A Study of how to Increase Revenues among League of Ireland Football Clubs through Marketing Activities

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Declaration

I, Johnathan Manley, declare that this research is my original work and that it has never been presented to any institution or university for the award of Degree or Diploma. In addition, I have referenced correctly all literature and sources used in this work and this work is fully compliant with the Dublin Business School’s academic honesty policy.

Signed:

Date: 21/08/2015
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I would like to thank everyone who was involved in helping me complete this research. This thesis has given me a great opportunity to conduct research on the League of Ireland which has been very exciting as I am huge fan.

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Abstract

The aim of this thesis is to find out how League of Ireland football clubs can increase their revenues through marketing activities. The paper contains a literature review which includes concepts such as the football brand, brand equity within sport, stakeholders within football and the revenue model for European football clubs. Also a general discussion about sport marketing and the complexity of the sport product is also provided within the literature review. To answer the main research question, interviews with three board members of three individual League of Ireland clubs have been conducted. In addition to this two other interviews with persons associated with the League of Ireland have also been conducted. The research has identified important insights into the League of Ireland and a revenue model for the clubs within the league has been created. Recommendations have also been provided with a view to help maximise the clubs revenue streams.
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1.0 Introduction

The introduction chapter will begin with background of the subject and continue into the problem discussion. The research question will be more defined and the chapter will end with explaining the thesis’s purpose as well as the limitations of the thesis.

1.1 Background

The League of Ireland (LOI) is the national association football league of the Republic of Ireland. It is regarded as the highest level of football available in the country and has been since it was first founded in 1921. The LOI operates at a semi-professional level with players only obtaining 40 week contracts annually. The Premier Division is made up of twelve clubs and runs from March to October. The contesting teams play each other three times during the course of the year and the team with the most points when all games have been played are crowned the LOI champions.

With the introduction of live English Premier League games available from the comfort of your own home, the LOI has subsequently struggled with their business model. Attendances remain low and the perception of the LOI is seen well below the multi-million pound product of the Premier League. The clubs within the LOI find it difficult to compete in European competitions such as the Champions League and Europa League due to their differences in resources compared to other European clubs. In 2011, Shamrock Rovers became the only LOI club to ever compete in the group stage of the Europa League while no club has represented the league in the Champions League group stages.

1.2 Problem Discussion

As mentioned LOI clubs are run just like any other company. However, most of the clubs rely heavily on volunteers and do not possess the resources in having multiple departments or expertise in certain areas. According to Desbordes (2006) in general, there is little evidence to suggest that Irish football administrators or clubs’ management engage in strategic marketing. However as suggested by Mullin et al (2014), the demand for professional marketing has grown within sport as the needs and demographic makeup of the sports consumers has become a lot more complex and the competition for the spectator income has increased. In light of this, it is important for LOI football clubs to understand that their purpose is to generate revenue and become profitable. Along with
increasing their own profit, LOI clubs can also become a tool to increase their sponsors profit by creating awareness in specific target markets and enhance sales (Beech and Chadwick, 2007). Aaker (2010) suggests that by having high brand equity the value for both customers and the firm can increase.

The LOI is ranked 41st out of the 54 members associations on UEFA’s coefficient listing (UEFA.com). In return this leads to LOI clubs finding it difficult to keep their top players. Players within the league often opt to transfer once interest from an English or Scottish club materialises as the standard of football is higher as well as wages. The LOI clubs struggle to replace these top players with equally talented ones. From a marketing point of view a strong talented squad that can compete within the LOI and to an extent European competition can increase the interest around the club. However due to the lack of competitiveness in European competition, losses of revenue can come in the form of attendance, investments and sponsorship deals. In order to compete in Europe, LOI clubs have to increase their revenues which they can do through marketing or by selling players. However, it often occurs that top players within the LOI only go for a small amount of money due to the bargaining power of bigger clubs. For example, top LOI player Seamus Coleman joined Everton for a fee between €60,000 and €100,000 only.

The LOI is a competitive league with many teams going through phases of success while some others remaining as a mid-table or lower table clubs. Clubs who generally have no hope of competing for the title of LOI champion have the issue of not knowing how much revenue they will gain and can use for the following year. Therefore it is important for clubs within the LOI to sustain a top three position in the league table due to the fact that these three positions qualify for European competition. In terms of revenue, these European competitions are massive for the clubs within the LOI and regularly playing in these tournaments boost the interests of the club among the general public in Ireland and abroad if they can reach or a close to reaching the group stages of either competition. However, prize money for competing in even the earliest qualifying rounds can be huge for the clubs in terms of revenue.
1.3 Problem Definition

In this section the main research question will be stated along with the three sub-questions which act as a guide throughout the research.

Main Research Question

*How can LOI football clubs increase their revenues through marketing activities?*

Sub-Questions

1. *How can LOI football clubs increase the demand for their brand and make them more attractive for investments?*

2. *What marketing activities can LOI clubs use to improve their revenues?*

3. *How are LOI football clubs affected by the three different stakeholders within football clubs? (Spectators, Sponsors & Investors)*
1.4 Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to analyse and evaluate what LOI football clubs have to do in order to increase their revenues and brand. Hopefully by answering the above questions, important insights and recommendations will be presented to help LOI clubs achieve this.

1.5 Limitations

Revenue Focus

This thesis will only focus on how clubs can increase their revenues. The clubs cost structure will not be taking into account in its entirety but will be mentioned at stages due to the clubs overwhelmingly limited budgets.

Time Constraints

Time constraints limit the research study due to only having two and half months to complete the study.

Bias

As interviews are the main data collection sources within the research study, bias from those who were interviewed may affect the findings.
2.0 Literature Review

The literature review will present the theories used throughout the research. The main areas of literature include sport marketing, the revenue model for European football clubs, marketing activities to increase revenue, stakeholders within football and brand equity. A summary of the literature will be provided at the end of the section.

2.1 Sport Marketing

The demand for professional marketing has grown within sport as the needs and demographic makeup of the sports consumers has become a lot more complex and the competition for the spectator income has increased. Professional teams along with colleges, schools, sport clubs and youth programs have all looked for a better way to attract and maintain consumers. As a result, today’s marketers need a strategy and a coherent system that can match sport consumers with sports products. This is called sport marketing (Mullin et al, 2014).

Advertising Age which is an advertising magazine came up with the term “sports marketing” in 1979 to describe how service marketers used sport as a promotional vehicle to market consumer and industrial products. Even today as a casual television viewer we can see the use of sport images and personalities to sell a whole range of products. However the definition by Advertising Age is limited as it only recognises ‘marketing through sport’ which various products are interested in and fails to recognize the ‘marketing of sport’ which a professional team or club engages in. (Mullin et al, 2014).

Mullin et al, (2014) define sport marketing as;

“Sport marketing consists of all activities designed to meet the needs and wants of sport consumers through exchange processes. Sport marketing has developed two major thrusts; the marketing of sport products and services directly to consumers of sport, and the marketing of other consumer and industrial products or services through the use of sport promotions.”

According to Mullin et al (2014), the sport marketing industry has been guilty of a problem called “marketing myopia” or “a lack of foresight in marketing ventures”. This problem lives through the belief that sport marketing consists of activities designed to meet the wants and needs of sport consumers. The following are some of the general symptoms of sport marketing myopia according to Mullin et al (2014);
• Rather than identifying and satisfying the wants and needs of the consumers and their markets, there are a focus on producing and selling goods and services.
• The belief that winning absolves all other sins.
• Confusion between promotion and marketing.
• The ignorance of competition inside and outside of sport.
• Short-term thinking and focus on quick-return investments rather than long-term investments through relationship marketing.

It is important that sport marketers keep these symptoms in mind so that they don’t fall into the trap of marketing myopia. Also from keeping the symptoms of marketing myopia in mind, sport marketers can use their understanding to cope with them and in some cases turn the symptoms around and use them in their favour.

Beech & Chadwick (2007) defines sport marketing in a different but interesting way.

“It is an ongoing process through which contests with an uncertain outcome are staged creating opportunities for the simultaneous fulfilment of direct and indirect objectives amongst sport customers, sport businesses and other related individuals and organisations”

2.1.1 Sport Product

Mullin et al (2014) noted that the sport product is made up of a peculiar bundle of elements that distinguish the sport product from a normal product. Some of these elements include playful competition, a separation from normal space or time, regulation by special rules, physical prowess and physical training and special facilities and equipment. These unique elements of the sport product make marketing it a lot different, in comparison to marketing regular products. Kotler et al (2013) define regular products as “anything that can be offered to a market for attention, acquisition, use, or consumption that might satisfy a want or a need. Products include more than just tangible objects, such as cars, computers or mobile phones. Broadly defined, products include physical objects, services, events, persons, places, organisations, ideas or mixes of these entities”.

However, Mullin et al (2014) suggested that the sport product is a complex package of the tangible and the intangible. For example when you hear the term football, you think of the goal posts and the
stadium which are tangible elements of the football product. However the experience is not as simple as it can be total frustration for the occasional consumer or total infatuation for the addict. Mullin et al (2014) also explains that all sports depend on human performance by the players, the fans and the marketers. According to Constantinescu (2011), the sport product has a series of unique features that differentiate it significantly from the products corresponding to other fields of activity. These unique features are similar to those intangible features that Mullin et al (2014) proposed. Constantinescu (2011) states that these differences require the development of marketing strategies and business plans which adapt accordingly to the sports field.

The additional elements of the basic sport product proposed by Mullin et al (2014) include the intangible, ephemeral, experimental and subjective nature of the sport product. This makes the sport product open to a wide array of interpretations by consumers and becomes subjective making it extremely difficult for the sport marketer to ensure a high probability of consumer satisfaction (Mullin et al, 2014). Thus, Mullin et al (2014) believe that the benefits of consuming sport are difficult to sell as the benefits are hard to identify or be described.

The strong emotional and personal identification that sport brings is another of the elements that Mullin et al (2014) added to the basic sport product. This includes fans identifying themselves with their favourite teams and players and using the terms such as “we”, “us” and “our” to associate themselves with their teams triumph or victory but using opposite terms such as “them” or “they” when portraying their teams failure (Mullin et al, 2014).

Simultaneous production and consumption is also an additional element to the sport product as sporting events are presold and consumers are often seen as co-producers as they help to create the game or event that they simultaneously consume (Mullin et al, 2014).

Core-product control beyond the marketers’ hands is another additional element to the sport product as marketers have little control over the core product, in other words the game itself. For example game rules and schedules are decided by the association and leagues of the sport while the owners, chairman and board of the individual clubs are responsible for transfers (Mullin et al, 2014).

Other additional elements proposed by Mullin et al (2014) include the dependence on social facilitation and the inconsistency and unpredictability of the sport.
Similarly to Mullin et al (2014), Beech and Chadwick (2007) also believe that in order to market a sport product a marketer has to consider these unique characteristics of sport marketing. The biggest influencing factors that are unique to the sport product according to Beech and Chadwick (2007) include that sport is product led meaning that the success of a marketing effort is influenced by the sport club or organisation performance in competition on the pitch. Beech and Chadwick (2007) also believe that sport is all about the uncertainty of the outcome and its ability to trigger emotions such as excitement, stress and tension. The idea that sport customers help to produce the product is also analysed by Beech and Chadwick (2007) as the presence of other customers is vital for the total consumption experience of the game. Also the consumption experience can be enhanced by customers attending the event together with friends and family. Another influence mentioned by Beech & Chadwick (2007) is the fact that sports fans are unlikely to purchase products from a rival sport club or organisation as products closely associated with one club or team will be undesirable by rival fans meaning that clubs market places are often geographically bound.

