages (or none at all) and the lack of investment. For instance, in 2019, “all 28 members of the US women's national soccer team sued their federation with allegations of institutional gender discrimination” (Ernise, 2019, para. 3). This is mostly fed by the stereotype that football is a game designed for men only, which forces women to balance practices and games with an actual job and their family life. Also, in the last years, many women stated to have suffered from bullying and sexual harassment in the football world. In addition to that, the existent organization in Portuguese women's football can be unappealing to spectators, due to its complexity, as it has been previously explained, especially when compared to men's football and its systems. Instead of attracting more audience and more professionals, it pushes them away as it is hard to understand. Although the core of women's football is still underdeveloped all over the world, its current layout in Portugal seems somewhat even odder and inexplicable.

As the lockdown began to fade away in Portugal, only the top tier was able to return to some of its normality. Other tiers, amateurs, women and even training football were left behind for a considerable amount of time. For instance, training football is only now returning to some of its activities, almost a year and a half after the beginning of the pandemic. With more restrictions lifted, it was unclear why professional football could resume its

season, but others could not. This came to show the real differences and increase the pre-existent disparities. Especially for academies, the lost time will never be replaced, and an entire generation of future professional can have been completely compromised. According to numbers published by Rádio Renascença, and shared by FPF, federated athletes within football are decreasing. Before the pandemic, there were 159.318 athletes and, during the 1st year of COVID-19, it dropped to 39.471. Hence, it accounts for a 25% loss (Aresta, 2021). The government's decisions are even harder to understand when it is possible to see how football helps the nation economically. A study conducted by UEFA shows that, in Portugal, football has an impact of €1.67 billion every season (Fernandes & Quaresma, 2021). Financially speaking, the existence of this sport is extremely important for the country, especially now, that the country is trying to recover from the global health crisis. Football somehow became a capitalist and elite game for its rich owners, thus turning everyone else that does not fit the new configuration into outcasts.

Modern times require a bigger interconnection between people and cultures. It is important to understand the real value of multiplicity, while raising awareness to the notions of inclusion and integration. The exchange of experiences and knowledge these concepts provide in real life can be an important asset for individuals and societies in general. There is no longer room for outcasts in contemporary football and more strategies need to be presented to secure a stable future. In order to expand and attract new audiences, new ventures and models must be designed to sustain the sport's evolution in such a multicultural and knowledgeable world. There are clear business opportunities in this concealed market that merges football and multiple cultures. The following chapter presents an original idea to tackle sociocultural issues in modern football, mainly in Portuguese grounds. It intends to provide a better working environment, thus also influencing the stability of personal life and general work-life balance. This idea consists of a project that focuses on solving the obstacles professionals face, while offering procedures to improve their cultural game.

CHAPTER III – ELYSIAN: BEHIND THE CONCEPT

In an increasingly intercultural world, mostly due to globalization and migration, every market or economic sector presents a business opportunity and demands a new take on innovation. The contemporary world is in constant need for entrepreneurship, which essentially refers to the act of creating, developing, and managing a business/company or an idea for a product/service (Barot, 2015; Eroğlu & Piçak, 2011). It is all about identifying new opportunities and reconciling value, thus also enhancing a more profitable commerce, and providing better quality of life. The key is the use of creativity to generate new ventures or improve existing ones. The project “*Elysian: Get your cultural game on*”, which was born with those values in mind and aims to facilitate intercultural processes, is the central topic of this dissertation. It presents an idea that undertakes an opportunity within a busy market, mostly due to a growing and neglected problem which is here referred to as sociocultural issues in modern football.

Throughout this dissertation, the blend of football and culture has been explored to unveil contemporary problems faced by professionals in the industry. The main issue identified was the lack of proper systems and strategies to ease transitional and integrational processes. This has led to the present project’s creation, with the purpose of improving the sport, the professionals’ lives, and expanding its sense of inclusion. Mainly based on knowledge and research, “*Elysian*” intends to help this field and offers new strategies. According to Söderlund (2018, p. 1), while citing Ryba et al. (2017), it has now become crucial to spread knowledge on adaptation and cultural transition in sports. Enlightening this subject and extending its research can help professionals and offer better strategies to their consultants as a mean to combat such issues:

The complexity of acculturation trajectories was forefronted by showing how some migrants confronted racism, exclusion, and damaging stereotypes while simultaneously feeling disconnected from their ethnic communities as well as experienced marginalisation, identity crisis, and acculturative stress upon their return to their community of origin. [...] Sport participation per se does not necessarily promote integration, but rather can be used as a context for bringing together individuals with different ethno-cultural backgrounds in a multicultural environment that can promote integration and multiculturalism. (Ryba et al., 2017, pp. 3-8)

Being able to understand such concepts and how to use them correctly is a must in modern-day daily life, especially to avoid unnecessary problems in an increasingly globalized society. This can also be applied to football due to its massive mix of cultures related to sports labour migration. The sport itself can become a very important example

for contemporary societies on how to deal with different cultural contexts, as long as its own characteristics and processes are improved. The project “*Elysian*” intends to become the bridge that allows a faster and more effective evolution towards that vision, thus improving the integrational process faced by professionals and directly boosting the sport’s level of inclusion. Alongside that, the company’s purpose is centred around the people by focusing on giving them a better quality of life, mainly through the elimination of sociocultural issues, such as linguistic and religious barriers or other related problems like differences in traditions, values, and beliefs. By doing so, it can also become an example for society in general and provide new insights on how to deal with those sociocultural obstacles.

With more and more sociocultural issues raising to the surface, it has now become evident that there are missing measures waiting to be taken. New systems and strategies need to be developed in order to help people acquire different sets of skills, which is key to survive in this contemporary world. Football is one of the best and most exposed examples of this problem, with multicultural squads and a constant migrant flux, as seen in previous chapters. Professionals in this area are not trained to deal with sociocultural issues nor do they receive any hints on what is about to hit them inside all those different cultural bubbles, where they are enclosed when moving into a new team abroad. Instead, it becomes their responsibility to know how to cope with situations where they are faced with those cultural disparities. However, “*Elysian*” intends to be the change they need. Through the creation of an extended network and a shared-knowledge platform, this project will develop new strategies and help professionals in the football world. “*Elysian: Get your cultural game on*” aims at being a leader in the junction of research and football, with a strong sociocultural philosophy to start that change. To do so, it is important to understand every step of its creation and the message behind it.

3.1. Problems faced by professionals due to sociocultural barriers

The mixture of cultures has become a common feature of modern societies' daily life. There have been significant changes and advancements triggered by the junction of different people, ideas, and principles. However, this has also created new challenges. The world of football did not escape this evolution, with both its good and bad aspects. By combining globalization and higher migration fluxes, contemporary squads encounter unexpected sociocultural issues, mainly linked to the players' transitional process into varied contexts.

Football is known all over the world for its monumental monetary values and legendary games, thus providing the perfect blend between entertainment and business. Nevertheless, this evolution has provoked some side effects, with the sport's culture changing dramatically. Modern-day squads became more multicultural than ever (Chadwick, 2013; Maderer et al., 2014; Ryba et al., 2017). Since the 1990s, the domination of imports in domestic leagues just kept growing. This expanded cultural diversity benefited football through a knowledge exchange, while also highlighting the lack of skills individuals have to deal with different cultures (Maderer et al., 2014). Encompassing such differences within a small environment and without proper coping strategies can present a real challenge. Issues such as linguistic, religious, and other cultural barriers emerge, and professionals find themselves in tricky situations. The problem relies on how it can affect individuals and their performances. Nowadays, clubs focus on providing specific tools or means to accommodate their employees, including easier access to houses or foreign language classes. However, these small solutions only provide a certain level of adaptation and not necessarily a positive, effective, and complete integration. As Chadwick (2013) highlighted, "there is more to cultural acclimatisation than two hours learning English at a local college" (para. 14) or any other language.

Despite their role as entertainers, professionals in the football world are still human beings and deserve some stability amid the chaos. Patronizing such situations can jeopardize not just their performances but also their daily lives, which raises many questions. Exchanging experiences and obtaining more knowledge can provide a deeper comprehension of the imposed environment. Above all, it is important to reduce negative situations and increase coping strategies or solutions to avoid major consequences.

3.2. Solution: Improving the integration and inclusion of professional football players, managers, and staff in different cultural environments

After assessing the main problem and its consequent secondary issues, there is the need to provide an effective solution. The idea consists of the creation of a platform that can tackle multiple perspectives within the same environment. It focuses on finding viable changes in the system and constructing the means to do so. This valuable proposal aspires to become a significant asset in the football world, mainly in Portugal and with a future possible expansion.

The solution proposed is the creation of a consulting company, under the name “*Elysian*” and with the grand slogan “*Get your cultural game on*”. Its main objective is to tackle the integration of professional football players, managers, and staff, both male and female, in different cultural environments. It aims at providing services that will help any professional to make that cultural transition effectively, hence generating a bigger sense of inclusiveness. Essentially, this project focuses on achieving a solution that benefits every individual, both personally and professionally. While doing so, it identifies and highlights the difficulties professionals face when in a new and different cultural environment. It intends to create strategies to help professionals in these challenging situations, so that their progress, performance, and daily lives are not harmed. Moreover, it identifies the best plan of action to reformulate the integrational process, thus benefiting everyone involved and developing a more inclusive environment. It designs a new model that allows a smooth transition from multiculturalism to interculturalism. By doing this, “*Elysian*” means to improve the football world and maximize its potential. This includes everything connected to football’s social, cultural, and economic role in modern societies and countries.

“*Elysian: Get your cultural game on*” is born as a tool to secure a proper integration and an extensive sense of inclusion to all professionals in the football world. It is a project designed to tackle sociocultural issues in modern professional football, with its initial implementation in Portugal. The company intends to provide specialized services, in order to supply the necessary means to sustain a proper and effective process. “*Elysian*” aims at becoming a life, educational, and cultural coach for professionals in need of help.

3.2.1. Market study

A market study focuses on assessing whether a new business can survive in its designed area or not. Essentially, it is a primary research to understand the market's demand and to compare the project with its direct or indirect competitors, thus displaying its differentiation (Entrepreneur Europe, 2021; Twin, 2020). It is also possible to see both the advantages and disadvantages it faces. The following table presents the findings of that analysis with its main focuses being the type of consultation, products, and services²⁰:

Table 1. Elysian's competitor analysis

FIRMS	SECTION			
	TYPE	PRODUCTS	SERVICES	SEGMENTATION
ELYSIAN	Intercultural Management	Website & Social Media	Education	Football Players, Managers & Staff
		App	Counselling	
		Events	Strategy	
GESTIFUTE	Career Management	Website	Career Management	Football Players & Managers
PROELEVEN	Career Management & Intermediation	Website & Social Media	Agency services	Football Players & Managers
			Career Management	
			Intermediation	
			Software	
POSITIONNUMBER	Career Management & Intermediation	Website & Social Media	Career Management	Football Players & Managers
			Intermediation	
SOCIALWARE	Personal & Social Development	Website & Social Media	Training & Teambuilding	All Companies
			Mentoring & Coaching	
			Lectures & Events	
BTOC CONSULTING	Management & Consulting Services	Website & Social Media	Accounting & Tax	All Companies
		App	HR Solutions	
		Events	Advisory	

Source: Personal Collection

²⁰ Data retrieved from the companies' websites and social media.