2.2 Understanding the football market

The European football market surpassed €20 billion in 2013/2014 which was driven mostly by the growth of the top five European leagues (Premier League, La Liga, Serie A, Bundesliga and Ligue 1). The English Premier League accounts for almost 20% of the European football market (Deloitte Annual Review of Football Finance, 2015). These figures are based on various areas within the industry such as broadcasting rights, match day revenue and commercial revenue. However, new broadcasting deals were the main driver for the overall growth of the market (Deloitte Annual Review of Football Finance, 2015).

The Premier league saw a 29% revenue increase in 2013/2014 which saw the league further extend its lead as the highest revenue generating league in the world with total revenue of €3.9 billion. Broadcast revenue rose by 48% (£569m) which contributed to over three quarters of the leagues growth (Deloitte Annual Review of Football Finance, 2015).

2.2.1 Revenue model for football clubs

Deloitte’s ‘Football Money League’ report (2015) provides an in-depth business synopsis of the top 20 clubs in the world. The report showcases all streams of revenue earned by these football clubs into 3 main categories including the match day revenue (gate receipts), broadcasting revenue
(domestic and international), and commercial revenue (sponsorship and merchandise). These three main categories are the bases that make up the revenue model for football clubs throughout Europe. However, in general, the broadcasting revenue is seen to be the most important and dominant revenue source for football clubs.

2.3 Marketing Activities to Increase Revenue

2.3.1 Football Stadium

According to Shank (2005), the stadium in which a game is played can affect consumers and their likelihood to attend a game. Stadium factors that can influence consumers are the newness of the stadium, aesthetics of the stadium, the seat comfort and cleanliness of the stadium. Shank (2005) also highlights a study undertaken on 1000 sport fans and what they value when attending a sporting event. Shank (2005) interestingly notes that the four most important factors were not related to the game itself.

- Parking that cost less than $8 and a ticket costing under $25 each.
- Adequate parking or convenient public transportation.
- A safe, comfortable seat that you can buy just a week before the game.
- Reasonably priced snack foods.

In fact, if these factors were not met, spectators would rather stay at home (Shank, 2005). It is also considered that a good stadium atmosphere is another major factor for fans to attend a sporting event which entails having strict control over rowdy fans (Shank, 2005).

2.3.2 Merchandising

Merchandising in sport occurs when an owner of a brand sell the rights to use the brands logo and/or name through sponsorship or licensing agreements. Merchandising licensing agreements allow the licensee to manufacture goods with the sport teams brand name, trademark and logo (Rosner & Shropshire, 2004). The licensor which is the football team receive royalties every time one of the licensed products is sold. The licensees who use merchandising agreements do so to enhance their perceived quality and value of their own products (Rosner & Shropshire, 2004).
2.4 The Football Stakeholders

Football clubs have three very important stakeholders which are vital for their long term revenue. These stakeholders include supporters of the club, sponsors and investors/owners.

2.4.1 Supporters

“If the sporting event is at the heart of the sport industry than the spectator is the blood that keeps it running” (Shank, 2005)

In order to increase attendances it is important that LOI clubs know the sports consumers. Not all consumers are equally passionate and fanatical, nor use their team to confirm their personal identity (Redden and Steiner, 2000). They experience sport in different ways, and use team affiliations to meet a diverse range of needs (Wann et al. 2001). Effective segmentation can reveal distinctive preferences and needs that can identify sources of loyalty and commitment and highlight differences in spending patterns of sport consumers (Pitts and Stotlar, 1996).

Sport consumers can be differentiated and ranked on the basis of their beliefs and behaviours (Stewart, Smith and Nicholson, 2003). Kahle, Kambra and Rose (1996) constructed a three level-tiered fan typology. The first tier was labelled “internalized” and “highly involved”. These individuals sought close attachment and identification and constructed strong tribal relationships with their team. At the lower level of intensity, “self-expressive”, people sought excitement and the “big experience” but were less inclined to incorporate the team in their sense of self. Finally there are camaraderie sport consumers who had only a slight commitment to the team, but enjoyed the social interaction with other team supporters.

Beech and Chadwick (2007) also agreed that different spectators are motivated by the different aspects of the sport, depending on which level or tier the individual was at in terms of a spectator. Beech and Chadwick (2007) also divided their fan typology into three different stages which included aficionados or diehard fans, fair-weather fans and theatre goers or spectacle whores. Shank (2005) also follows suit by describing the three different groups with the terms low identification, medium identification and high identification. According to Beech and Chadwick (2007) the diehard fans are committed, passionate and loyal to one specific team within football. Shank (2005) explains that the high involvement fan is based on a long term commitment and attends games home and away while also recruiting new supporters to the team. The high involvement fan is always going to return to
sporting events, invest more financially in being a fan and thinks of the club as an important part of the community (Shank, 2005). The fair weather fan that Beech & Chadwick (2007) introduced are ‘hot and cold’ fans who attend games regularly when their team is performing well and achieving good results or success. However, when their team is struggling and are not competing for trophies, the fair-weather fans tend to lose interests and distance themselves from the failure. The medium identification fan is similar to that of the fair-weather fan as they identify themselves with a team or a player for a short period of time. However when the team or player drops in status the medium identification-fan will more than likely shift their allegiance to other players or teams (Shank, 2005). However, a fan experiencing medium levels of identification may move to higher levels (Shank, 2005). The theatre goers often watches or attends sport due to the sense of occasion it brings and the benefits they can gain for themselves such as the music and comradeship (Beech & Chadwick, 2007). According to Shank (2005), the low identification fan attends sport primarily for social interactions or likewise to the theatre goer for the entertainment benefit of the event. Shank (2005) explains that these “social fans” are attracted by the atmosphere of the game, promotions or events occurring during competition. However, again, Shank (2005) believes that if the low identification fans are reinforced by the entertainment benefits than they may become more interested in the game and more involved.

2.4.1.1 Influencing Factors

It is very important for marketers to understand why spectators are attending events so they can understand how to increase the rate of attendance. Shank (2005) describes these reasons for attending a sporting event as fan motivation factors which are divided into eight different aspects or motives which are listed and explained below.

- **Self-Esteem Enhancement** – fans are rewarded with feelings of accomplishment or give themselves a boost when their favourite players or team is winning. (Shank, 2005)
- **Diversions from Everyday Life** – The game provides a diversion or escape from everyday life and personal problems and stress that associate with it. (Shank, 2005)
- **Entertainment Value** – This motivational factor is quite similar to the one previous as the entertainment, drama and the uncertainty of the outcome of the game provides a diversion from everyday life. (Shank, 2005)
- **Eustress** – Sports provide fans with positive levels of arousal and excitement. (Shank, 2005).
• Economic Value – Some sport fans are interested in the gambling aspect of the game and the potential economic gains of having a wager on a sporting event. (Shank, 2005)
• Aesthetic Value – Sport is seen as an art form and fans are motivated to attend events due to the beauty in the athletic performances. (Shank, 2005)
• Need for Affiliation – Fans are motivated to attend games in order to feel a part of something as it plays on their sense of belonging. (Shank, 2005)
• Family Ties – Sport is often seen as a way to bring the family closer together, spend time with each other and open the line of communication through sports. (Shank, 2005)

Shank (2005) proposes that ‘game attractiveness’ is another factor related to game attendance. Game attractiveness varies from game to game and week to week due to the perceived quality of a single game which is based on the opposition standard or the skill level of the individuals competing in the contest as well as team records and league standings. Also if the game is a special event such as a rivalry between two teams or an opening day fixture, the attendance is likely to increase. (Shank, 2005)

Shank (2005) divides economic factors into two different aspects also that relate to game attendance; the controllable factors and the uncontrollable factors. The controllable factors consist of the sports marketing environment that can be changed by sports marketers such as the price of tickets and the perceived value of the sports product. The uncontrollable factors include aspects such as the average income of the population and the economic health of the country. (Shank, 2005)

As well as the other factors the competitive factors are also divided into two different aspects by Shank (2005). Direct factors and indirect factors, where direct involves other sports and indirect involves other forms of entertainment. Shank (2005) explains that one major direct competitive factor is the televised game. However the need for watching televised sports differs by gender as men are motivated to watch sports on television because they enjoy the pre-match build ups along with the expert analysis and interviews with managers and players. However women watch televised sports for the social value and for the reason that family and friends were already doing so (Shank, 2005). However one study shows that as a result of games being shown on the television, home games would have a negative impact on attendances. However Shank (2005) argues that the more one watches away games through television, the more one will attend home games.
2.4.3 Sponsors

Sponsors are another important stakeholder for football clubs. In most cases sponsors are a business who exchange money or their product for the right to associate their names or products with the football clubs name and brand for their own advertising. Sponsors can also come in the form of private individuals also. Sponsors have become a great source of income for football clubs (Beech & Chadwick, 2007).

2.4.3.1 Companies

It is becoming ever present in today’s world that companies are relying on sport sponsorships to market their product and services. Companies pursue these sponsorship opportunities to enhance their image and create awareness in specific target markets or to enhance sales and their market share (Beech and Chadwick, 2007). Shank (2005) stated similar reasons for why companies pursue sponsorship within sport by explaining that sport is becoming the most effective and efficient way to communicate with the market as companies are keen to inform and remind their target and potential markets of their product or service in order to trigger or persuade customers into buying their offerings. For example Heineken, the world’s third biggest brewer, have been sponsoring the UEFA Champions League since 2005 and have extended their sponsorship deal for a further three years in 2013 with an estimated cost of £43.6 million per year with the new deal potentially worth more (Armstrong, 2013). During its eight year partnership; Heineken has seen customer awareness grow to 60% among UEFA Champions League fans (Armstrong, 2013).

However where as Heineken have announced that they prefer to sponsor sporting events, Emirates Airlines rather take the alternative route and sponsor football clubs. For example, one football club that Emirates Airlines sponsor is Arsenal F.C. who participates in the English Premier League. In 2012, Emirates Airline extended their sponsorship deal with Arsenal for a further five years and will continue to appear on the front of Arsenal’s jerseys and merchandise until the 2018-19 season. Emirates Airline partnership with Arsenal began in 2004 and the deal is worth £30 million a year to Arsenal. Along with this Emirates Airline has also obtained the naming rights to Arsenal’s home stadium until 2021 (Boren, 2015).

Within (Desbordes, 2007) book ‘Marketing and Football’, a research was carried out on the efficiency and sponsorship in Portuguese Premier League football. The aim of the research was to find the reasons for sponsoring a Portuguese football club and the results emerged that there were
five main reasons on what companies consider before sponsoring a football club. The first conclusion was that sponsorship receipts depend on the dynamics of the market and the current trend. The second conclusion was that sponsorship receipts depend on the management of the club and their display of efficiency to appear independent from their dimension and attract more sponsorship than non-efficient clubs. The third conclusion involved the strategic location of the football club and the ‘economies of agglomeration’ with the clubs strong in this area seeing higher interest from sponsors. Fourthly, the participation in European Cups such as the UEFA Champions League and the Europa League is seen as an attraction for sponsors as their brand is exposed to a greater audience when the club competes in European competition. Lastly, the clubs market share is also beneficial to increase interest from sponsors (Desbordes, 2007).

According to Beech & Chadwick (2007) when sponsors pay for a certain “product or service” they become customers to the club and this can be seen as a business-to-business relationship. By sponsoring a team or a sporting event, sponsors will have access to the other sponsors of the club which creates a network. According to Horowitz (2014) sponsors are more than happy to do business together as the sponsorship is something they have in common. Therefore, companies that are in sponsorship for their own benefit and their own purpose only, will find it challenging to find success and make use of their network (Ford and Berthon, 2002).

2.4.4 Investors (Owners)

An investor can be an individual who provides money to the football club in the hope of a financial return or according to Andreff & Staudohar (2000) to increase the football clubs profitability and brand value. Often in football we see investors buying football clubs with the most famous case of Russian businessman Roman Abramovich who bought Chelsea F.C for £126 million (News.bbc.co.uk) and up to 2015 has provided Chelsea with an interest free loan of over £1 billion (The Irish Times). Before the introduction of the Financial Fair Play rules, financial profitability did not have the same effect on football clubs who usually have big problems with the financial aspects of their business unlike in other businesses where financial profitability is a key to their success. For example, before, if the leagues in Italy, Spain and England were running as ordinary companies they would face bankruptcy within two years (Preuss, Haugen and Schubert, 2015).
As investors/owners like Roman Abramovich became ever more present and dominant in the world of football, clubs suffered rising net losses annual. Although these clubs could operate way down in the red each year and achieve success due to their wealthy investors or owners, many others could not due to the extortion of the player transfer market to buy talented players as well as the increasing sponsorship deals for clubs at the top of the European game. Consequently, this trend has affected the competitive balance of the clubs within the European leagues and between the individual European leagues themselves (Preuss, Haugen and Schubert, 2015). This has led to some clubs overinvesting in talent and in return facing financial problems because of their goal to achieve success at the top level (Preuss, Haugen and Schubert, 2015).

However, given these undesirable developments, UEFA introduced the Financial Fair Play rules in September 2009 which were developed to introduce more discipline and rationality in finances within football clubs (Preuss, Haugen and Schubert, 2015). The Financial Fair Play rules have put a limit on spending as football clubs are only allowed to spend up to €5 million more than they earn per assessment period. However in an effort to promote investment in stadiums, training facilities, youth development and women’s football, all costs associated with these investments are excluded from the break-even calculation (UEFA.com).

However, Hickey (2015) argues that this will mean that the dominant will remain dominant and the weak remain weak as he explains that Real Madrid will now always be permitted to spend more than Celtic, due to their vastly different revenue levels. Hickey (2015) also explains that this is disheartening for any lower league football fans as leagues in smaller European countries could really suffer as many LOI clubs require large debts already for basic day to day operations.

2.5 Football Brands

2.5.1 Brand Equity

It is understood that in an effort to enhance the organisation’s image and increase its revenues, sport managers should incorporate the concept of brand equity and the strength of a team name in the marketplace, into strategic marketing efforts (Gladden et al, 1998). Kotler et al (2013), explain that brands are more than a name or symbol and represent the consumers’ perceptions and feelings about the product and its performance. A powerful brand has high brand equity (Kotler et al, 2013). Mohsin (2009) explains brand equity as the sum total of all the different values people attach to the
brand, or the holistic value of the brand to its owner as a corporate asset. Kotler et al. (2013) define brand equity as “the differential effect that knowing the brand name has on customer response to a product and its marketing”. However, there are a number of views on how brand equity is defined, but they are all generally consistent with the basic notion that brand equity represents the “added value” endowed to a product or a service (Pekka, 1999). This “added value” is what is important to marketers, as in general, almost every marketing investment and action for a brand seems to be interpreted as a successful or unsuccessful effort to build, manage, and exploit brand equity (Ross, 2006).

Brand equity is broken up into two perspectives including financial-based and consumer-based. From a firm’s financial perspective, brand equity has been defined as the incremental cash flow resulting from a product with a brand name versus the cash flow that would result without the brand name (Shocker & Weitz, 1988). However, Aaker (1991) and Keller (1993) proposed two different views in terms of the consumer perspective. Keller (1993) introduced the customer-based brand equity which was defined as the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of the brand. However, Aaker (1991) proposed that brand equity consisted of four factors including brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality and brand loyalty.

2.5.1.1 Perceived Quality

According to Beech & Chadwick (2007) perceived quality is the hardest component for sport marketers to control as supporters often associate their experience with the quality of football on display from their team on the pitch. Although sport marketers have no control over the standard of football played and success on the pitch, they can still influence the perception of quality by using brand elements such as star players and managers (Beech & Chadwick, 2007). For example sport marketers can involve players in promotional campaigns (advertising, profiles and talk shows) or working within the community (visiting hospitals’, fundraisers). Mullin et al. (2014) also explain that sport marketers can use peripheral elements of the game to their advantage such as the stadium, merchandise and in game activities for spectators to enjoy (face-painting, half-time quiz). Finally Beech & Chadwick (2007) argue that sport marketers can create a great experience for the supporters even if the result of the game is not in their own teams favour as the factors above could provide a positive perception of quality.
2.5.1.2 Brand Awareness

Brand awareness is considered the easiest component for sport marketers to control once there is a budget available to undertake some activities. For example, sport marketers could develop a promotional plan which would involve promotional selling, sales promotion and advertising, in an attempt to increase the awareness of the football club (Beech and Chadwick, 2007). Sport organisations and football clubs are unique in the fact that they often receive free publicity (Mullin et al, 2000). However, it is important to keep in mind that this publicity can be positive or negative so it is important for football clubs to maintain good media relationships (Beech & Chadwick, 2007).

2.5.1.3 Brand Associations

According to Beech & Chadwick (2007), brand associations are the emotions, feelings and ideas towards the sport organisation or football club and what it means to the fan. Football clubs can use emotions and thoughts linked to their tradition of their club to differentiate or present a different selling point from other clubs and create a unique brand association (Beech & Chadwick, 2007). For example, Celtic Football Club has associations to their green and white hooped kits, their stadium Park Head, the colour and atmosphere created by their fans at home games, and their emotional ‘You’ll Never Walk Alone’ rendition sang by the fans at the start of every match. According to Beech & Chadwick (2007), it is often easy for football clubs to create unique brand associations due to the emotional nature of sport.

2.5.1.4 Brand Loyalty

Brand loyalty involves the football clubs’ ability to draw and maintain fans. Beech and Chadwick (2007) explain that there are two types of loyalty, including behavioural loyalty which involves the things consumers do (attend matches, buy merchandise) and attitudinal loyalty which are the consumers’ perceptions and attitude toward the brand (commitment, attachment to their team). Beech & Chadwick (2007), argue that the sport organisation is highly influenced by how much the fans invest in the team through attending games and buying merchandise and one mistake sport marketers tend to fall victim to is that they take the fans’ loyalty for granted. Therefore, it is important for football clubs to have an active communication strategy with their loyal fans to encourage them to continue to support and feel a part of their team (Beech & Chadwick, 2007).
2.5.2 Assessing Brand Equity in Sport

However, over the years, there have been a number of proposed frameworks involving brand equity in sports. One of these frameworks was proposed by Gladden et al (1998) and was based around Aaker’s (1991) framework on brand equity. Gladden et al (1998) proposed a conceptual framework for assessing brand equity in regards Division 1 College Athletics through Aaker’s (1991) four components: brand awareness, brand associations, perceived quality and brand loyalty. From their research, Gladden et al (1998) added three antecedents of brand equity including 1) team related (success, head coach, star players), 2) organisational related (reputation, tradition, entertainment package, product delivery) and 3) market related (local media arrangements, geographic location, competitive forces and supports). Gladden et al (1999) revisited this framework and proposed two new antecedents to expand their brand equity model to the professional sports industry. These two added antecedents consisted of 4) the teams logo design and 5) their stadium. As well as developing five antecedents of brand equity, Gladden et al (1999) also created 6 consequences of brand equity including national media exposure, merchandise sales, individual donations, corporate support, atmosphere and ticket sales.
Bauer, Sauer and Schmitt (2005) were also involved in developing another framework based on brand equity in sports. However, unlike Gladden et al (1998) they based their Brand Equity in Team Sport (BETS) framework around the previous work of Keller (1993). The BETS framework consisted of four factors and 16 indicators. Bauer, Sauer and Schmitt (2005) used 16 indicators across the four factors brand awareness, product related attributes, non-product related attributes and brand benefits. For example they explained that product-related attributes are associated with aspects that are directly related to the athletic dimension of competition while the non-product related attributes are concerned with further non-athletic characteristics of the brand (Bauer, Sauer and Schmitt, 2005). Therefore, perceived current athletic success, star players, head coach and management were all product related attributes or indicators where as non-product related attributes or indicators included logo design, stadium, stadium atmosphere and tradition. This study
carried out by Bauer, Sauer and Schmitt (2005) highlighted the importance of brand awareness and demonstrated that brand equity had a significant effect on economic success of the organisation.

However, despite the general understanding that spectator sport is a service-oriented product, sport brand equity research has overwhelmingly relied on models pertaining to physical goods (Ross, 2006). According to Ross (2006), sport branding researchers have been slow to acknowledge the impact of service oriented marketing and the unique characteristics of team sport in understanding and developing sport brand equity.

According to Ross (2006), because of the unique characteristics of sport services a framework is needed for understanding spectator-based brand equity which should be based on a service-oriented mind-set in which the customer experience is paramount. This spectator-based brand equity framework suggested by Ross (2006), recognizes the unique characteristics of spectator sport through organisation induced, market-induced, and experience-induced antecedents that contribute to the creation of spectator-based brand equity (Ross, 2006). The main component of the spectator-based brand equity framework consists of brand awareness and brand associations and the consequences include team loyalty, media exposure, merchandise sales, ticket sales and revenue solicitation.
2.6 Summary

This research is focused on increasing revenues for LOI football clubs but to understand the theoretical framework, I will use a model that was created in a similar study that was based on the revenues of Swedish football clubs within Allsvenskan. However, I will be introducing some slight changes to the original model created by Karlsson and Skannestig (2011).

Overall Karlsson and Skannestig (2011) explain that high brand equity can influence the stakeholders within football clubs. Brand equity is made up of perceived quality, brand awareness, brand association and brand loyalty as suggested within the theory. This brand equity can attract the stakeholders within the football clubs which include supporters, investors and sponsors. A relationship can be created between the brand and the stakeholders which can result in value being created for both parties (Karlsson and Skannestig, 2011). This value for the football clubs comes in various revenues streams including match day revenues, broadcasting revenues and commercial revenues, which are explained within the theory as the main revenue streams for European football clubs.

Also according to Karlsson and Skannestig (2011), these increased revenues can then strengthen the brand equity once again as larger sponsors may want to become part of the network and more supporters may want to purchase merchandise meaning that the brand becomes more visible.
3.0 Methodology

This chapter will explain the methods used to undertake this research. It will include the scientific approach followed by the chosen research strategy. Also the data collection methods will be explained as well as the quality of the research.

3.1 Scientific Approach

According to Saunders et al (2012), it is important to recognise the nature of your research design which can take three different purposes including the exploratory, descriptive and/or explanatory purpose or a combination of these. Saunders et al (2012), states that “the object of descriptive research is to gain an accurate profile of events, persons or situations”. Explanatory researches are studies that establish casual relationships between variables. However this research will take an exploratory approach as according to Saunders et al (2012) this approach is a “valuable means to ask open questions to discover what is happening and gain insights about a topic of interest”, in this case the LOI. Saunders et al (2012) explain that the exploratory approach is useful if you want to clarify your understanding of a certain problem and are unsure of the precise nature on where the problem stems from. This thesis hopes to gain insights into the chosen phenomenon and help create recommendations on how to improve certain issues raised throughout the research.