“*Elysian*” stands out due to its originality. Unlike this project, most consulting companies linked to football are focused on career and finance management, in both Portugal and around the world. In addition to that, there are more emerging under the scope of social media management. However, there are no consulting companies ready to tackle sociocultural issues. Outside the football world, there are some consulting firms focused on intercultural/cultural management or personal and social development that may present a different type of competition. Still, “*Elysian*” provides specialized services. As it is possible to see in the above table, this project can have a clear advantage over its competitors, mostly due to its type of consultation. It also offers to its customers more products besides the usual website used by most companies, with its app and events. Its services are also completely different from others, because “*Elysian*” presents another point of view by designing services centred on the person and not the career. The most similar service would be *Proeleven* and *MRP.POSITIONNUMBER*’s intermediation services since the firms deal with most of the initial contact. Another resemblance would be *Socialware* and *BTOC Consulting*’s solutions through training and mentoring. However, none prepares professionals for intercultural experiences and that is how “*Elysian*” can change the game in the consulting and football world. At the same time, this project’s segmentation is more broaden in the sense that includes everyone involved in a football team, not limiting its range of clients due to talent, status, or fame. Although it focuses on professional football in a primary stage, “*Elysian*” wishes to expand to all tiers and ages in order to achieve its vision.

The competition is fierce in the football world, mostly due to its growing popularity and strong business component. To enter this market, it is important for “*Elysian: Get your cultural game on*” to stand out as a much needed and completely different company. Its sociocultural concerns blended with its personal care services will display its value, while proving that the demand has also shifted. Solutions like “*Elysian*” will reinvent both the sport’s world and society in general, mostly by doing what everyone else has been neglecting over the past few years. Integration and inclusion have become crucial to football and its development, while also being essential to contemporary societies. Thus, it is important to spread awareness on sociocultural issues and provide better solutions to individuals facing these problems. “*Elysian*” will change the game and, hopefully, start a revolution.

3.2.2. Interviews

The current project – “*Elysian: Get your cultural game on*” – was submitted to an empirical study mainly through a qualitative method, which is here presented as interviews. Their main objectives were to assess the importance of the project and its viability in the football world, mainly in Portugal. In addition to that, this method was chosen since it could be the key to understand the real issues experienced or witnessed by professionals, while also allowing them to provide new suggestions that can benefit the project. Three main key points to develop the interviews’ questions were outlined: (1) assessing how professionals view integration and inclusion in football, (2) finding out what is lacking and how or what changes can/need to be made, and (3) discovering possible episodes that verify the need for such transformations. The guide, which is available on Appendix I, was composed by six questions and structured around the defined objectives. Initially, the goal was to interview professional football players, managers, and staff from both male and female squads. However, the project faced many obstacles, mainly linked to bureaucratic constraints and restrictions imposed by the professionals’ contracts. Two female professional players – who will here be addressed as I1 and I2 to maintain anonymity – agreed to do the interview. The interviews were conducted online and in Portuguese²¹, on August 20th and 24th 2021. Due to the player’s hectic schedule, as the season had just begun, a document with the questions was sent as requested and they wrote the answers during their moments of free time. The value of their contribution must be highlighted since they represent an important case-study and an example in the football world, as part of a group – female football players – that is still out of the mainstream. Their gender implies even more challenges, thus exposing a patriarchal and masculine context. Moreover, these two players display the presence of interculturalism in the sport from different experiences. I1 depicts the journey of a Portuguese player in the external market, while I2 shows the opposite, as a Portuguese sportswoman who has only played in the domestic one. Along with this, they also represent another sort of intercultural transit, as they are both part of a specific cultural territory – women’s football – that is still placed by society in the margins of mainstream (male) football.

²¹ All the interviewees’ statements presented here have been translated to English for concision and clear understanding for the reader. The original versions in Portuguese can be found in their complete form in Appendixes III and IV.

For the sole purpose of contextualization, I1 is a 27-year-old professional football player with experience in both national and foreign clubs, while I2 is a 20-year-old professional football player with experience only in national clubs. When questioned about her perception of integration and inclusion in Portuguese professional football, I1 stated that: “There is still a long way to go” (I1, Answer 1). Further on, the player also highlighted some bureaucratic problems she has experienced which consequently have affected her performance. On the other hand, player I2 emphasized her experience as a woman in a predominantly male sport. She stated that, once, the police had to act on a particular episode of sexist abuse, proving that prejudice and discrimination are still present. Both experiences can be verified in the following statements:

I myself have a problem in the league I play in. I'm Portuguese and that's why I can represent our national team. But at the same time, I am enrolled in the league as a foreigner because I was not formed locally. This makes the football I intend to play at a high level very difficult. I've tried everything. I've already talked to the federation, but what they say is that they won't change it because of a single player. There are many high-performance players who could share their football in Portugal. However, that door ends up closing because we count as foreigners in our own country. (I1, Answer 2)

I have experienced racist and sexist comments at a professional level, not so long ago (about 5 years ago). I remember that the police acted at the time, even though discrimination and prejudice continue to happen often just because we are women doing sports. (I2, Answer 2)

The interview's guide also included a question on whether or not there were still changes to be made, while also giving the players the opportunity to make some suggestions that are necessary from their point of view. I1 recalled issues related to money power and connected it to the lack of equality amongst female teams, mostly to remember that not all are on the same financial level, and this jeopardizes many professionals' careers. This consequently affects a lot of women that must play football as a hobby and have a separate job at the same time, thus forcing many to quit. I2 mentioned the same issue, although without the money issues, and went further by addressing the viewers/football fans perceptions. Despite some different details in their statements, both players highlighted the need to establish more equality, while also mentioning the importance of educating people on and off the pitch:

For example, I witnessed an episode a while ago that I thought was horrible! The federation imposed a salary cap, which I would even have agreed with if it hadn't forgotten to help all the LIGA BPI teams. This is because in order to have a ceiling there must be a floor. But that's not the reality and I think Portugal loses a lot, especially with amateur players who make sacrifices to train and work at the same time. It's so difficult that many end up giving up because they don't have the right conditions. (I1, Answer 3)

In my opinion, there is still a lot that has to change, from professionalizing clubs and athletes to changing the minds of those who watch it or not. I think football should be seen for being football and not for being female or male. We still have a long way to go, as did men's football. (I2, Answer 3)

The players were also questioned about the importance of having a project that focuses on connecting education and football, while providing specialized services that can be individually personalized. This referred to the project's three main branches and it was essential to understand how "*Elysian*" can be viewed in a real context, with the question clearly mentioning education, counselling, and strategies with a few examples (e.g.: workshops, summer camps, life coach, psychological follow-ups, and so on). I1 emphasized the need to battle mental health issues, which can derive from sociocultural challenges. I2 also highlighted the need for counselling, thus reinforcing the idea that mental health is an important subject that must be addressed in order to maintain professionals in a positive position without affecting their performance:

Speaking from my own experience and some of the difficult problems I faced in my life as a teenager, at the age of 24, I had to seek psychological help to keep my performance at the highest level. After almost 4 years, I see a lot of difference in my posture and the dedication that I have, but more importantly in the reaction I have when facing some problems on and off the field. This has helped me to find a balance and improve my performance, which ends up influencing me as a professional and as a person in my daily life. (I1, Answer 5)

I am in favour that all people should, at some point, have psychological counselling, especially during education. We all go through situations at school, at home or even on the street that can affect us in some way. Having psychological counselling does not mean that we are not ok, but it helps us to see things from another perspective. (I2, Answer 5)

Moreover, I1 insisted that such strategies should be implemented from the earlier tiers to help structure growing individuals as more inclusive human beings. This is also important to show kids that they are not alone, and that others may face the exact same challenges. Hence, it would help them understand themselves and others better, which is key to build a more positive and inclusive environment. By providing the necessary help and tools, not only can younger people overcome their issues and pursue their dreams with more

ease, but it also prevents them from going through unpleasant and avoidable situations. On the other hand, I2 stated that education is important in correlation to sports, especially collective ones since it forces individuals to learn and grow with each other. She also emphasized that they learn how to respect one another by working as a team, which is important to evolve as an individual. This is significant for both the industry and societies:

A lot of the times some young people get lost along the way due to the lack of knowledge and understanding. More than that, I think all young people who play football should be accompanied by a mental coach, someone who can make the transitions from home to school and from school to the field, thus allowing for a better progression as future professionals but also as human beings in society. (I1, Answer 4)

I consider sports very important in the education of anyone, especially collective. I think it helps us a lot to know how to deal with others and to work as a team. It also helps us to learn to deal with our mistakes and those of others, but also to know how to overcome some difficulties, both personal and collective. At the level of sociocultural respect, I believe that, by working as a team, we learn to respect the other person the way they are, although there are always exceptions. (I2, Answer 4)

Regarding strategies, the player I1 emphasized the use of social media to share the daily life of professionals in the football world. In fact, she provided an example by stating: “There are many players using these platforms to help children who dream of being professional players one day and it can also be used for other things” (I1, Answer 6). The goal would be to make people understand that the sport is much more than running after a ball and kicking it. Moreover, it would be important to inspire younger generations and providing them with real insights on what that career actually asks of them as professionals. In the final part of the interview, both players were questioned on whether or not they believed that football could be an important educational platform, much like a trigger to improve individuals personally and professionally. At the same time, it was imposed that football could be the bridge to understand differences and implement respect all over the globe. I1 answered affirmatively and made a sum of all the aspects mentioned above. I2 emphasized how football can be a great educational tool, by making people work together and understand each other. This requires a lot of respect on both ends, which is also important on players’ daily lives as members of a society:

Football is globally known, and I think it can be a great educational tool. [...] Being a football player is much more than kicking a ball and I think a lot of people don't understand that because they don't have access to the life of a professional. We players talk a lot to each other about how difficult it is to be a football player and keep our mindset strong every day. (I1, Answer 6)

As I said earlier, football, as a team sport (I don't know about individual sports because I've never practiced it), teaches us to work as a team and to respect the differences of others, because, if at the end of the day we don't all work for the same purpose, we end up getting nowhere. (I2, Answer 6)

Overall, these interviews have proven that professionals in the football world face more issues than the ones displayed by mainstream media, especially women. The general public is only allowed to get access to the problems that these major corporations want them to, while a lot of information remains unknown. In reality, these professionals are faced with multiple issues that they must contour with little or no help at all. Whether it is sociocultural challenges, bureaucratic hindrances, or even a mixture of both, the football world needs to change, and it has potential to do so. The analysed interviews show that the sport can take on a significant role by making noteworthy changes, which requires some external help. This is the much-needed confirmation that there is a market with a specific need that can be fulfilled by the project “*Elysian: Get your cultural game on*”. Moreover, these interviews validate the project’s importance on all spectrums of the sport, thus portraying a possible expansion into other areas, modalities, and countries. In addition to that, the interviews highlight the extension to all tiers as crucial to achieve the project’s purpose, when it comes to the processes of integration and inclusion of all professionals in the football world.