According to Saunders et al (2012) the research method can be quantitative, qualitative or use multiple methods which are a mixture of both. Quantitative is often used when data collection techniques such as questionnaires are carried out or when data analysis tools such as graphs or statistics are present as these are all focused on numerical findings. On the other hand, the qualitative method is based on observations and is often associated with interviews when collecting data (Saunders et al, 2012). For example according to Dolan et al (2009), unlike the quantitative method, the qualitative method does not try to transform verbal words into numerical data as the data remains at words. The qualitative method tries to get to the heart of the phenomenon and tries to understand what led to the decisions and choices that were made and how these decisions and choices formed the phenomenon (Dolan et al, 2009). The success of the research is mainly dependant on the researchers’ ability to approach the participants and build a relationship demonstrating sensitivity in order to gain access to the data (Saunders et al, 2012). The research method used in this thesis is of a qualitative nature as in-depth interviews have been performed to give a deeper insight and understanding of the phenomenon. As well as this the data collected in the
interviews cannot be transformed into numerical data or statistically analysed which further enhances the argument that this research is of a qualitative nature. Overall, it is the researcher’s ability to observe and analyse the collected data through the in-depth interviews that has created the final outcome and recommendations of the research.

This research undertakes an abductive approach as instead of moving from theory to data as occurs in deduction or data to theory as occurs in induction, an abductive approach moves to and from each and combines deduction and induction (Saunders et al, 2012). Furthermore, Saunders et al (2012), explains an abductive approach entails collecting data to explore a phenomenon by identifying themes that can generate a theory or modify an existing theory which you test through data collection. Therefore, an abductive approach has been suited to this thesis as the empirical data collected when exploring the phenomenon has been used to generate new theory.

3.2 Research Strategy

According to Saunders et al, (2012) there are eight research strategies which include experiments (1) and surveys (2) which are predominantly linked to quantitative research design. Archival research (3) and case studies (4) may involve either qualitative and quantitative research design or a mixed design of combining both while (5) ethnography, (6) action research, (7) grounded theory and (8) narrative inquiry are all associated with qualitative research design (Saunders et al, 2012).

The strategy of this research will be in the form of a case study. The case study strategy is best suited to generating answers to questions beginning with ‘why?’ ‘what?’ and ‘how?’ and this strategy is mostly popular and often used within exploratory research (Saunders et al, 2012). The line of questioning used in case studies (‘how?’ and ‘what?’) are in line with the questions stated in this thesis and for this reason the case study strategy is used in this thesis.

Case studies may use quantitative or qualitative methods but many case studies designs use a mix of these methods to collect and analyse data. For example, interviews, observations, documentary analysis and questionnaires (Saunders et al, 2012). Yin, (2003) states that the ability to manage a wide range and variety of evidence such as interviews, observations, documents and artefacts is one of the case study’s strengths. Yin (2003) also explains that it is preferable to use case studies when there is a willingness to learn and understand a social complex phenomenon. In accordance with this thesis, secondary documents such as books, websites, newspaper articles and thesis have been
used to gain information on the complexity of sport marketing in general and within football in Ireland. In addition to this, interviews with clubs officials and people involved within football in Ireland and in particular the LOI has been conducted in order to seek more information and knowledge. This thesis aim is to examine and understand the complexity of increasing LOI football clubs revenues through marketing activities and in order to do this I found that the case study was the most suitable research strategy.

In addition to this one of the case studies strengths is the use of multiple sources of evidence, which is called triangulation. According to Saunders et al (2012), triangulation refers to the use of different data collection methods within one study in order ensure that the data is telling you what you think it is telling you. For example, in this case study, semi-structured interviews and documentations are used to triangulate and support the data collected. This will be explained further below.

3.3 Data Collection

According to Yin (2009), there are six sources of evidence that are most commonly used in doing case studies. These include archival records, documentations, direct observations, participant observation, physical artefacts and interviews. This thesis main source of information comes from conducting interviews with LOI clubs and personnel. However this information will be supported by various sources of documentation also.
According to Yin (2009) an interview is the most important source of information when conducting a case study as it provides direct insight into important affairs and events of your research topic. The most common form of interview is a face-to-face encounter where the researcher seeks information from a person involved in the area the researcher is interested in. During this thesis, it was important that I conducted interviews as it allowed me to ask questions directly aimed at my research agenda. All of the interviews that took place during this research were face-to-face encounters except one which took place through email. However the face-to-face interviews allowed me to have fluid conversations and ask additional questions which allowed me to gain further information on the area of my research.
Saunders et al (2012) breaks down the different types of interviews into three categories including structured interviews, semi-structured interviews and unstructured interviews. Semi-structured interviews are a combination of structured and unstructured interviews. In these semi-structured interviews the researcher focuses on themes and some key questions that may vary from interview to interview (Saunders et al, 2012). The order of questions may also be varied due to the flow of the conversation and also additional questions may be asked to explore your research questions and objectives in more depth (Saunders et al, 2012).

For this research semi-structured interviews were conducted with officials of some LOI clubs as well as other knowledgeable people within the field. The themes used in the interviews were based around the current marketing activities of the league, the three stakeholders important to football clubs and branding. This approach gave the interviews some structure and enabled me to seek the specific information required to be able to write this thesis. During the interviews depending on the respondents’ answers, I was able to ask additional questions relating to certain topics as the interview approached a more open discussion which allowed me to gain further information. Overall, the face-to-face encounters along with the semi-structured approach to interviews gave me a good overview of opinions, of the different clubs and personnel involved within the LOI.

Face-to-face interviews with two board members of Shamrock Rovers FC and Bohemian FC were conducted in order to get an understanding of the club structure, their current financial budget, their current marketing activities, their brand and also the impact of the three stakeholders on the clubs revenue. In addition to this an interview performed through email was conducted with a board member of St.Patrick’s Athletic also. Two other face-to-face interviews were conducted with ex CEO of St.Patrick’s and LOI pundit Richard Sadlier and current Limerick FC manager Martin Russell. Both are ex professional footballers with experience in England and have also been involved in various positions within the LOI for many years. (See Appendix)

3.3.2 Documentation

According to Yin (2009) documentation is likely to be relevant to every case study topic and can consist of many different types of information sources including letters, memoranda, personal documents, announcements, written reports of events, progress reports, news clippings and other articles appearing in the mass media or community newspapers. These documents are mostly available through the internet; however they may often lack in accuracy and bias. Yin (2009) explains
that these documents must be used carefully and should not be accepted as fact. The most important use of documents according to Yin (2009) is to strengthen the reliability of the interview and verify certain aspects mentioned in the interview. In this thesis, I have used different sources of documentation such as research articles, books and media articles to strengthen and verify the data collected in the interviews. I have also used these sources of documentation throughout the theoretical framework. In doing so, I have added to the information gathered in order to expand my knowledge on the research problem.

3.3.3 Primary Sources

According to Berg (2007), primary sources can be written or oral testimony which is considered as first hand evidence left by participants or observers directly connected to a certain event or experience. Documents, recordings, diaries and journals are examples of primary sources. The primary sources used in this thesis comes in the form of the interviews that I conducted with the clubs and individuals involved within the LOI. Email interviews were also used as a primary source.

3.3.4 Secondary Sources

According to Berg (2007), secondary sources can be written or oral testimony which is considered as second hand evidence left by people that were not present at the time of the certain event or experience. Documentary secondary data is often used in collaboration with primary data in most research projects (Saunders et al, 2012). Secondary sources are often referred to as text materials or written documents which can include books, journals, magazine articles and newspapers (Saunders et al, 2012). The secondary sources used in this thesis include books, journal articles, newspapers and other internet sources. However, the secondary sources were limited as unfortunately there is not much research available on football marketing specifically. However sport marketing theories as a whole were examined and I feel that these theories can relate to the football market as well.

3.4 Sampling

According to Saunders et al (2012), there are two categories of sampling including probability sampling and non-probability sampling. Probability sampling is mostly common with survey research strategies where as non-probability sampling is associated with case studies. As this thesis is undertaking a case study approach non-probability sampling is being used. However within the non-
probability sampling category lays many different approaches including purposive and convenience sampling.

This thesis uses the purposive and convenience sampling approach. According to Saunders et al (2012), purposive sampling involves the researcher using their judgement to choose participants with different characteristics in order to provide maximum variation possible in the data collected. In this thesis, three LOI clubs were selected based on their club structures with two clubs being members owned and run football clubs and one being privately owned. As well as this Richard Sadlier and Martin Russell were selected as they have held various positions within various LOI clubs and observed the league from all angles and viewpoints.

However convenience sampling is also used within this thesis which according to Saunders et al (2012) involves selecting cases that are easily available to the researcher but often this type of sampling leads to bias and is prone to influences beyond the researchers’ control. For example the clubs interviewed for this research are all based in Dublin and no clubs outside of the capital were taking under consideration due to time limitations and travel. Despite this Saunders et al (2012) claims that samples chosen for the convenience approach to sampling often meets the purposive sample selection criteria and is relevant to the research aims which is the case in this thesis also. Overall, the empirical data of this thesis has been sampled with the intention to enhance the thesis’s analysis.

3.5 Quality of Research

Yin (2009), divides validity into three parts which include construct validity, internal validity and external validity which all have an impact on the quality of research along with its reliability. This thesis undertakes these four factors to enhance the analysis and findings from the research.

In order to improve construct validity, multiple sources of evidence were used in this thesis as three different clubs were used and two experts with different backgrounds within the league were used to gather a wide range of information and versatility in the data collected. Internal validity can be increased by explanation building which is the case in this research as a wide range of sources and theories were used along with the expert interviews to give a complete picture of the LOI’s current situation. External validity addresses the domain for generalisation. As this thesis is based on three LOI clubs, current Limerick F.C. manager Martin Russell and ex CEO of St.Patrick’s Atheltic Richard
Sadlier, the case to generalise broadens. As other LOI clubs suffer with the same problems as the three used within this research, the results will be applicable to them also. However, the thesis will only be able to be generalised within the LOI.

According to Yin (2009), reliability is the idea that if the research was done all over again by a different researcher, the findings that he/she would report would be the same as the previous researcher’s. In order to make this thesis reliable, audio recording of every interview exists as well as the documents representing the email interview conducted with Anthony Delaney.
4.0 Findings

The findings chapter aims to give an overview of the data collected in the interviews. It will begin with a presentation of the respondents. Afterwards the respondents’ answers will be presented under various headings including current marketing activities within the LOI, the revenue model for Irish football clubs, the stakeholders within the football clubs and brands within the LOI.

4.1 Presentation of Respondents

As described earlier, four face-to-face interviews have been conducted including two with officials of Shamrock Rovers and Bohemians as well as Limerick F.C. manager Martin Russell and ex-CEO of St.Patrick’s and LOI pundit Richard Sadlier. Also an email interview took place with Anthony Delaney who is also an official with St.Patrick’s. In all, the data collected enabled me to get the perspective of three LOI clubs and two experts who have been involved in the LOI game in various positions before. Below is the list of participants and their previous roles.

- Mark Lynch, Board Member & Marketing Officer at Shamrock Rovers FC.
- Daniel Lambert, Board Member & Commercial/Marketing Director at Bohemian FC.
- Anthony Delaney, Board Member at St.Patrick’s.
- Martin Russell, current manager of Limerick FC in the LOI Premier Division and ex-professional footballer with experience in England and in the LOI.
- Richard Sadlier, ex professional footballer in England, ex-CEO of St.Patrick’s and current pundit on the LOI highlights show and journalist.
4.2 LOI Clubs Marketing Activities

Shamrock Rovers use both traditional and digital marketing to increase their brand awareness and promote their home games. Mark Lynch explains that advertisements are placed in local newspapers (Tallaght Echo & InTallaght Magazine) as well as at national level (The Star). Shamrock Rovers also conduct radio advertisement on 98FM (one of the clubs sponsors) in the lead up to games during the week. As well as this Shamrock Rovers develop posters which are designed by a volunteer which promote games and events taking place within the club. Digitally, Shamrock Rovers promote games on their own digital platforms such as their website, Facebook and Twitter. In terms of paid advertisement, Mark Lynch explains that recently Shamrock Rovers undertook a Facebook advertisement campaign to promote an event at the club. However, as there was no click to buy option available for the event within the advertisement, it was hard to evaluate the benefit. With Shamrock Rovers signing one of Ireland’s most decorated footballers in recent times Damien Duff, Mark and the club have big plans to promote his home debut game through the traditional and digital avenues available. As well as this the club plan to hold an autograph session with Damien Duff at Tallaght Stadium prior to game day to generate interest. Mark continues by admitting that the marketing budget is restraint at Shamrock Rovers due to other costs.

Daniel Lambert from Bohemians states that the club have a budget of zero when it comes to marketing due to other costs but they do have a strategic plan to increase attendances over the next 10 years. Daniel explains that the club use contra-deals in order to display advertisements in national newspapers such as the Mirror. In return, the club offer the Mirror advertisement space in their home ground of Dalymount Park on match day throughout the year. Before the season began (February and March), Bohemians undertook a poster campaign which was designed by a volunteer. The posters were designed to be attention grabbing and played on relevant matters at the time such as the marriage referendum. The posters were displayed at bus stops throughout Dublin which again was possible due to a contact in that area. Daniel explains that the club look for unusual ways to generate publicity due to their non-existent budget. For example, in a recent game between Bohemians and Shamrock Rovers, Bohemians supporters revealed a banner at kick off of the game portraying the lyrics of DJ Fat Boy Slim famous song “Praise You” which had relevance to their manager Keith Long. The lyrics displayed “We’ve come a LONG LONG way together; I got to praise you like I should”. Daniel and the club posted the image of the banner on their digital media platforms and to Fat Boy Slim who in return ‘shared’ the image on his own Facebook page to two million followers. However despite having no budget, the club do spend €20-€30 to boost certain Facebook posts to increase their reach.
Anthony Delaney of St.Patrick’s explains that their marketing activities are fairly similar as they operate through the traditional avenues such as newspapers advertisements and poster campaigns also. Digitally, Anthony states that the marketing done on social media is operated by volunteers. Anthony also explains that school visits and competitions are run also to maintain the clubs profile in the local community. Shamrock Rovers and Bohemians also conduct school visits for the same reasons and often involve players in order to raise their profile within the community.

Richard Sadlier reflects at his time at St.Patrick’s as CEO during the years 2007-2009 and explains that most marketing activities were done through relationship building between the club and national newspapers, radio stations, TV stations and sponsors also. Other marketing activities included poster campaigns as well as holding press conferences as these allowed to club to be in the national media. Overall all the clubs interviewed generally have very similar marketing budgets and mainly use the same marketing avenues as each other bar some minor changes in content.

4.3 Revenue model for clubs in the LOI

Shamrock Rovers and Bohemians main source of revenue comes from the membership scheme as both clubs members owned and run which will be explained later within the stakeholders section. St.Patrick’s and Limerick F.C. main source of revenue comes from their respective owners which again will be explained later within the stakeholders section.

However, in terms of the revenue model the clubs main sources of revenue come from match day revenue and commercial revenue. Other sources of revenue for LOI clubs can come from the participation agreement with the FAI and prize money from UEFA for competing in European competition. In order to give a better overview of how each club creates revenue through the above streams, I will take a look at each under separate headings.

4.3.1 Match Day Revenue

Attendance and gate receipts are big sources of revenue for LOI despite many clubs in the league suffering with low attendances. The revenues generated from attendance come from two sources, the gate receipt and the sales that occur within the stadium on match day. All clubs interviewed offer similar prices when it comes to match tickets with an Adults ticket costing €15, student €10
and a child ticket ranging from €5–€7 depending on age. Shamrock Rovers also offer a discount price of one adult and one child at €20 for every home game but also offer various special family deals over the course of the season.

In terms of sales within the stadium on match day clubs take in income from selling their official match day programme. In a previous meeting with Mark Lynch from Shamrock Rovers, he stated that it is important that the club offer a wide range of choices in terms of food and snacks on match day to enhance the overall match day experience for the supporter. Both Shamrock Rovers and Bohemians agree an annual deal with catering businesses to provide supporters with this a range of food and snack options within the stadium on match day. This is also the case with St. Patrick’s and most LOI clubs around the country. However, Shamrock Rovers would be the only club with a wide variety of food and snack options within their stadium. In order to increase attendance, Shamrock Rovers also offer free parking in the local shopping centre explains Mark. Shamrock Rovers also have a function room located in their main stand within Tallaght Stadium named the ‘Glenmalure Suite’ which is opened to members from 45 minutes prior to kick off. The suite is an exclusive bar area which also sells hot and cold beverages along with snacks and in return increases match day revenue for the club. However, Bohemians have the upper hand when it comes to generating more match day revenue as they have three bars located within Dalymount Park. Daniel Lambert explains that the bars are one of the main sources of revenue for the club. Unlike the ‘Glenmalure Suite’ in Tallaght Stadium, the bars in Dalymount Park are open to all supporters of Bohemians. As well as this the three bars located in the stadium have a late license meaning that they are open and available to supporters to enjoy a drink after each home match and on some occasions can remain open till 2AM. In the recent news, Dalymount Park has been sold to the Dublin City Council and is being redeveloped with Bohemians as the main tenants. However, according to Daniel the bars will not be affected by this new ownership and they will remain a main source of revenue for Bohemians.

4.3.2 Commercial Revenue

Commercial revenue is broken up into two categories including sponsorship and merchandise.

4.3.2.1 Sponsorship

Sponsorship is also one of the main sources of revenue for LOI football clubs. All clubs agreed that creating strong relationships with their sponsors was important to maximise their revenue. Daniel Lambert explains that the club have gone away from the old traditional way of attracting
sponsorship and instead undertake a more modern approach. Daniel states that the traditional way of sending out emails to a number of companies/individuals who could be potential sponsors with a list of benefits for sponsoring the club and offering various sponsor packages doesn’t work anymore. Instead Bohemians contact their potential sponsors and ask them to meet face to face. In the meeting, the club show various video clips of match day, the atmosphere and give an idea of what the whole club is about. Daniel stresses that Bohemians often build on their history and the work that the club does within the community to make them more attractive to sponsorship. After which the club enquires what the sponsors want to get from the sponsorship if they were interested in the club. Daniel explains that some sponsors want more social media coverage or local based sponsorship often just want to be a part of the community. The club and the potential sponsor build up a customised sponsorship package deal that is beneficial for both parties. None of Bohemians sponsor package deals are the same and they meet regularly with their sponsors. This way of building up a customised package can lead to extra revenue and overall more satisfaction for the sponsor also.

Mark Lynch of Shamrock Rovers also agrees that most of their local sponsors are buying into the value of a community relationship and also into the goodwill that the club creates. Mark explains that although the club operates as a business, ultimately they are a member owned community sporting organisation. According to Mark, the local sponsors see the value of being visible on an advertising board surrounding the perimeter of the pitch or in the match day programme as they are operating within the local community. However, Mark explains that they would want commercial return too and notes that Shamrock Rovers supporters are more in favour of buying from one of their sponsors than one of their sponsors competitors.

In terms of bigger sponsorship deals which are mainly the shirt sponsorship deals, Mark believes that the sponsor is buying into brand awareness. In this case Shamrock Rovers sell would be to identify the amount of minutes that they are shown on TV and the amount of people that watch the certain match involving Shamrock Rovers on TV as well the highlights show that is shown every Monday night. The club also approximate the amount of time the brand is visible on the TV. With these calculations, the club show how much it would cost to get that much visibility on TV normally, and compare it to the free TV advertisement you receive from sponsoring the club. As well as this Shamrock Rovers are present in various newspapers over the weekend with plenty of action shots displayed in each newspaper displaying the sponsor’s name which again makes the club favourable to sponsorship. Mark also explains that some sponsors want to make the relationship more
integrated and build a package around the deal. For example Hyundai who currently sponsor Shamrock Rovers have created an incentive for managers, players and fans to buy Hyundai cars by offering a discount to them. Therefore Hyundai are increasing their brand awareness as well as selling cars from the sponsorship package.

According to Anthony Delaney, St.Patrick’s have used their recent profile in order to attract sponsorship. Anthony states that the club have been lucky enough in the past couple of years to have won domestic trophies and competed in European competition and thus have used this profile to engage sponsors. Richard Sadlier took the position of CEO at St.Patrick’s from 2007-2009 and from his experience recalls that most sponsorship for the club came from building relationships with local businesses that want to support the local club. Richard states that from his time as CEO that it was difficult to give hard figures to persuade big sponsors to the club at the time.

4.3.2.2 Merchandising

Selling merchandise can generate revenue for clubs within the LOI but often only on a small scale. Each club operates a shop within their home stadium on match day for supporters to buy their team’s jerseys, tracksuits etc. Daniel and Mark explain that merchandising completely relies on the demand for certain products and varies from year to year. For example, Shamrock Rovers home and away jersey this year did not sell well according to Mark as the design was not favourable but he expects this to change next year as the club’s jerseys will be designed and manufactured by a different brand. Daniel states that Bohemians have seen their merchandise revenue triple in the last year due to their jerseys marking the 125th anniversary of the club. Bohemians also have plans to release an attention grabbing away kit next year in effort to boost sales and revenue also.

4.3.3 Participation Agreement

In order for clubs to participate in the LOI, clubs must sign a participation agreement. Mark Lynch states that this document is effectively a legal contract and rolls out certain regulations that the club must abide by. In the participation agreement, Mark explains that the clubs must seed (give away) the sponsorship rights of the league to the FAI. For example the LOI is sponsored by Airtricity Utility Solutions and is widely known as the Airtricity League. Also Mark explains that in the participation agreement is the necessity to give the FAI’s selected stream of sponsors specific sign locations in the stadium. As well as this, clubs must also seed broadcasting revenue to the FAI. So in order to
participate in the league the clubs must agree to these set of regulations and also pay a registration fee in order to participate. At the end of the participation agreement, the prize money for competing in the leagues is also laid out which is based on each individual clubs performance within the league.