3.3. Positioning

The project “*Elysian: Get your cultural game on*” positions itself in the sports’ industry, particularly in the football world. It is strictly designed to satisfy solely the professionals in this area and to solve their sociocultural issues. This clear position is the outcome of a creative solution, which will be described further down, along with its mission, vision, and objectives. The originality and uniqueness of “*Elysian*” ensures its competitiveness through differentiation. Moreover, it is a project especially made for the people. Its humane features are the core of its essence.

3.3.1. Mission

The main mission of “*Elysian*” is to facilitate the integration of professional football players, managers, and staff in different cultural environments. While doing so, it also improves their inclusiveness. This project aims at providing a better working environment and securing proper stability to individuals, both professionally and personally. It offers multiple platforms with innovative features to maximize the potential quality of life, thus benefiting both the people and the industry.

3.3.2. Vision

“*Elysian*” aims at being a pioneer in balancing football and culture, thus envisioning a safer, knowledgeable, and culturally aware community. The project sees itself as a leader in the solidification of unity in the sport and as a crucial piece to end inequality. It is also designed to improve people’s education and other sociocultural skills that are becoming increasingly important. Overall, “*Elysian*” is born with the vision of integration and inclusion through the great power of education and general knowledge.

3.3.3. Objectives

The project’s main objectives are to create new tools to facilitate the processes of integration and inclusion, to bring new awareness plus knowledge on sociocultural issues in football, and to provide stability to both the professionals and the industry. In addition to that, it has in view the eradication of unfairness, inequality, and prejudice. “*Elysian*” aims to work as an intermediary channel that secures cultural balance, which ultimately impacts the transitional process and its outcome. While doing so, the project intends to set the example and encourage changes in worldwide football.

3.4. Branding

The success of a company is highly linked to its brand, thus making it one of its most valuable assets through pure recognition and love. “*Elysian*” was designed with a minimalist concept, thus strategizing an easy brand and image. In order to highlight the company’s name and slogan, the project is built around black and white only. The name “*Elysian*” alludes to a heavenly or paradisiacal world, where systems do work, and people can achieve a proper harmonical life. At the same time, the slogan “*Get your cultural game on*” is an incentive to obtain more knowledge and face cultural adversities as a football game. You learn, you play, and you win. Raising awareness to these facts will increase the willingness to fight these sociocultural barriers and lead to a victorious path. Building this project around the people will make it stand out and shine.

3.4.1. Logo

Figure 1. Elysian’s logo



Source: *Personal Collection*

The logo is the ultimate representation symbol of a company, which combines text and image in order to translate a business's vision and identity. It is an important feature so that people can identify the brand and link it to a specific service or product. In the case of “*Elysian*”, its design is minimalistic and straightforward just like its branding image was structured, which makes it memorable and easily recognizable. This symbol represents the entire image of the company and everything surrounding it, with its duality and opposition through colours but also the perfect harmony between them.

3.4.2. Slogan

The company's slogan is “*Get your cultural game on*”. It uses a rather well-known expression and mixes it with the project's core – culture. This combination depicts the project's identity and its purpose through a simple line. The main goal is to incentive people to fight against sociocultural stereotypes, thus collaborating towards a more unified world and society. Through this catchy slogan, “*Elysian*” intends to raise awareness about this particular subject and motivate individuals to learn about it.

3.4.3. Concept

“*Elysian: Get your cultural game on*” is set as a consulting firm specialized in intercultural management, primarily designed to address the football industry with a main focus on the professional Portuguese market. It has an interdisciplinary mindset that intends to achieve an effective interaction between different cultures through the power of knowledge. This project provides new tools to simplify the process and broaden individuals' perspectives, in order to make them understand and respect each other without any preconceived notions, hence, improving their work environment and facilitating their daily lives in a new cultural setting. It is also a platform designed to avoid any sociocultural problems in such a diverse environment like professional football. Although “*Elysian*” initially targets the national and professional market, it has the goal of expanding not only to amateur football and younger layers in training academies, but also to the international market, where the project's strategies would have to be altered. Above all, the company focuses on the people in an industry where money has become the ultimate power.

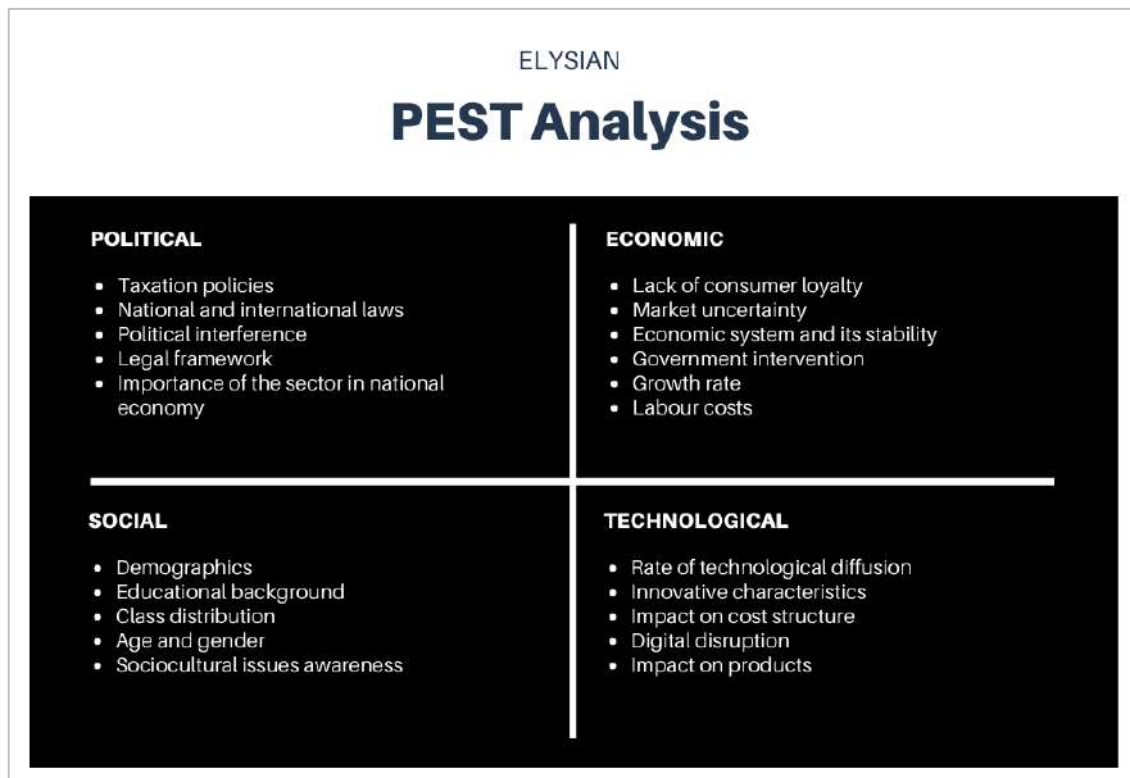
3.5. PEST and SWOT analysis

In the business world, it is important to assess a company's positive and negative sides. This is usually done by performing a PEST and SWOT analysis, which allows to create a more truthful picture. The evaluation of all possible factors and their influence can prevent future issues and discover new paths, thus reinforcing the firm and triggering a faster evolution.

3.5.1. PEST

The PEST analysis is crucial for the assessment of external factors and their impact on the company. This acronym stands for political, economic, social, and technological factors. Essentially, it presents the different parts of its macro environment and what affects the business' competitive advantage. While doing so, it helps shaping a proper strategy to achieve its maximized return.

Figure 2. Elysian's PEST analysis



Source: *Personal Collection*

3.5.1.1. Political factors

In a PEST analysis, political factors refer to a wide spectrum of key points such as the country's laws, the government in duty, taxation, and other types of regulations. All these variables can have a significant impact in a company and its business-core. The importance of this section increases with the possibility of expanding the business to other countries and markets, whose systems can be very different. By studying all these factors, a company obtains the proper tools to diversify its environment and to be able to adapt it in other contexts. For "*Elysian*", political factors include:

- Taxation policies
- National and international laws
- Political interference
- Legal framework
- Sector's importance in national economy

The political factors faced by "*Elysian*" are mainly linked to policies, laws, and other bureaucratic issues. To be in conformity with the national laws and policies, the project must be carefully structured within the mandatory legal framework. At the same time, its growth might be halted by them due to the system's slowness. There is also the issue of interference, since football holds an important role in the Portuguese economy. In a more advanced state, "*Elysian*" will face the same issues in foreign markets, thus confronting them on another level and forcing new strategies.

3.5.1.2. Economic factors

When building a business, economic factors must be considered, especially if there is a desire to expand to other markets. It is important to assess a country's economic conditions and understand whether the business has room to grow and achieve some stability in that specific national market. This includes possible help in the form of investments by top organizations. As far as moving into other countries is concerned, factors such as the currency and monetary policies play a huge role in the company's strategy. In the case of "*Elysian*", this includes:

- Lack of consumer loyalty
- Market uncertainty
- Economic system and its stability
- Government and football governing bodies' intervention
- Growth rate
- Labour costs

As a business in a niche market and industry, “*Elysian*” is dependent on the relevance and impact of its economic factors. The economic system is never the most stable, which can have implications in the market and influence its uncertainty regarding this type of project. In addition to that, “*Elysian*” will have to be careful with the intervention of governmental and institutional bodies, since not all may be beneficial for its development. The project is also reliant on consumer loyalty and the lack of professionals' interest may jeopardize its presence in the industry, while also negatively impacting its growth rate. There are also many costs when it comes to building and maintaining the company, mainly labour and structural costs, related to specialized employees and facilities.