However both Mark and Daniel are unhappy with this participation agreement as it does not benefit the clubs. Mark states that the clubs have pushed and questioned the FAI about how much revenue they receive from Airtricity for sponsoring the league but an answer has never been given to the clubs. As well as this the FAI sold the broadcasting rights of the league to RTE, the national TV broadcaster in Ireland. However again, both Mark and Daniel have never been given answers when they have questioned the amount that the FAI has received from RTE. In defence, Richard Sadlier and Mark admit that the FAI have told the clubs that when the broadcasting rights deal with RTE was completed, it was done in conjunction with the Irish national football team’s television rights. The FAI told the clubs that they lost out on a particular amount of money in order to include the LOI within the deal which involved RTE showing 20-30 LOI games per season and a highlights show called ‘Soccer Republic’ every Monday night. Mark Lynch uses the following figures as an example and explains that RTE were offering €5 million for the broadcasting rights of the Irish national football team’s games without the LOI but would only offer €4 million with the inclusion of the LOI as the TV broadcaster saw no value in broadcasting 20-30 games per season and ‘Soccer Republic’ every Monday night. Richard Sadlier who is a pundit on ‘Soccer Republic’ occasionally during the season states that the viewership for some shows was between 30,000-50,000 people which he explains is very low in the TV world. However, a figure recently came out that the viewership of the show has gone up by 4% to the year previous. Mark explains that he understands the FAI’s point of view but still wants to question the figure that is paid to the FAI by RTE and calls for transparency.

In addition from not receiving broadcasting revenue from their games being televised, both Mark and Daniel admitted that their game attendance is affected which decreases revenue for the clubs as a result. Mark explains that Shamrock Rovers can often lose up to 1,000 gate receipts for TV games that are broadcasted which is the equivalent to €10k-€15k in terms of match day revenue for the club. Daniel also agrees that Bohemians lose revenue on game day when their game is shown live on RTE and it often results in a couple hundred or so not attending Dalymount Park. However, I gathered from the interviews that it is not just being shown on TV that is affecting attendances but actually the kick off times being rescheduled in order to fit TV schedule. For example, a Friday night game which is usually scheduled for 7.45pm or 8pm kick off is often rescheduled for a 7.05pm kick off due to TV. It is common knowledge around the clubs and amongst supporters of the league that
this kick off time does not suit. For example, if Shamrock Rovers were to play in Dundalk at 7.05pm on a Friday night or Cork were to play in Dublin at St. Patrick’s at 7.05pm on a Friday night, the attendance would drop due to work commitments and travel arrangements and in return both home and especially away fans who would normally attend the game would find it hard to do so. However, both Mark and Daniel allude to the fact that being on TV is important in attracting bigger sponsorship deals but overall the non-transparency of the broadcasting deal between the FAI and the RTE and the participation agreement is to still be questioned as clubs are losing revenue in terms of gate receipts as a result.

However the biggest concern shown by the clubs towards the participation agreement is to do with the prize money that is listed for playing in the league. Mark Lynch explains that the amount of money that the FAI receives from all the registration fees that our paid by the clubs to participate in the league actually exceeds the amount of prize money for competing in the league. Mark describes that in effect the clubs pay the prize money and depending on where you finish in the league, the club can actually lose money by just entering. This sentiment is echoed around the league with journalist Daniel McDonnell (2015) stating that cuts within the league have made it an extremely expensive league to play in with very little reward as those who do not battle for honours at the end of the season will only receive a chunk of the prize fund which turns out to be less than their affiliation fee. Overall, it is hard to suggest that this participation agreement is actually a source of revenue for the clubs. It is hinted that the agreement is only beneficial to a degree for clubs challenging for honours as their prize money may exceed their initial affiliation fee. For clubs who are not challenging for honours, their initial affiliation fee would exceed the amount of prize money they would receive and in return they would lose money from participating in the league.

4.3.4 European Prize Money

For clubs lucky enough to compete in Europe which is based on their finishing league position of the previous year, European prize money can be a massive source of revenue for the clubs according to Martin Russell and all those interviewed. For example Dundalk received €550,000 for competing in one qualifying round of the Champions League this year and if they had progressed to the next round they would have received an extra €650,000 on top of that (McDonnell, 2015). In comparison Dundalk only received €100,000 for winning the LOI. All those interviewed agreed that European qualification is massive for LOI clubs as the prize money is huge in LOI terms and massive to the clubs in terms of revenue.
4.4 Stakeholders in LOI

4.4.1 Supporters

It is clear from the interviews that the most important stakeholder in the LOI is the supporters of the clubs. Without the supporters there may be no clubs at all and Shamrock Rovers and Bohemians are good examples of this with them both being members owned and run football clubs. Both Mark and Daniel explain that supporters of Shamrock Rovers and Bohemians saved their respective clubs from serious financial difficulties by taking over their clubs and using their own initiative through the membership scheme to keep the clubs alive.

From the conversations in the interviews with Mark, Daniel and Richard, they all agree that the LOI suffers with attracting people to games and more has to be done to make match day more of an event. Daniel explains that Bohemians do face painting for children on match day and hires bands/DJs to the bars sporadically to make the game more of an event. He believes that all LOI clubs do things to attract the theatre goer; however he believes that this is not enough and that more has to be done more often. Mark Lynch also agrees and believes that the club need to attract this supporter by offering promotions in local restaurants and cinemas with the match ticket so supporters particularly families can make it a day out. However Daniel Lambert admits that there is an element of Bohemians and Shamrock Rovers support that can create a bad image for the match day experience due to the small sections causing trouble outside the ground. These ‘hooligans’ can create a hostile atmosphere and can lead to families not attending the games.

Mark Lynch and Richard Sadlier both agree that winning increases attendances for their respective clubs. Anthony Delaney believes that there are certain people that do attach themselves to a winning team but that people also come to be entertained. He argues that winning trophies does not necessarily mean that attendances will increase the following season but does agree that you are more likely to attract a higher attendance when your team is doing well. However he adds that if performances drop, unfortunately your attendance does too. Daniel Lambert believes that for Bohemians the attendance does increase but that the club has a core support and the increase isn’t as significant as other LOI clubs. He explains that clubs such as Dundalk, Cork City and Galway United can have a whole city/town attending their games when they are doing well where as Bohemians are competing with 4 other clubs within Dublin.
Overall from what I gathered from all interviews, the supporters are the heart and soul of the LOI as well as being the main source of revenue for the clubs through the membership scheme and match day revenue.

### 4.4.2 Sponsors

As mentioned earlier on, sponsors are one of the main sources of revenue for LOI football clubs. As well as this sponsors, especially with newspapers, can be useful in terms of marketing activities through contra deals as mentioned earlier. In order to get the most from a sponsorship deal, a good relationship must be formed with Daniel explaining that sponsorship is more than money for the club. Richard Sadlier admitted that during his time at St.Patrick’s most sponsors were from the local community and before he became involved with the club the relationship with them was partially strained. He added that it was his vital for the club to be present in the local community and placed importance on building these relationships back up. As explained before, Mark, Daniel and Anthony agreed that creating a strong relationship with their sponsors and customising packages for their sponsors is vital for maximising the clubs revenue and maintaining a good relationship.

Daniel Lambert explains that sponsorship is important for networking. He alludes to the point that Bohemians were able to keep certain players last year as they were able to offer players a part time job outside of football due to the opportunity created by their relationship with their sponsors. Recently, Shamrock Rovers signed one of Ireland’s most decorated footballers Damien Duff through their relationship with their two sponsors Pepper and Hyundai. Damien has made it public knowledge that he is donating his salary while at the club to charity. The salary which is believed to top €150,000 over 18 months will be paid directly from the club sponsors, Hyundai and Pepper Ireland (Independent.ie).

During the interview with Daniel, he explained that the club had planned to do a sponsorship night where all sponsors are invited for a social gathering at the end of the season. He admitted that this year would be the first time the club would arrange such an event but felt it was important for the club to do so this year and continue to do so each year to create a network of sponsors and show them their value to the club. Mark Lynch of Shamrock Rovers explained that the club did have a Shamrock Rovers business club which involved sponsors and the club meeting up for regular meetings to trade ideas and help each other. However Mark explained that its shelf life was limited
at the time and meetings and attendees was becoming less. He added that the potential is always there and felt that creating a network was important for the club.

4.4.3 Owners/Investors

From conducting the interviews I found that there were two different types of ownership structures within LOI clubs. The first being the membership scheme used by Shamrock Rovers and Bohemians, and the second being the single ownership scheme used by St.Patrick’s and Limerick FC. Both structures will be explained below.

4.4.3.1 Membership Scheme

Shamrock Rovers and Bohemians are members owned and run football clubs meaning that they are owned and run by supporters of the club. According to Mark Lynch, the number of members in Shamrock Rovers often changes but currently there are just fewer than 400 members at the club. Daniel Lambert states that Bohemians have approximately 500 members. The membership schemes in both clubs allows the fan/member to be present at the clubs AGMs and the right to vote on club issues such as the election of board members as well as other incentives such as a free season ticket, stadium car park space and receive a monthly newsletter. The cost to become a full member of Shamrock Rovers costs €50 per month where as membership for Bohemians costs €365 per year. Mark explains that approximately 45%-55% of Shamrock Rovers revenue is made up from the membership scheme along with gate receipts while Daniel also states that memberships and gate receipts would be Bohemians main source of revenue also.

4.4.3.2 Individual Owners/Investors

From interviewing Anthony, Richard and Martin, the owner/investor of their respective clubs are the main source of revenue. Garret Kelleher owner of St.Patrick’s and Pat O’Sullivan owner of Limerick F.C have invested greatly in the club. Martin Russell explains that Pat O’Sullivan took over all the debts of the club when he became involved in 2009 and bank rolled the current squad of players. Pat with help of the contacts he has, has invested in getting the club back to the Markets Field which is Limerick’s spiritual home and is a currently trying to develop a training centre for the club according to Martin Russell. Richard Sadlier explained that before the economic downturn, Garret Kelleher was planning on acquiring a site for a training facility and to build structures on it to become the first
residential academy training unit for players. Today, Anthony still holds Garret as their main source of revenue.

In terms of investors for Shamrock Rovers, Mark Lynch explains that although the club is a members owned and run football club, if a potential investor is interested in buying the club, it is up to the members to vote on whether to sell or not. Mark goes on to say that the potential of investor is fairly slim however.

4.5 Brands in the LOI

The LOI as a brand itself is perceived poorly among the general public according to all those interviewed. The common phrase amongst the interviews was that the league was being constantly compared to the multi-million pound English Premier League which dominates the newspapers headlines and social circles in this country when football is the topic. Martin Russell explains that it is often hard to know what the LOI as a brand portrays when your involved in the bubble but admits that the perception of the league among the population of the country is that it’s a ‘poor man’s league’. Martin further adds that the league is perceived as not attractive and has a similar standard or outlook to the English Conference division which is the 5th tier of English football. Martin Russell states that the presence of the English Premier League and English broadcaster Sky Sports, who he states make the English game look better than it actually is, has an impact on the perception of the LOI as a whole.

Anthony Delaney states that the general public do not realise the talent within the LOI and that most of the games are far better spectacles than they would expect. Anthony goes on to explain that he watched three games the weekend previous to the interview, two of which were English Premier League games on Sky Sports including Manchester United VS Tottenham Hotspur and Stoke City VS Liverpool and one of which involving Shamrock Rovers VS St.Patrick’s. As a spectacle, Anthony was adamant that the Shamrock Rovers VS St.Patrick’s game was a better spectacle than those in the English Premier League. However he adds that although there is a high percentage of the Irish national team with LOI experience, the perception of the players in the league is that they are not good enough to play in England.

Richard Sadlier reflects on his time with St.Patrick’s and his involvement in building a brand around the club. Richard explained that no matter what way that the club tried to be their own exclusive
brand, they were always attached to the brand of the LOI which was negative for the club. Richard stated that constant bad media press surrounding other LOI clubs such as financial difficulties or unpaid wages would have an effect on St.Patrick’s brand image as they were associated with the LOI as a whole.

In terms of the individual clubs brand image, Anthony Delaney hopes that St.Patrick’s are perceived as a family club. For Daniel Lambert and Bohemians, they seek to be perceived as ‘the peoples club’. Daniel explains that the club had a meeting in order seek direction for their brand and believes that clubs within the league are lost in terms of their brand. He adds that the average person doesn’t know the structure of Bohemians or know the clubs history so therefore felt it was important to have a clear identity. Bohemians came up with the idea of ‘the peoples club’ for the reason that they have been a members club for 125 years and at the club ‘everyone is in it together’. In order to enhance their brand image, Daniel believes that selling jerseys is a walking advertisement for brand awareness and seeks to build their brand through innovative jersey designs that are attention grabbing. In terms of weaknesses associated with the Bohemians brand, Daniel admits that bad press that comes from the element of support who cause trouble occasionally on match day are negative for the brand image.

Mark Lynch describes Shamrock Rovers brand as the pre-eminent football sports brand in Ireland. Mark further describes the brand as the brand of record which is rooted with the clubs history and success as the club are known as the most successful football club in Ireland with the largest trophy haul. Mark also explains that with his experience of travelling Europe in European competition with the club and on other occasions, he comes across those within the football community who know of the Shamrock Rovers brand as ‘the brand’ within football in Ireland the same way that Coca Cola are known as ‘the brand’ of soft drinks.

All clubs conduct marketing activities through their traditional and digital mediums as explained earlier to enhance their brand image and brand awareness. However, Martin Russell explains that the LOI has a long way to go and radical changes are needed for the league to enhance its image. He believes that there needs to be a new direction in leadership whether that comes from the FAI or whether the clubs take control of the league themselves which was the case prior to 2007. He also adds that facilities need to improve in order for the league to enhance its brand image as well as European results to gain credibility for the league amongst the general public.
5.0 Analysis

This chapter will analyse, compare and connect the theory concepts within the literature review with the findings from the data collection.

5.1 Sport Marketing

The theoretical framework suggests that it is hard to separate sport marketing from regular marketing. Most of the clubs in this study use traditional (radio advertisements and local newspaper advertisements) and digital methods (Facebook and Twitter) leading up to match day to promote their games. In general within the sports industry, it is stated in the theory that sport marketers often suffer with a problem called ‘marketing myopia’ which involves the marketer ignoring customer needs, short term thinking and the belief that winning absolves all sins. All clubs believe that winning does increase attendances, however, in the case of Bohemians; Daniel Lambert explains that they don’t expect to win anything for the next 10 years but the club do have a plan to increase attendances during that time through marketing and community activities. Although Mark Lynch states that it is not easy to show a return on a marketing investment in the LOI due to the clubs limited budgets, I still feel as that more can be done in terms of creating campaigns and having long term goals. The marketing activities around the clubs interviewed seem to be very stop and start but it is important to understand that the business environment is not favourable. However, recently, Shamrock Rovers have created a good campaign on social media to promote Damien Duffs home debut. I feel that this is the way forward for the clubs as they need to become creative and keep looking for ways to generate publicity and promote games on their digital platforms as it is free to do so.

The theory also suggests that the sport product is hard to market as the product is subjective. The most intriguing aspects of the sport product are the excitement, emotions and the uncertainty of the outcome according to the theory. The excitement and emotions aspect of the product were rarely mentioned in the interviews. In addition to this, I feel all clubs need to look to increase their marketing activities closer to game day by being more innovative online and creating player profiles.
5.2 Revenue model for clubs within LOI

The revenue model in the theory relies on three categories including broadcasting revenue, match day revenue and commercial revenue. From conducting the interviews with the clubs, these aspects are similar with the exception of broadcasting revenue. According to the respondents, the LOI clubs do not receive revenue from broadcasting rights due to the participation agreement with the FAI, as explained in the findings.

Instead the LOI revenue model only consists of the categories match day revenue and commercial revenue which includes sponsors and merchandise. As suggested in the interviews, European prize money can be a massive source of revenue for LOI clubs but as qualifying for European competition depends on how well a club performs in the league each year; this will be excluded from the revenue model at this analysis stage.

5.2.1 Match Day Revenue

According to the theory, the supporters are very important for football clubs. For example, the supporters buy the tickets to attend the games and are involved in creating the experience on match day according to the theory. Attendance and gate receipts are big sources of revenue for LOI despite many clubs in the league suffering with low attendances. For example the 2014 season saw an average attendance of 1,502 per Premier Division game while the First Division only saw an average attendance of 495 people per game (European-football-statistics.co.uk). According to all the personnel interviewed, the reason for such low attendances is due to the poor perception of the league. As well as this all the personnel interviewed alluded to the fact that most stadiums within the league are old and run down and regarded as below standard bar a few exceptions. Nonetheless match day revenue remain a high source of revenue for LOI clubs.

From conducting the interviews, revenue generated from match day come from two sources the gate receipts and the sales that occur within the stadium on match day. In order to potentially increase attendance the theory suggests that a consumer is more likely to attend a game if the ticket is under $25 which is the equivalent to €20 roughly. For all LOI clubs this is the case while also offering special discount family deals on occasion to increase future revenue. As well as this Shamrock Rovers also offer free parking which is another incentive for consumers to attend games according to the theory. A wide range and variety of reasonably priced food and snack options within the stadium is also suggested to be an incentive in the theory. However from experience, LOI
clubs suffer with this aspect bar Shamrock Rovers. Bohemians can attract extra revenue and gate receipts by hosting musicians in their bars after the game. As Daniel stated this often attracts people who have never been to a game before to attend due to their interest in the particular musician.

In terms of revenue generated on match day, the clubs sign an annual deal with a catering business to provide food and snacks as explained in the findings. This is better suited to the clubs as they don’t have the resources to run such an operation themselves. Other forms of revenue generated on match day come from selling match day programmes and merchandise. Bohemians can generate more revenue than most other clubs through their bars which have a late licence for their supporters to attend to after every home game.

5.2.2 Commercial Revenue

5.2.2.1 Sponsors

According to the theory sponsors are a main revenue source for clubs today. In LOI, sponsorship is also an important source for the clubs revenue although it’s not on the scale in terms of revenue compared to other European leagues. Theory also suggests that it is important for clubs to create a good relationship with their sponsors in order to make the partnership more successful and beneficial for both parties. Bohemians and Shamrock Rovers have created good relationships with their sponsors by customising packages for each individual sponsor’s specific need which leads to higher satisfaction for the sponsor. In return, this can lead the possibility of generating extra revenue from the sponsor and other benefits. The case in point would be Shamrock Rovers relationship with Hyundai and Pepper who have agreed to pay Damien Duff’s salary which he is donating to charity in order for him to join the club. This created a good opportunity for Hyundai and Pepper to promote their goodwill as well as attaching themselves to the brand of Shamrock Rovers and Damien Duff. In return, Shamrock Rovers can create extra revenue from gate receipts due to the excitement of Damien Duff causes amongst the general public as well as through merchandise sales.

Bohemians also take an interesting approach when attracting sponsors. The club inform and educate their potential sponsors about the history of the club and their success so that the sponsors know what they are investing in. This can lead to the sponsors becoming attached to Bohemians brand and the opportunity to create a long term relationship will increase as well as the possibility of the sponsor investing extra money for the club.
5.2.2.2 Merchandise

As illustrated in the theory merchandise is an important source of revenue for football clubs today also. During the interviews with the respondents I found that merchandise can be a source of revenue for the clubs but only on a small scale due to high purchasing costs. The respondents noted that merchandise relies completely on demand and supply and sometimes it is hard to get the balance right. The clubs also recognised the importance of jersey design and having merchandise that is perceived well amongst the supporters. Shamrock Rovers struggled this year in terms of their jersey sales due to the bad reception of the design. However, Bohemians have seen their merchandise sales triple due to their 125 year anniversary kit. Bohemians are also taking an interesting approach to their new away jersey next year with plans to design an attention grabbing kit to boost sales and revenue.

5.3 Stakeholders in the LOI

The respondents in all interviews stated that supporters, sponsors and owners/investors were very important in terms of long term revenues for their respective clubs. The respondents spoke about the importance of creating a good relationship with each of the three stakeholders.

5.3.1 Supporters

According to the theory, football supporters can be segmented into three different types including the die-hard/high identification fan, the fair-weather/medium identification fan and the theatre goers/low identification fan. All the respondents agreed with the theory that these three types of fans are present within the LOI. The respondents also all agreed that the LOI in general suffers with attracting theatre goers to games. All the respondents agree that to attract these fans; the game has to be marketed more as an event which is something that all respondents again agree is missing from the LOI. In creating the game as more of an event, the clubs will attract the theatre goer and the fair weather fans also. According to the theory the fair weather fan attends games to watch a favourite player or the team when they are successful. All the respondents agreed that a winning team often does mean an increase in attendances. However, as results on the pitch cannot be influenced through marketing, building player profiles and making them attractive to the fair weather fans can increase their likelihood to attend games. This was something that all respondents agreed on, yet it is rare to see clubs building players profiles or having interview segments with
players on a regular basis. With the recent signing of Damien Duff, it is important that Shamrock Rovers take advantage of his profile and increase the interest with the fair-weather fans.

According to the theory there are eight different influencing factors for supporters to attend games including self-esteem enhancement, diversion from everyday life, entertainment value, eustress, economic value, aesthetic value, need for affiliation and family ties. All respondents believe that the general perception within the league is that aesthetic value is below par due to the constant comparison the English Premier League. Although the respondents do not try to compare the aesthetic value to English Premier League, they do believe that the entertainment value is there for fans to enjoy the experience of watching a LOI game. The clubs also have to portray the eustress aspect in their marketing activities more often so fans feel a sense of excitement and arousal before big games and rivalries. As mentioned, clubs do offer special discount family tickets which interlinks with the family ties influencing factor. This is a good way to generate new fans from a young age as well as getting more families to the stadium on an increasing basis.

The theory also suggests that the televised game is a major direct competitive factor. The respondents all agree with this sentiment with the televised English Premier League games creating more interest throughout the general public than a live LOI match. As well as this the respondents also agree that their own televised games see a drop in attendances also.

5.3.2 Sponsors

The theory suggests that sponsors are a very important source of revenue for football clubs. A study conducted in the theory suggests that the reasons for sponsoring a club comes from five reasons including the current trend of the market, the management of the club and their efficiency to appear independent from their dimension, the location of the club, the participation in European competition and the market share the club holds. As mentioned earlier, the respondents admit that the current trend of the LOI is fairly poor while Richard Sadlier explained that it is very hard for clubs to appear independent from their dimension as all the clubs are under the LOI brand. In the interviews, the respondents agreed that participation in European competition was only a minor factor for their sponsors as most of the sponsors were locally based. From analysing the theory and the reasons for sponsoring a club, it is clear to see why LOI clubs struggle with attracting bigger sponsorship deals and are mostly sponsored by local business.
The theory suggests that it is important to create a business-to-business relationship with sponsors as it would be challenging to find success with your sponsor if you are in it for your own benefit. The respondents were all aware of this and do create a relationship with their sponsors through their customised packages. Bohemians innovative of informing and educating their sponsors about the clubs history is a good incentive to create a long term relationship and possibly more revenue for the club. As mentioned earlier, Shamrock Rovers and Bohemians are benefitting from creating relationships with their sponsors and both the clubs and the sponsors are getting something out of the relationship. The theory also suggests the importance of building a network and from the findings both Shamrock Rovers and Bohemians have understand this. However, the clubs need to pull through on the ideas that they presented within the findings and continue to show the sponsors value to the club.