3.5.1.3. Social factors

A company's culture is highly influenced by the culture of the society where it is inserted. It is crucial to understand that particular sociocultural system, in order to adapt both products and services, thus designing the business according to its preferred customer segmentation. By sharing values, beliefs and attitudes, the company can create a significant bond with its clients and maintain a loyalty-based system. The social factors included in “*Elysian*” are:

- Demographics
- Educational background
- Class distribution
- Age and gender
- Leisure interests
- Sociocultural issues awareness

In the case of “*Elysian*”, social factors carry a major importance on its identity and structure. It considers several key points such as demographics, educational background, class distribution, age, and gender. These factors are massive contributors to the assessment of all segmentations, thus allowing the project to reach every single consumer in the most customized manner possible. At the same time, “*Elysian*” considers the use of personal factors – such as hobbies, personality traits, family relations, among others – combined with awareness on sociocultural issues – in order to adapt its services in the most effective way to each customer.

3.5.1.4. Technological factors

The 21st century arrived as a technological era filled with innovation and advancements, thus changing all industries and their operating models. This transformation has now become one of the biggest influences in companies. Implementing these features can be risky due to their constant evolution and often unavailability or instability, which forces businesses to always be aware of the state and progress of technology. “*Elysian*” includes technological factors such as:

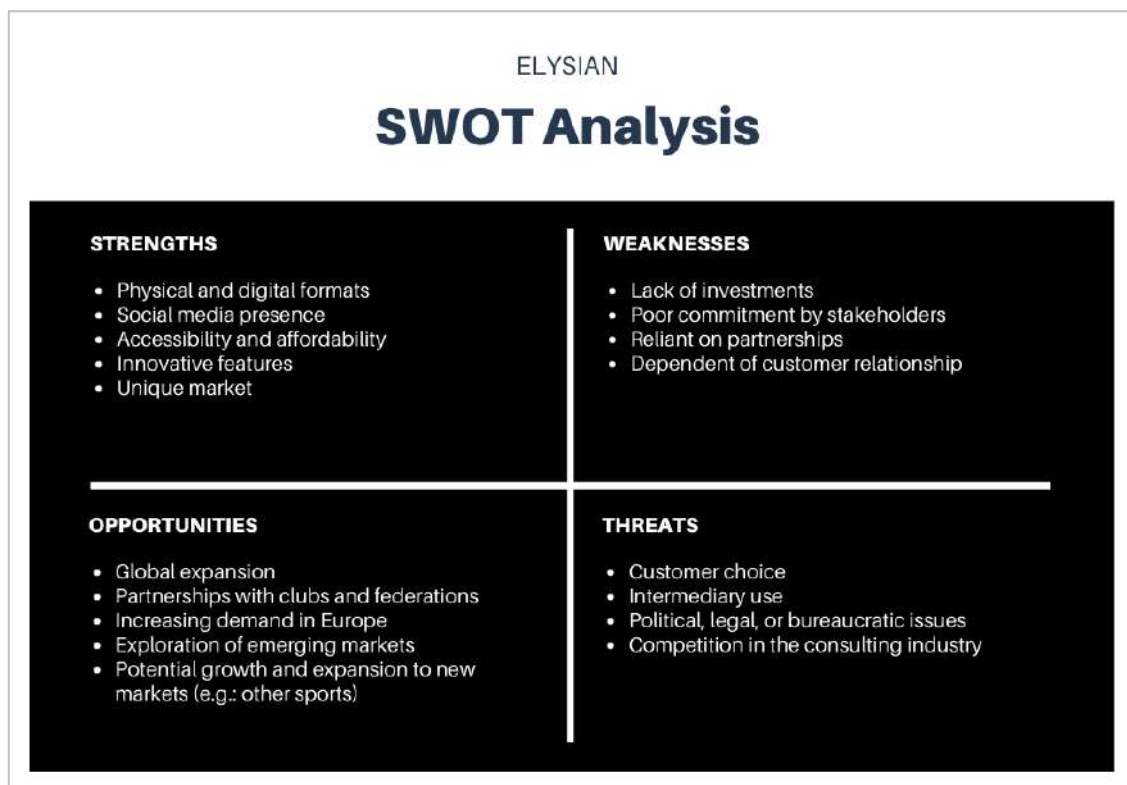
- Rate of technological diffusion
- Innovative features and characteristics
- Impact on cost structure
- Digital disruption
- Impact on products

“*Elysian*” faces technological factors such as digital disruption, technological diffusion, generalized innovation, and others. Since the project includes online products, these variables can have a massive impact on them. Thus, it is crucial to follow the industry’s evolution and keep as up to date as possible, to provide only the best to its customers. Technology is a big part of modern-day business, and it can have repercussions on cost structure. At the same time, the rate of technological diffusion can have implications on the company’s growth and development. With its innovative features and characteristics, “*Elysian*” can also benefit from the contemporary and constant digital disruption, which presents an advantage.

3.5.2. SWOT

Alongside the PEST analysis, every company should do a parallel SWOT analysis to better understand the situation it is in. The acronym stands for strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. This type of analysis is extremely relevant to assess internal and external factors that can impact the company's development and maintenance. The SWOT analysis allows a regular revision of strategies and the implementation of new opportunities, thus showing how each point influences the company's business model and what upgrades are needed.

Figure 3. Elysian's SWOT analysis



Source: *Personal Collection*

3.5.2.1. Strengths

Every company has core strengths and skills that provide a ledger over its competition. By assessing those characteristics through a SWOT analysis, it is possible to maximize them and their range, thus expanding its area of action and improving profits. In the case of “Elysian”, its internal advantages are mainly focused on:

- Physical and digital formats
- Social media presence
- Accessibility and affordability
- Innovative features
- Unique market

As a pioneer in the blending of football and culture, “*Elysian*” has the advantage of presenting itself in a unique market and with original characteristics. Its innovative features, accessibility and affordability are the main factors that attract a larger consumer basis, thus becoming a crucial point in its development and growth. At the same time, the project includes both physical and digital formats in order to adapt itself to everyone. This also leads “*Elysian*” to a strong social media presence, which has now become highly significant to enlarge a company’s scope and improve customer relationship.

3.5.2.2. Weaknesses

In such a competitive world, every company lacks on something or is delayed in its evolution in comparison to competitors. These weaknesses show exactly what internal disadvantages may be harming the business and its development. Through their assessment, it is possible to detect deficiencies and provide better solutions to survive in the market. “*Elysian*” holds weaknesses such as:

- Lack of investments
- Poor commitment by stakeholders
- Reliant on partnerships
- Dependent of customer relationship

“*Elysian*” encounters some obstacles in its conception and development, thus possibly affecting its growth and sustainability. Since it tackles neglected issues, it may face a lack of investments and poor commitment by stakeholders or any other possible business partners. This comes to show that the project is highly reliant on partnerships and customer relationship at all levels, which constitutes a significant weakness and a constant concern that must be followed carefully.

3.5.2.3. Opportunities

This section of the SWOT analysis displays a better insight into the business possibilities of the company, such as emerging markets or neglected areas/sectors. Thus, it presents positive opportunities that may be a crucial factor in the firm's growth and expansion. Consequently, these factors can increase its competitive advantage and benefit the project. As a future global company, "*Elysian*" includes the following opportunities:

- Global expansion
- Partnerships with clubs and federations
- Increasing demand in Europe
- Exploration of emerging markets
- Potential growth and expansion to new markets (e.g.: other sports)

As a project dedicated to football, possible partnerships with clubs and federations or other governing bodies present a great opportunity to build a strong network. With an increasing demand in Europe due to globalization and migration, "*Elysian*" has the chance of exploring emerging markets and envisioning global expansion, thus maximizing its potential growth and extension to other sports with the same issues.

3.5.2.4. Threats

When building a company, it is important to evaluate possible threats in both the present and the future to avoid meeting unnecessary obstacles. The assessment of these factors presents the impact of negative external influences on the business, which can affect the company's competitive advantage and harm the entire evolutive process. Thus, it is crucial to avoid unnecessary problems and predict others while strategizing beforehand to deduct losses or suffer less damages. To "*Elysian*", some possible threats can be:

- Customer choice
- Intermediary use
- Political, legal, or bureaucratic issues
- Competition in the consulting industry

This project is dependent on customer choice, which can have a negative impact on its growth if not seen as a top pick among professionals. Besides, it can be perceived as an intermediary use system and others may take advantage to generate some profits. In addition to that, “*Elysian*” faces threats such as political, legal, or bureaucratic issues that may delay its progress or put barriers to its development. These factors also have a major impact on the company because of all the implications triggered by the slow bureaucratic processes. Another big threat is the competition in the market, not just in sports but in the consulting world in general. Although the services provided might not be exactly the same, the industry is quite big, and it can become challenging to maintain “*Elysian*” as a necessary company.

3.6. Products VS Services

When designing a company and what it has to offer to consumers, it is important to define very clearly what are its products and services. To do so, the people working on the business' structure must understand their differences and maximize their potential through co-creation. A product is usually regarded as a tangible item, which can be acquired or consumed. On the other hand, a service is described as an intangible item provided by an individual or another third party. However, these notions are still under scrutiny and have never reached any consensus among specialists. Hence, such descriptions can be modified or perceived in a different manner.

Unlike the ancient times of business where companies believed that strategies should be directed to either products or services, modern-day firms are leaning towards a new method usually referred to as Product-Service Systems (PSS). According to Barquet et al. (2013), while citing Goedkoop et al. (1999), Kowalkowski (2010), and Vargo & Lusch (2004), this type of system presents a combination of both assets to meet the needs of every consumer. The authors continue to explain that “PSS focuses on offering services and the product becomes simply the means to provide the offer. In other words, products are seen as distribution mechanisms for service supply” (Barquet et al., 2013, p. 694). Contemporary practices find it more beneficial to combine products and services, thus maximizing their competitive advantage. At the same time, there is a new emphasis on the interaction between companies and customers, rather than a single focus on production. While it used to be crucial to provide the best features and top-line products, modern societies are obsessed with good services and complete attention. This type of interaction is now a major asset for companies and the strategies included in their business plans.

“Elysian: Get your cultural game on” centres itself on both products and services that depict its identity and purpose. The multiple platforms and overall system of the project are a strict combination designed to satisfy the customer's needs, in both a presential and remote manner. These attributes provide the company with a duality that is suitable for all parts of the sport's spectrum, thus benefiting everyone that faces such issues and requests help. Moreover, this project presents itself with a customized philosophy and strategy through the junction of both sides. Hence, *“Elysian”* would not be possible without such a system.

3.6.1. Products

In the case of “*Elysian: Get your cultural game on*”, the products are both tangible and intangible items that can either be acquired or purchased with an end goal focused on consumption, whether physical or digital. Their main purpose is to provide platforms that can act as a community and be used to share experiences or information. This project bases itself on multiple products with an equivalent importance for the company, including a website, an app, and events.

3.6.1.1. Website

The website designed for “*Elysian*” has a minimalistic and simple interface, with a modern overall look. It includes all the project’s information plus exclusive contents and an area completely dedicated to sharing knowledge. With this free platform available on all formats and devices, the company intends to provide an easier access to its services and basic intel. The section dedicated to exclusive contents will contain interviews and written testimonies of professionals’ experiences, both negative and positive. At the same time, it will show how the firm deals with such issues and what are its main strategies to tackle them. The other section related to knowledge will provide a more educational insight into those same issues, through the regular publication of articles and small papers.

3.6.1.2. App

“*Elysian*” also includes an app that is available on all devices and contains the same features as the website, although based on a freemium model which differentiates it from the other platform. It has two brand new sections that are exclusive to it, “*The Football Café*” and “*The Offside Zone*”. These areas were planned to meet the company’s purpose and are exclusive to premium users, even though free users have access to related but smaller content. “*The Football Café*” will act as a network and online archive to share any research on the sport’s main sociocultural issues, with an emphasis on academic studies. On the other hand, “*The Offside Zone*” will become a closed-off community where professionals can freely share experiences and support each other. Both sections will be divided into topics such as religion, race, gender, language, and others.

3.6.1.3. Events

In order to perform as a leader and a pioneer in the connection between football and culture, “*Elysian: Get your cultural game on*” presents different types of events, while having in mind possible future collaborations with already existing events. The goal is to expand minds and views through the sharing of experiences and knowledge. These events include congresses, conferences and other informal gatherings or conventions. With such ideas in mind, “*Elysian*” intends to host and offer a wide variety of social occasions where sociocultural issues are indeed the main focus. The project has in its plans two major annual events: a conference and a congress with names yet to be attributed. These were included in the company’s vision to enhance the knowledge exchange and link the industry with academic encounters. In addition to that, other smaller events will be a crucial part of the project’s development as an easier way for individuals to come together and share experiences or knowledge. For instance, as features of the “*Education*” branch, activities such as workshops and summer camps will be of great importance on both services and products. The variety of events presented by this project can solidify the merge between the two fields of sports and education.

3.6.2. Services

“Elysian: Get your cultural game on” offers a wide and diverse panoply of intangible services. With its easy-to-use interface and freemium model, the project establishes itself as an accessible platform to anyone who wishes to benefit from its resources. The project’s services include three main branches that can be approached in different modalities: *“Education: Learning and personal development”*, *“Counselling: Transformation and adaptation”*, and *“Strategy: Cultural Integration”*. These features were defined in line with the project’s main core, thus being crucial to its development and essential to help customers.

3.6.2.1. Education: Learning and personal development

In such a diversified and globalized society, it is crucial for individuals to expand their sets of skills and to stimulate their own development on all levels. This project includes the branch *“Education”* as a key factor in sociocultural changes, by introducing strategies focused on knowledge and intellectual growth. It is designed as a teaching tool to improve cultural awareness and help professionals evolve. With this branch, *“Elysian”* intends to create a variety of services such as regular classes, workshops, summer camps and lectures. At the same time, it holds a strong e-learning component, in order to not restrain itself or its clients.

3.6.2.2. Counselling: Transformation and adaptation

As previously mentioned in this dissertation, moving to a different cultural environment can present multiple challenges and trigger many issues such as cultural stress. The branch *“Counselling”* presents a variety of features to help professionals on their transition, both on their departure or arrival. These include life coaching, psychological follow-ups, and different types of therapy that are always dependent on the client and the situation. Such services are crucial to deal with cultural and emotional stress, while also tackling all the variables attached to it. Essentially, it offers them a specialized service focused on preparing them for another culture and maintaining a training system to prevent problems that may affect them, both professionally and personally.

3.6.2.3. Strategy: Cultural integration

To solidify the processes made in the other two branches and adapt the services provided to each individual, “*Strategy*” aims at finding the best-fitting solutions to different professionals in the most various environments. A significant part of this work will be performed in parallel with the “*Counselling*” branch, mainly due to the coaching and training needed. The uniqueness of this project is centred on its customized model, which is especially evident on this specific service that highlights the need for different approaches on each specific case. The goal is to discover the best method for every individual and respective cultural context, while also outlining the most effective system to be applied on their work life and daily activities.

3.7. Marketing strategies

Creating an entire business from scratch can be challenging and maintaining it can be even worse, thus forcing teams to focus, now more than ever, in marketing. With an increasingly competitive market, companies need to assess all possible strategies to attract people and design a plan to maximize their profit: “A marketing strategy refers to a business's overall game plan for reaching prospective consumers and turning them into customers of their products or services” (Barone, 2021, para. 1).

To start off, “*Elysian*” is placed in a unique market with a very specific niche. Hence, its positioning already presents a great strategy due to its particularity. It also focuses its marketing strategies on partnerships, such as possible links with football clubs, associations, and other governing bodies, which strengthens the bond between the company and the industry. Since making connections and building a strong network are a must in contemporary business, “*Elysian*” plans on reinforcing its presence by betting on multiple links within the football world. This also includes organizing/hosting its own events and participating in other companies’ events. This will enhance both sides’ status and contacts, while fostering the exchange of knowledge, in order to improve skills in the industry. In addition to that, the project is designed with a concept that includes a vast digital presence mainly through its products. Modern times request the use of social media to display everything related to the firm and its users, especially as a way of shortening the distance between both. This links the strategies to the company’s products, such as the website or app, where customers can access exclusive contents.

Essentially, the project “*Elysian*” has planned its marketing strategies around the people, with a combination of events and social media. The focus will be on the previously mentioned activities such as workshops, summer camps, congresses, conferences, and others of the same kind. This will tie up with online initiatives such as the creation of a YouTube channel where the project intends to share interviews, points of view, testimonies, and even display the professionals’ daily life without any constraints. The use of social media will allow a direct connection between the project, the professionals, and the general public. These two key factors are the most necessary to establish the company and build a strong community, which is the main feature of its identity. As time goes by, other strategies may come into play, depending on the needed adjustments to the international context.

3.8. Glocalization: From Portugal to other cultural contexts

The business world keeps evolving and adapting itself to every new context, independently of the challenges it faces. Over the past few years, globalization showed companies that their previous strategies in external markets were not enough to maintain customers and their new needs. As stated by Grigorescu and Zaif (2017, p. 70), companies/corporations used to focus on selling or advertising the exact same product or service without taking into consideration the different contexts. However, in the present time, the business world has become aware of the need to adapt and to mould itself in order to satisfy a wide range of people with dissimilar necessities or wishes. This shift can be connected to a specific term – glocalization – now vastly used in many global marketing strategies. Glocalization is referred to as “the art of balancing the universal characteristics of a brand with the local ecosystem in which it exists” by Mathew (2019). By deconstructing the term, it is possible to see that it is based on the junction of two other words – global and local – with an emphasis on localization. Rather than standardization, strategies based on the concept of glocalization highlight the need for some adaptation and differentiation. This is mostly due to the variation of features present on all sorts of environments, such as political, social, cultural, or other factors. Dumitrescu and Vinerean (2010, pp. 149-151) highlight the term as “thinking globally, acting locally” and simply define it as “providing a global offer [...] while taking local related issues into account”. This has now become the core of business thinking.

In the modern business world, glocalization is the ultimate key point to reach mass target audiences and for companies to effectively expand in the international market as “*Elysian*” wishes to do. The project was initially designed within the Portuguese context, bearing in mind two main segments in professional football: Portuguese working abroad or planning to do so; and foreigners working in Portugal or also planning to do so. However, in a second stage, it is important to expand the company’s scope in order to fulfil its purpose, which is, in sum, to help professionals in the football world without any restrictions. Thus, “*Elysian*” intends to broaden its range by including training football, amateur football, and other leagues in external markets. This means that the project will have to be adapted to all the different cultural contexts where it can be applied, including the ones requested by third parties. To do so, its growth must be planned whilst thinking about the various levels of multiculturalism it may find along the way. Hence, new strategies must come into place to suit each individual and the environment he/she is or

wishes to be inserted in. Multiple variables such as the cultural background, customs and traditions, or even the language, will have to be properly assessed on both ends: the professional's side and the context where he/she will work in. It is specifically crucial to understand the environment since it combines the local and the variety within the squad, which adds greater challenges. The project will maintain its core, while finding better fitting solutions to each specific case and its surroundings much like other major companies have done. Despite the aim of operating at a global level, it is important to assess how the project can indeed fulfil the needs of other individuals in completely different cultural environments, when comparing to the Portuguese cultural context.

As previously mentioned, for any company that intends to work all over the world, the concept of glocalization is the answer to achieve that goal. The project "*Elysian*" will also fall under the scope of a "*glocal company*", to accomplish its master vision as a sociocultural firm that intends to reach all four corners of the world. This second stage of the project is extremely important to justify its objectives as a tool to improve integration and inclusion, while also turning them into a reality in the football world. However, this phase will be dependent on the first stage's success and establishment. If the methods used are proved to be positive and effective, "*Elysian*" will be able to progress towards a glocal concept and explore new ventures in external markets. Moreover, this is crucial to emphasize the sport's role and its potential as an educational tool. The project's initial stage and its results will prove whether or not the merge between football and education can improve the individuals' work-life balance. Hence, it will boost the necessity for such an initiative, that benefits both the industry and modern societies. Through glocalization, "*Elysian*" will raise awareness on sociocultural issues all over the globe and provide the necessary strategies for people to face them. By using this notion, while moulding a more inclusive community, the project will be able to help a wider number of already established individuals and future professionals, so that they may achieve greater success in both football and society, in the upcoming decades.

CHAPTER IV – ELYSIAN’S BUSINESS MODEL CANVAS

*An idiot with a plan can beat a genius without a plan.*²²

– Warren Buffet

Every business begins with an idea, and it is followed by a structured plan, in order to achieve its greatest potential. In the modern entrepreneurial world, this is usually done through the use of the “*Business Model Canvas*” created by Alex Osterwalder (Mansfield, 2019). It is a visual analysis to understand where a company or project is lacking and how it needs to be improved, thus reinforcing the idea of achieving a perfect product or service by an entrepreneur. This model provides a sectional foundation so that the creator can explore the new business venture in a simplified manner. Essentially, it answers a few key questions such as the ones highlighted by Gassmann, Frankenberger & Csik (2014): “How can my company become a game changer? How can it become a role model for its industry?” (p. 1). Even though the concept and construction of business models began its development during the 70s (Gorevaya & Khayrullina, 2015), the current BMC is a fairly more recent creation, with its birth happening at the beginning of the 21st century (Strategyzer, 2021). This model is a consequence of new trends and evolutions, with a constant growth component. Despite its simplified and visual one-page version, it is important to expand it and perform a written analysis for internal evaluation. But what really is a business model?

The term business model refers to a company's plan for making a profit. It identifies the products or services the business plans to sell, its identified target market, and any anticipated expenses. [...] They help new, developing companies attract investment, recruit talent, and motivate management and staff. Business plans help investors evaluate companies that interest them. (Kopp, 2020, para. 1)

A business model must include several sections that define the company and may influence its success, as an exploratory visual representation. By displaying such crucial features, this model allows the project's owners to assess which parts still have the potential to grow and which ones jeopardize the idea or may present any type of threat in terms of failure. The original and entire structure is composed by the following nine elements:

²² Alaili, A. (2021). Retrieved from *Entrepreneur Post*: <https://www.entrepreneurpost.com/2021/01/29/an-idiot-with-a-plan-can-beat-a-genius-without-a-plan-warren-buffett/>

- Value proposition
- Customer segments (or personas)
- Customer relationship
- Distribution channels
- Key activities
- Key resources
- Key partners
- Revenue streams
- Cost structure

All these sections are crucial to deconstruct the business idea and its components, thus allowing for a more insightful analysis on its pros and cons. This is important to assess the most appropriate strategies that need to be implemented, especially according to each company and its chosen market or audience. Hence, it speeds up the process of creation and establishment, which is an advantage to entrepreneurs and anyone that benefits from the business' services. At the same time, this model must be updated throughout time to enable a clear understanding of how the business is operating, thus allowing its owners or creators to adapt it to new circumstances. In this way, it is possible for the project to grow alongside the world and modern societies, mostly by keeping up the pace and following new advancements or fulfilling new needs. It is also crucial for the company, helping it avoid unnecessary issues that may jeopardize its development or existence.

The project “*Elysian*” opted by the regular or original business model structure and components, even though other versions have arisen in the past few years. The original nine blocks are the most suitable for this business idea and goals. This is not only relevant to start the project, but also to maintain it further down the road with some adaptation included. In addition to that, this seems to be the most effective and complete model. Thus, it corresponds to the company's needs and goals, mainly focused on achieving the best products and services. This is essential in order to obtain the project's original vision, to improve people's lives, and to offer other options for the industry. The current chapter explores the “*Business Model Canvas*” outlined specifically for the project “*Elysian: Get your cultural game on*”. The following sub-sections explain each block in detail and display the corresponding assigned features.

4.1. Value proposition

In the “*Business Model Canvas*” (BMC), a company’s value proposition describes the solution proposed to solve the customer’s problem. It must add or create value that will be prioritized by a specific segmentation. Overall, the value proposition is the foundation of the BMC. It showcases the offer proposed to the market and its importance, while also displaying the main exchange between both parties and how it is delivered. This entire block focuses on transmitting what the company can do to satisfy the customers’ need and its main appealing features. The present project includes key points in its value proposition such as:

- Multiple platforms
- Easy access
- Personalized services
- High-quality performance

This project was born as a means to raise awareness on sociocultural issues, while also facilitating the transitional and integrational processes of professionals in the football world. Thus, improving the level of inclusion among the community, mostly through educational tools. This is visible through the project’s products and services. For instance, “*Elysian*” will be available on the most used formats nowadays, which are the website and the app. Hence, it allows all professionals to access it anytime and anywhere in the simplest possible way, while providing key components such as the sections related to shared experiences and promotion of knowledge. In terms of services, the specialized outlining for each case displays how the project prioritizes its clients and understands their uniqueness on all situations. All these features are not only beneficial to professionals in need of help, but also to organizations or other responsible bodies – such as agencies or independent agents – as this project provides them with an insight on the core issues that may affect these organizations as a team. “*Elysian*” presents a value proposition that prizes all those values. It can be interpreted in many ways. For instance, this project can be perceived as innovative – due to the lack of consulting firms focused on intercultural management in sports – or as newer and fresher – due to the mass presence of consulting firms in other areas. The project’s value proposition is more qualitative than quantitative since it emphasizes the customer experience and design rather than the price.

4.2. Customer segments and personas

When building a company, it is important to establish a target audience. In other words, to whom the services or products are specifically designed. It dissects the whole consumer base into smaller and more specific groups. The segmentation of possible customers provides a better analysis of what is actually needed on each specific case. Hence, it allows the company to customize its product or service to its main target audience. This helps increasing its appeal due to the differentiated option it offers, while still sharing a common denominator. “*Elysian*” targets the following segments/personas:

- Football players, managers, and staff
- Nationals working abroad or planning to
- Foreigners working in Portugal or planning to
- Football agents
- Other football agencies or organizations

This project targets a niche market, which is mostly – and hopefully only initially – restricted to professional football with an emphasis on the Portuguese context. This includes nationals working abroad or planning to and foreigners working in Portugal or planning to. In addition to that, it can be identified as a segmented business since it includes a variety of customer personas, whether due to gender, nationality, or consumer identity. This can be perceived through the inclusion of managers, staff, agents and other football agencies or organizations in need of help. “*Elysian*” also presents another feature that displays the contrast between its customers. Since the project offers both premium and free services, mostly when it comes to its digital platforms, there is an additional segmentation that is always dependent on personal consumer choice.

4.3. Customer relationship

The interaction between a company and its customers must be secured through key points. Thus, allowing an effective trade and benefiting both sides. This is usually referred to as customer relationship, which is the section that questions how that interaction works. Thus, it helps the company to understand how that connection can be established, developed, and maintained. It also describes the different types of relationship, the ones already settled in the segmentation and how the block is integrated within the whole structure. For “*Elysian*”, the section of customer relationship includes:

- Digital culture and experience
- Long term relationship
- Personal assistance
- Community-based
- Short projects with intensive training
- Co-creation systems

“*Elysian*” establishes the connection with its customers through a close experience based on the exchange and sharing of visions. It focuses on achieving a relation with a defined duality, whether through a long term and personal bond or a sense of community and co-creation. These two key features are mainly sustained by the project’s inclusive products and its customized services. For instance, the apps’ sections mentioned in the previous chapter – “*The Football Café*” and “*The Offside Zone*” – emphasize the possibility to share and collaborate towards gathering more information, while also allowing the existence of a support system within a closed network. At the same time, the assistance provided is outlined by the customer itself and designed to meet the individual’s needs according to the different situations. Such systems were chosen to provide the most satisfying experience to consumers and making them feel like they only pay for what they ask for. In addition to that, “*Elysian*” proposes short projects with intensive training to maintain interest on the company and provide a greater personal or career development through such activities. The relationship between the project and its customers is sustained by these key features, with a major emphasis on the consumer’s experience.

4.4. Distribution channels

The distribution channels are the means by which a company provides, disseminates, and sustains its offer. This includes the entities or methods used to communicate the business's proposition to its target audience and the ones that facilitate the product or service's selling. Essentially, these channels identify what links the company to its customers and vice-versa, and allows a sustainable development of this relationship. This section is crucial to raise awareness, expand the business's horizons and achieve greater plans. The distribution channels of "*Elysian*" include:

- Partnerships
- Social media
- Network
- Internal events
- External events
- Personal contacts
- Website
- App
- Technological devices

In the case of "*Elysian*", the distribution block includes owned channels – such as the website and the app – and partner channels – like partnerships and external events. Its remote/presential duality forces the company to rely on multiple distribution channels. For instance, digital media are crucial to sustain a great marketing strategy and to provide easier access. This includes the need for technological devices, in order to maintain channels such as social media, the website or the app. On the other hand, physical media are essential to develop a closer and more personal relationship with customers. This can be seen through the project's bet on events and personal contacts as distribution channels. "*Elysian*" is also keen to construct a strong network and fostering important partnerships. Hence, this strategy on multiple channels can benefit the company and other third parties that wish to be involved with this idea.

4.5. Key activities

A company has to perform certain activities to provide a service or a product. Essentially, this section focuses on assessing what tasks can make the designed model work. It also includes all the processes needed to maintain both the company and everything it offers. This assessment is crucial to achieve the value proposition already established and to understand how it is possible to do so or what methods are the most effective. “*Elysian*” has the below listed activities as its priority:

- Intercultural management consulting services
- Operations: Research and cultural assistance
- Marketing
- Sales
- Strategy
- Training
- Quality control
- Data analysis

This project relies on problem-solving activities, with a highlight on the firm’s services and general operations. These include features such as the specialized intercultural management, research, and cultural assistance. Although every activity is crucial to support the company’s growth, the ones previously listed are its main focus since they assure its normal functioning. However, there are also other key activities that are necessary to secure the best services and products, while also boosting the project’s development. Quality control, data analysis, and training are all crucial characteristics in this section, due to their importance for the offers provided by “*Elysian*”. At the same time, activities related to marketing, sales, and strategy are equally important in order to expand the project, while also helping it to reach a wider audience.

4.6. Key resources

The key activities demand key resources in order to function properly. For a business to be and stay active, it needs both material and immaterial solutions. This encompasses all the physical, human, intellectual, and technological means. Every company faces some difficulties to establish itself, which is why it is crucial to have such key resources. These will be the company's core as they allow its creation and dissemination, while also sustaining its development. The key resources of "*Elysian*" are:

- Brand
- Image
- Reputation
- Culture
- Infrastructure
- Digital devices
- IT engineers
- Software
- Customer database
- Contracts, licenses, and agreements
- Expert human resources for specialized teams

For "*Elysian*", the key resources are presented in various types such as human, intellectual, and physical. These include several features, that range from branding to the entire team. The brand, image, reputation, and business culture are the means needed to attract both employees and customers. Also, resources such as digital devices, IT engineers, software, customer database, and infrastructures maintain the company's development in terms of services and products, while also providing the specific tools to sustain the business. Specialized departments and the respective teams are crucial to ensure the best delivery of the project's offer. From interpreters to teachers and even psychologists, "*Elysian*" needs specific people with a varied range of competences to help professionals in need of their services. The services provided by this project demand employees from all fields to provide the best assistance possible. In addition to that, it is fundamental to obtain the necessary contracts, licenses, and agreements to ensure the proper and legal functioning of the company. All these resources combined will sustain the company's activity and influence its growth.

4.7. Key partners

Building a company from scratch may be a difficult task without any help. Entrepreneurs and businesspeople must assess who are or who can be their venture partners. This term is mostly used to refer to external assistance that provides resources. Essentially, the key partners' section presents a list of third parties that are needed to deliver both the products and the services to the company's target audience, in order for it to perform correctly. The following list presents this project's key partners:

- Football clubs
- Football associations
- Other football governing bodies and organizations
- App developers
- Network
- Investors
- 3rd party collaborators
- Government and related organizations

“*Elysian*” counts mainly with strategic alliances between the company and non-competitors, although possible collaboration with actual competitors must not be completely disregarded. Being associated with football clubs, associations, and other governing bodies or associations is an advantage that benefits both parts. It is also essential to have key partners such as the government or related organizations, third party collaborators, and investors, in order to widen its audience and allow possible fundings. Moreover, establishing a good network – between the academic, the business, and the football world – is fundamental for the project's growth and expansion. Other key partners include, for instance, app developers to maintain the digital products of “*Elysian*”.

4.8. Revenue streams

The revenue streams refer to the income sources of a company, besides its possible fundings. In other words, how the money will enter the business, which also helps the company to understand its profits' potential. While doing so, it deconstructs all the paths used for financial gain. Assessing the possible revenue streams allows a company to see whether or not it is viable, especially when compared to its cost structure. "*Elysian*" is sustained by these revenue streams:

- Consulting fees/Usage fees
- Publication fees
- Event fees
- Subscription fees
- Brokerage fees

The project "*Elysian*" will present two revenue models: transaction-based, to one-time customers, and recurring, to repetitive customers. In addition to that, that revenue can be generated in multiple ways such as usage fee, subscription fee, or even brokerage fee. It will depend on the type of service every individual will seek out. Other revenue streams include fees related to publications that contribute to the project's research and to the hosted events such as conferences, congresses, workshops, or summer-camps. All these variables are crucial to cover the company's costs. At the same time, these streams must be able to generate a healthy profit, thus providing "*Elysian*" with a positive economic balance.

4.9. Cost structure

Since nothing comes without any cons, every business faces some costs and those must be properly assessed. The cost structure assesses the values needed as a whole for the business to operate fully and depicts a detailed analysis of every factor that may present a loss of money. Essentially, it evaluates the required monetary funding to cover the firm's regular costs. The definition of such variables allows a company to maintain a balance and evaluate its own financial stability. This section of "*Elysian*" includes:

- Infrastructure
- Support and research
- Technological maintenance
- Bonuses or commissions
- Employees (full-time)
- Utilities
- Traveling expenses

This project is more value-driven rather than cost-driven, since it intends to provide the best services and max value to its customers instead of fixating on minimizing costs. In terms of costs, "*Elysian*" presents regular and common losses such as wages, bonuses/commissions, or payment of utilities. However, the money invested in each of these variables contributes to the project's development, since it would not function without proper tools and insightful employees. These are indeed fundamental to sustain the company. The same goes for infrastructure costs, in order to allow a face-to-face service; technological maintenance to secure some of its products and the online service; and traveling expenses, to meet the clients' needs no matter where they are. Support and research are also crucial for the project's main idea, so it is important to secure its costs in order to provide the best available service with top knowledge.

4.10. Investment plan

The first investment plan of a starter company must display all the costs related to essential features. This is usually related to sporadic or one-time buys – such as computers, desks, and other items – rather than regular costs that are indeed a constant in the firms’ costs – like rent or other monthly expenses. The following table details the initial costs²³ of “Elysian”, with the designated items and their approximated value, mostly directed to its first year of business, establishment, and development:

Table 2. Elysian’s Investment Plan

TECHNOLOGICAL COSTS	
ITEM	APPROXIMATED VALUE (in total)
App development	€10.000
Website development	€10.000
IT equipment (computers, servers, printers, etc.)	€20.000
MATERIAL COSTS	
ITEM	APPROXIMATED VALUE (in total)
Chairs	€700
Tables/Desks	€1.000
Lighting	€200
Cabinets	€600
Boards	€200
Lockers	€800
Garbage cans	€100
IMMATERIAL COSTS	
ITEM	APPROXIMATED VALUE (in total)
Marketing plan	€5.000
Licensing & related features	€5.000
TOTAL COST	€52.200

Source: *Personal Collection*

²³ The costs stated on this table were assessed through an online search on multiple stores (Ikea, Worten, Staples, BrainStory, Framework Lab, MEDIA&MEIOS, amongst others) and related services. This was done to establish the overall average price of every listed item, while considering the possible number of future employees in its initial stage. It is important to keep in mind that these values may vary depending on the market’s offer at the time of the investment and the scale of the project, which may be modified according to the fundings obtained. Information last accessed on 20/08/2021.

As it is possible to see in the above table, the costs of the project “*Elysian: Get your cultural game on*” can be deconstructed into three main segments: technological, material, and immaterial. The mentioned items are crucial to start the business since it is impossible for the company to establish some roots without them. When it comes to the technological costs, the development of both the website and the app are extremely important due to their status within the project. These are two key features of its products and the core of many of its services. In addition to that, “*Elysian*” needs IT equipment to progress. This encompasses many features such as computers, router, servers, UPS (*Uninterruptable Power Supply*), printers, projectors, and so on. As for material costs, the list provides some basic elements that are essential in every office. The project includes a physical structure to operate in and receive clients, thus it must have elements such as chairs, desks, and other related items. It must also provide the best facilities to its employees, which demands key features such as lockers, boards, and proper lighting. “*Elysian*” also accounts for immaterial costs like the marketing plan, licensing, and other bureaucratic work. Although other initial expenses are highly important, these elements are indeed crucial for the project to operate under the legal scope. Overall, the general costs for “*Elysian*” to be established account for a total of €52.200. This is an estimated amount, based on the approximated value of each component, multiplied by the number of possible initial employees, here estimated as ten.

The outline of this investment plan is essential to provide a better insight into the project for future investors, thus assessing the much-needed initial input in detail and with all expenses specified. Investing requires lots of consideration and it is a risky action, which means that possible investors must feel safe and able to see how their money will bring them more profits than losses. At the same time, it is important for them to know exactly where that money is being employed, in order to understand how it is going to help the company grow. Making this connection allows investors to visualize the company’s potential, which motivates them to maintain the relationship with the project. By determining the key components for starting the project, investors get access to major information related to how and where their money will be spent. These detailed descriptions are fundamental to convince partners, after attracting them with the general idea of the business.

4.11. Funding

Modern business culture presents funding as one of its crucial features. This refers to more casual and voluntary investments – depending on the type of funds – without the need of purchasing or simply using the company’s products and services. It is somewhat like a vote of confidence in a monetary value to help in the business’s growth and expansion. In “*Elysian*”, funding may come in many shapes and forms:

- Donations
- Sponsors
- Crowdfunding
- Business angels
- Personal investments

It is well-known in the entrepreneurship world that funding can be the ultimate key to establish a business. Primarily, business angels – people who invest in innovative projects with major potential to grow – and bootstrapping, which is listed above as personal investments – usually done by the founder, co-founders, and even family or close friends – are the most obvious options at the beginning of the project. This may include fundings through banks, microcredits, venture capital, and even competitions/awards. On a second stage, the company’s development can lead to funding mainly by sponsors and donations. It may also include suitable support or incentive programs, even from the government, focused on the development of small businesses. However, in contemporary times, a new option, known as crowdfunding, has been taking over due to its easy process and bigger exposure in terms of possible help. “*Elysian*” relies on all the forms of funding mentioned, which is an advantage and helps to accelerate its growth.

Modern societies present a vast mixture of cultures as one of their main traits, whether from a business or personal perspective. The combination of globalization and migration, alongside other advancements, such as the technological revolution, created new environments that are extremely diversified and can be seen all over the world. This transformation has provided many advantages, but also multiple challenges in different areas of life. Despite its short timeline, contemporary football is a result of that shift, which has triggered a mass evolution, especially during the last few decades. The change witnessed all over the world was also reflected on the football industry, mostly due to the new intercultural encounters that have taken over the football world, both on and off the pitch. This evolutionary process has boosted different obstacles and they must now be addressed in order to avoid unnecessary hindrances. Sociocultural issues have a significant impact on people's lives, whether professionally or personally. This does not only affect their overall performance, but also how they feel and face day-to-day situations. Football is no exception, and the aftereffects of such obstacles can be expressed in an even more negative way, since this sport contains all those barriers within an extremely enclosed environment. This can lead to worse scenarios, where professionals of the industry isolate themselves and suffer in silence without leaving any hint behind for others to understand, thus, presenting bigger threats and creating a snowball effect of negative consequences within the football industry. Ignoring sociocultural issues, which is particularly witnessed in the football world, leads to a lack of information that jeopardizes the professionals' lives from several perspectives. Hence, a project such as "*Elysian: Get your cultural game on*" is necessary to raise awareness, to improve the knowledge on the subject, and to create better solutions for the people. This is highly important to secure a positive, steady, and balanced evolution in the football industry, but also in the rest of the world.

The project "*Elysian: Get your cultural game on*" intends to become a tool to secure integration and inclusion for all professionals within the football world. It is focused on providing the much-needed guidance and help through innovative features. Such a project is crucial in modern times in order to avoid unnecessary sociocultural problems and combat the existing ones. "*Elysian*" exposes the hidden problems of forced multicultural environments, alongside its extended research. It intends to generate a higher level of interest and concern on the subject, by providing a fresher point of view on sociocultural issues. This project uncovers the challenges that professionals face and

wishes to instigate a more heated discussion about them. Moreover, “*Elysian*” acts as a pioneer to develop further research, while also finding new strategies to assist professionals in difficult situations. In order to fulfil its vision and achieve its goals, the project plans to educate people on several matters – both positive and negative – such as intercultural communication and competence, cultural transition and adaptation, assimilation and acculturation, among others. “*Elysian*” also focuses on offering new tools to deal with the subject of sociocultural issues, through the foundation of a strong network and community. “*Elysian*” will also share its expertise through a combination of products and services, strictly designed to help professionals in the football world that find themselves in difficult cultural situations. These features are the result of a blend between sociocultural concerns and personal care solutions, which were outlined thinking about the people. This is crucial to contribute towards a more effective and positive cultural environment, which will have a major impact on all the processes that professionals are subjected to. Ultimately, it will also affect their results and performance in the field. In addition to that, this project can be replicated in other countries, since there is a similar cultural bubble all over the world of football, that also shares similar situations triggered by sociocultural problems. “*Elysian: Get your cultural game on*” is a project that works towards the eradication of unfairness, inequality, and prejudice. At the same time, it displays great efforts to build and secure a safer, knowledgeable, and culturally aware community. For the further development of “*Elysian*” and other projects related to the subject of sociocultural barriers, it is important to highlight the question of mental health even more. Although the present project contains a counselling component, future ventures or proposals should include a deeper focus on how individuals are mentally affected by cultural aspects. Simultaneously, bigger investments should be made in scientific knowledge and research, in order to allow more relevant insights into the social characteristics of football within its limited spaces. This can unveil underlying problems and, consequently, solutions to solve them. The project “*Elysian: Get your cultural game on*” presents a good opportunity to discuss the missing elements in modern football, which can also be mirrored in general societies. This may lead to a greater understanding of common or shared concerns and facilitate the creation of possible solutions that benefit both parties. Moreover, “*Elysian*” can become the trigger for the construction of new projects, whether related to football or not, by opening the door to other ideas, concepts, opinions, and perspectives, that may change the way people think and act.

Forcing individuals to face so many cultural differences and sudden changes within the limited environment of football, especially without the right set of skills or any coping mechanisms, intensifies sociocultural problems instead of solving them. Cultural barriers are real and can become a serious challenge. Moreover, they can affect individuals – personally and professionally – on a deeper level than what is usually presented or discussed in mainstream media. It is crucial to tackle these obstacles through an innovative and creative mindset, which is also necessary to sustain the future societal evolution. It is possible to solve sociocultural issues and to decrease their influence on people's lives, mostly by sharing a deeper knowledge regarding the subject and by teaching people successful strategies to overcome the obstacles that they may find. Providing intercultural competence skills also allows a greater focus on how to assist individuals on their specific battles, mostly by securing proper tools and better strategies. Football can be a game changer and a revolutionary educational tool in society, if used accurately. Unawareness and failure to act are not acceptable since they only hide the real problems and restrain solutions, especially when there are new options available. Sociocultural issues cannot remain as a taboo subject and the project “*Elysian: Get your cultural game on*” will fight for that change.

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Appendix I – Interview questions (Portuguese version)

1. Qual é a sua percepção da integração e inclusão no futebol profissional português?
Os nossos órgãos de gestão, clubes e associações estão a providenciar as devidas ferramentas tanto para cidadãos nacionais como estrangeiros?
2. Já experienciou alguma dificuldade ou testemunhou outros profissionais em dificuldade para se adaptarem ou a ter outros problemas relacionados com diferenças culturais, preconceito ou discriminação? Se sim, há algum episódio que queira partilhar?
3. Acha que ainda há mudanças que têm que ser feitas? Como é que mudaria o processo ou o que é que gostava que ele tivesse de diferente?
4. Qual é a sua opinião sobre uma possível conexão entre a educação e o futebol, especialmente para consciencializar no que diz a respeito a questões socioculturais e encontrar novas soluções através do conhecimento, o que pode melhorar o ambiente desportivo, mas também a sociedade em geral?
5. Na sua opinião, que diferença faria um projeto com serviços especializados e personalizados a nível individual em termos de educação (ex.: workshops, summer camps, aulas variadas), aconselhamento (ex.: life coach, acompanhamento psicológico, terapia), e delineamento de estratégias para facilitar a integração cultural?
6. Acredita que o futebol pode ser uma plataforma importante para educar as pessoas e levá-las a compreender, aprender e respeitar essas diferenças? Se sim, que estratégias acha que teriam uma maior influência tanto nos profissionais como na sociedade portuguesa?

Appendix II – Interview questions (English version)

1. What is your perception of integration and inclusion in Portuguese professional football? Are our governing bodies, clubs, and associations providing the proper tools for both nationals and foreigners?
2. Have you experienced any struggles or witnessed other professionals struggling to fit in or having troubles with cultural differences, prejudice, or discrimination? If yes, are there any episodes you would like to share?
3. Do you feel like that are still changes to be made? How would you change the process or what would you like it to have?
4. What is your opinion on a possible connection between education and football, especially to raise awareness to sociocultural issues and finding new solutions through the power of knowledge, which can improve both the sport's environment and society in general?
5. In your opinion, what difference would it make to have a project with specialized and personalized services at an individual level in terms of education (e.g.: workshops, summer camps, varied classes), counselling (e.g.: life coach, psychological follow-ups, therapy), and outlining strategies to facilitate cultural integration?
6. Do you believe that football can be an important platform to educate people and lead them to understand, learn and respect such differences? If yes, what strategies do you think would have a higher influence on both the professionals and the Portuguese society?

Appendix III – I1's answers

1. A integração que quase todas as estrangeiras e cidadãs nacionais têm tido no futebol feminino é incrível, pois está a evoluir em Portugal. Penso que os órgãos de gestão, clubes e associações responsáveis têm conseguido providenciar condições a nível profissional para quase todas as equipas que disputam a LIGA BPI. Ainda há um longo caminho pela frente, mas penso que estamos a melhorar a cada ano que passa.
2. Eu mesma tenho um problema na liga onde jogo. Sou portuguesa e por isso posso representar a nossa seleção. Mas, ao mesmo tempo, sou inscrita na liga como estrangeira por não ter sido formada localmente. Isto dificulta muito o futebol que eu pretendo jogar a alto nível. Já tentei de tudo. Já falei com a federação, mas o que dizem é que não vão mudar isso por causa de uma única jogadora. Há muitas jogadoras de alto rendimento que podiam partilhar o seu futebol em Portugal. No entanto, essa porta acaba por se fechar porque contamos como estrangeiras no nosso próprio país.
3. Sim porque ainda há coisas que precisam de ser acertadas e equilibradas. Por exemplo, eu testemunhei um episódio à uma época atrás que achei horrível! A federação impôs um teto salarial, com o qual eu até concordaria se não se tivesse esquecido de ajudar todas as equipas da LIGA BPI. Isto porque para haver um teto deveria haver um chão. Mas a realidade não é essa e acho que Portugal perde muito, principalmente com jogadoras amadoras que fazem sacrifícios para treinar e trabalhar ao mesmo tempo. É tão difícil que muitas acabam por desistir por não terem as devidas condições.
4. Acho que isso deveria de ser imposto desde o primeiro escalão. Muitas vezes alguns jovens perdem-se pelo caminho pela falta de conhecimento e compreensão. Mais do que isso, acho que todos os jovens que praticam futebol deviam de ser acompanhados por um mental coach, alguém que possa fazer as transições de casa para a escola e da escola para o campo, permitindo assim uma melhor progressão tanto como profissionais do futuro, mas também como seres humanos na sociedade.

5. Penso que seria importante, não só a nível da integração cultural, mas também a nível da inclusão. Falando por experiência própria e perante alguns problemas difíceis que enfrentei na vida como adolescente, até como emigrante, aos 24 anos tive que procurar ajuda psicológica para manter o meu rendimento ao mais alto nível. Depois de quase 4 anos, eu vejo muita diferença na minha postura e na dedicação que tenho, mas mais importante ainda na reação que tenho ao enfrentar alguns problemas dentro e fora de campo. Isto ajudou-me a encontrar um equilíbrio e a melhorar a minha performance, o que acaba por influenciar-me enquanto profissional e enquanto pessoa no dia a dia.
6. O futebol é conhecido globalmente e penso que pode ser uma ótima ferramenta educacional. As estratégias de hoje em dia, por muito que não queiramos, são muito baseadas na internet e especialmente nas redes sociais. Há muitos jogadores a usufruírem destas plataformas para ajudar crianças que sonham ser jogadores profissionais um dia e também podem ser utilizadas para outras coisas. Acho que criar um canal no YouTube seria uma boa ideia, principalmente para alguns jogadores mostrarem o dia a dia deles com a disciplina e o rigor que têm todos dias. Ao mesmo tempo, podiam partilhar algumas das suas experiências menos boas e mostrar aos outros que não estão sozinhos. Ser jogador de futebol é muito mais do que chutar uma bola e acho que muitas pessoas não entendem isso porque não têm acesso à vida de um profissional. Nós, jogadoras, falamos muito entre nós sobre como é difícil ser jogadora de futebol e manter o nosso psicológico forte todos os dias. Muitas vezes sofremos caladas pois somos mulheres e não queremos mais dedos apontados.

Appendix IV – I2's answers

1. A percepção que tenho da integração no futebol tem sido incrível, pelo menos na realidade em que me encontro. O clube dá todas as condições e apoio para nos sentirmos bem, de igual forma para todas, cidadãs nacionais ou estrangeiras.
2. Já vivenciei comentários racistas e machistas a nível profissional, não há muito tempo (cerca de uns 5 anos), mas lembro-me que a polícia agiu na altura. Apesar de muitas vezes continuar a acontecer a discriminação e o preconceito por sermos mulheres a fazer desporto.
3. Na minha opinião, ainda há muita coisa que tem de mudar, desde profissionalizar os clubes e as atletas a mudar a mente de quem assiste ou não assiste. Acho que o futebol devia ser visto por ser futebol e não por ser feminino ou masculino. Temos um longo caminho ainda como teve o futebol masculino.
4. Considero o desporto muito importante na educação de qualquer pessoa, principalmente o coletivo. Penso que nos ajuda muito a saber lidar com os outros e a trabalhar em equipa. Também nos ajuda a aprender a lidar com os nossos erros e os dos outros, mas também a saber ultrapassar algumas dificuldades tanto pessoais como coletivas. A nível de respeito sociocultural, acredito que, por trabalharmos em equipa, aprendemos a respeitar o outro da maneira que ele é, apesar de haver sempre exceções.
5. Sou a favor de que todas as pessoas deviam, em algum momento, ter acompanhamento psicológico, principalmente durante a educação. Todos nós passamos por situações na escola, em casa ou mesmo na rua que nos podem afetar de alguma maneira. Ter acompanhamento psicológico não quer dizer que estejamos mal, mas ajuda-nos a ver as coisas de outra perspetiva.
6. Acredito que sim. Como respondi anteriormente, o futebol, por ser um desporto coletivo (não sei em relação a desportos individuais porque nunca pratiquei), ensina-nos a trabalhar em equipa e a respeitar as diferenças dos outros, pois, se no fim do dia não trabalharmos todos/as para o mesmo objetivo, acabamos por não chegar a lado nenhum.

Appendix V – Elysian’s Business Model Canvas

Key Partners	Key Activities	Value Proposition		Customer Relationship	Customer Segments
Football clubs & associations	Intercultural management consulting services	Multiple platforms		Digital culture & experience	Football players
App developers	Marketing & Sales			Long term relationship & personal assistance	Football coaches/managers
Other football governing bodies & organizations	Operations: Research & cultural assistance	Easy access		Shorter projects with intensive training	Football staff
	Strategy & Training			Co-creation systems	
	Quality control & Data analysis			Community-based	
		Key Resources			Distribution Channels
Investors	Brand, image & reputation	Personalized services		Partnerships	Nationals & Foreigners
IT engineers	Culture			Social media & network	
	Digital devices & software			Events (internal & external)	
3 rd party collaborators	Contracts, licenses, and agreements	High-quality performance		Personal contacts	Football agents & other agencies
	Infrastructure				
Government & related organizations	Customer database			Website & App	
	Specialized departments & respective teams (human resources)			Technological devices	
Cost Structure			Revenue Streams		
Infrastructure			Consulting fees/Usage fees		
Support & Research			Publication fees		
Technological maintenance			Event fees		
Bonuses or commissions			Subscription fees		
Employees (full-time)			Brokerage fees		
Utilities & Travelling expenses					