5.3.3 Investors/Owners

Within the LOI, there are many different ownership structures among the clubs. Two clubs interviewed in this study Shamrock Rovers and Bohemians are both members owned and run football clubs. As explained earlier on, the membership scheme allows fans who are mainly high identification supporters to become part owners of the club. In order to become a member, the person must pay a specific amount of money per month/annual to the club. This way the club generates revenue. In order to increase revenue, both clubs must make the membership scheme attractive to their high identification supporters and show them the value of becoming a part owner of their football club.

Within football in Europe, the theory suggests that before the introduction of the ‘Fair Play’ rules financial profitability did not have the same effect on football clubs who usually have big problems with the financial aspects of their business unlike in other businesses where financial profitability is a key to their success. For example, the theory states that if the leagues in Italy, Spain and England were running as ordinary companies they would face bankruptcy within two years. This led to wealthy investors and owners such as Roman Abramovich pumping endless amounts of money into Chelsea F.C. However, with the introduction of the ‘Fair Play’ rules clubs are only allowed to spend what they earn.
In comparison, the two clubs with an investor/owner in this study St. Patrick’s and Limerick F.C., do not have the individual wealth and power such as Roman Abramovich. Garret Kelleher of St. Patrick’s and Pat O’Sullivan of Limerick F.C. support the clubs financially in a small scale compared to other owners/investors in European football. The reason being is that the LOI is an expensive business with little return on investment due to its unpopularity and perceived entertainment value. Mark Lynch stated that although the club is members owned and run, a takeover from an investor would go down to a vote between the members of the club. However, he states that the potential of an investor is very slim which further highlights the unattractiveness of the league.

Furthermore, the respondents all agreed that the introduction of the Fair Play rules were not relevant to LOI clubs as the league as a whole was not on the same level as the other European leagues. However, the respondents note that clubs are already under the sanction of the licencing regulation which is laid under the jurisdiction of the FAI.

5.4 Brand Equity in the LOI

According to the theory a brand is more than a name or symbol and includes the consumers’ perceptions and feelings towards the brand. The theory uses four components that make up a football clubs brand equity including perceived quality, brand awareness, brand association and brand loyalty. In terms of Shamrock Rovers and Bohemians the respondents were clear in what their brand was trying to portray. However, in their marketing activities these aspects are only portrayed occasionally whether consciously or unconsciously. In order to further address the issues we will examine the LOI and the clubs brand equity under the four components.

5.4.1 Perceived Quality

The theory states that this aspect of brand equity is the hardest for the marketer to control as it relates to the supporters associating their experiencing with the standard or quality of football on show. In general, the respondents suggested that general perception of the standard of football within the LOI is poor; however, Daniel believes that the perception is actually much lower than what the standard actually is. With many ex-Irish internationals returning to the LOI such as Damien Duff, Stephen McPhail, Keith Fahey, Colin Healy and Liam Miller, the opportunity for the clubs and the FAI is there to influence this poor perception of the standard of football within the league. Martin Russell also notes of the players that have learnt their trade as footballers within the LOI
before moving into English football such as Seamus Coleman, Wes Hoolahan, Kevin Doyle and James McClean who are all Irish international footballs now. Again, as the theory states that the use of star players can enhance the perceived quality, the above aspects could be used to enhance the poor perception of the standard of football within the league.

In general, the player profiles within the LOI are very low and the respondents all agree. As an avid fan of the LOI and of football, there are exciting and talented young players within the league that the clubs should build a profile around. However, the clubs do send players to visit schools and football clubs in the local community to raise their profile and their brand.

Perceived quality can also increase through peripheral elements of the game such as the stadium, merchandise and in game activities according to the theory. Sport marketers can influence these aspects through activities such as face painting or a half time quiz or entertainment show. With the exception of Shamrock Rovers and to an extent Bohemians who are redeveloping their current stadium, St.Patrick’s and other clubs around the LOI need to improve their stadium facilities to increase the perceived quality. The respondents interviewed also admit that in game activities, such as face painting, that make match day more of an event are only done occasionally and not often enough.

5.4.2 Brand Awareness

According to the theory brand awareness is considered the easiest component for the marketer to control. The sport marketers could develop a promotional plan which would involve promotional selling, sales promotion and advertising, in an attempt to increase the awareness of the football club. However the theory also states that there needs to be a budget present to undertake certain activities. The respondents made it clear that their budgets are limited and therefore find it hard to show a return on a marketing investment in the LOI world. However, the clubs do undertake low cost traditional and digital marketing activities to increase brand awareness. The theory also states that football clubs also gain free publicity in the media which is a positive for all LOI football clubs. For example recently, Shamrock Rovers have gained plenty of media exposure due to the recent arrival of Damien Duff.
5.4.3 Brand Association

According to the theory brand associations are the emotions, feelings and ideas towards the sport organisation. The theory suggests that football clubs can use emotions and thoughts linked to their club to create a different selling point and a unique brand association. It is suggested in the theory that due to the emotional nature of sport it is often easy to do so. Within the LOI brand association is very common and sometimes based on geographical location. For example Shamrock Rovers are associated with the Southside of Dublin while Bohemians are the Northside of Dublin. However, due to the two clubs expansive history of success, particular Shamrock Rovers, both clubs have a unique brand association. Along with the famous traditional green and white hoops of Shamrock Rovers and the traditional red and black stripes of Bohemians, the two clubs have caught the emotions and feelings of their own supporters with their unique brand association. However, this tradition and unique selling point needs to be portrayed more often in their marketing activities and across all their marketing channels to increase awareness of their unique selling point.

5.4.4 Brand Loyalty

The theory suggests that brand loyalty is the clubs ability to generate and maintain supporters. It is split into two separate aspects according to the theory, including behavioural which involves the supporter attending games and buying merchandise and attitudinal which involves the supporters commitment and attachment to their team. Although supporters can be loyal in terms of attending games, their attachment may differ. Therefore, it is important that the clubs involve supporters in the club and keep them aware of proceedings at the club. Shamrock Rovers maintain supporters such as their members and season ticket holders by sending newsletters providing information on the current activities within the club. Simple communication between club and supporters can enhance the supporters’ loyalty to the clubs brand and more willing to spend time and money in their favourite team.
6.0 Conclusion

The study conducted with LOI clubs Shamrock Rovers, Bohemians and St. Patrick’s as well as the expert opinions of Richard Sadlier and Martin Russell are the foundation for the results in the conclusion. Though the findings are based on three LOI clubs, I feel that the results may be applicable to other LOI clubs also.

**Problem 1**

*How can LOI football clubs increase the demand for their brand and make them more attractive for investments?*

In order to increase the demand for their brand and make the clubs more attractive for investments, the clubs must continue to develop their brand and seek ways to improve the four components that influence brand equity. From conducting the case study, it is not clear whether the clubs place much importance on their brand and if they do whether they are doing so consciously or unconsciously.

The LOI clubs in the study all admitted to having limited budgets and that it was hard to show a return on a marketing investment in the world of LOI. However the clubs do carry out some traditional marketing activities such as radio and newspapers advertisements with the help of some of their sponsors. The clubs are also available online mostly through the Facebook and the Twitter platforms. As the clubs are conducting these activities on a low scale and without any suggestion of a strategic plan, with the exception of Bohemians, creating brand awareness is difficult for the clubs. In return this makes it difficult for the clubs to be attractive for investments and difficult to increase their revenue through sponsors and supporters.

The perceived quality component of brand equity is hard for the marketer to control as it is mainly based on the results and performances on the pitch. However, to improve the perceived quality of the clubs brand, the clubs can use profiles and players in their marketing. Therefore, the clubs in the study use their players to visit schools and football clubs in their local community but only occasionally. From conducting the study I found that the clubs agree that the players’ profiles need to be expanded to counteract the negative perception of the standard of football within the league. However, no emphasis on the players’ quality in terms of footballing ability is placed within their marketing which can further enhance the perceived quality of the brand. Although with the recent
signing of Damien Duff to Shamrock Rovers, the club have used his profile in recent marketing activities to promote his home debut.

The clubs to an extent place emphasis on their brand association within their marketing but again they don’t maximise this potential to further enhance the brand. The clubs use traditional and digital media to communicate and attract supporters in an attempt to relate them to their brand. All clubs in the study use social media in order to feed information to supporters to help create a strong bond between club and supporters. In return, this strengthens the brands ability to generate and maintain supporters. The clubs also send newsletters via email to season ticket holders to further strengthen the relationship in order to create brand loyalty.
**Problem 2**

*What marketing activities can LOI clubs use to improve their revenues?*

The LOI revenue model is based on 2 categories match day revenue and commercial revenue. In comparison to the larger European leagues, broadcasting rights are the main source of revenue for football clubs around Europe but that is not the case within the LOI due to the clubs having to seed their broadcasting rights to the FAI in order to participate in the league. Match day revenue come from two aspects, the gate receipt and the sales within the stadium. However although gate receipts are the main source of revenue for the clubs within the study, they struggle to attract big attendances due to the perceived quality of the game and their inability to make match day an event. In terms of sales within the arena, clubs receive an annual payment from catering companies to provide food and snacks for supporters inside the ground. Other sales within the arena come from the purchasing of match day programmes and merchandise. In the case of Bohemians, they generate a significant chunk of their revenue through their three bars on match day which is a major benefactor for the club. In terms of sponsorship, the clubs customise deals for each specific sponsor which can lead to a more satisfied customer and in return more revenue. Merchandise is also a source of revenue for LOI clubs but it is often hard for the clubs to find the balance between supply and demand to maximise this revenue.

From conducting the case study, the LOI clubs can improve in maximising their attendance revenue by making match day more of an event and increasing traditional and digital marketing activities in the lead up to match day. As demand constantly changes in regards merchandise, it is hard for the LOI clubs to maximise this potential. Although, Bohemians are aiming to do so by manufacturing an attention grabbing away jersey for next year to boost sales and maximise revenue. However, the LOI clubs within the study use sponsorship to increase their revenues as best they can by creating relationships and customising packages to benefit both parties.
Problem 3

How is LOI football clubs affected by the three different stakeholders within football clubs?

(Spectators, Sponsors & Investors)

The most important stakeholders for the LOI clubs are the supporters, sponsors and investors/owners. The three stakeholders are important for the clubs in terms of long term revenue. The supporters are also the main reason why the LOI clubs exists. This is clear from the study as two of the clubs interviewed are both members owned and run football clubs. These members are long term supporters of the club’s and are the main revenue source and part owners of the clubs. As well as this the regular supporters of the LOI football clubs are of high importance as they are also one of the main sources of revenue for the club due to their attendance on match day and their purchases within the stadium. These supporters also create the atmosphere in the stadium on match day and enhance the whole match day experience as a whole.

The sponsors are also an important stakeholder for the LOI football clubs. The relationship built between the LOI clubs and their sponsors has led to benefits for both parties as explained earlier with Shamrock Rovers and the Damien Duff deal as well as Bohemians and the opportunity for their players to get a job with their sponsors. Building a relationship with the sponsors and educating them on the history of the club can increase the revenue for the clubs due to the sponsors getting attached to the cause.

The investors are also an important stakeholder for two of the LOI football clubs within this study. Both St. Patrick’s and Limerick F.C. main source of revenue comes from their respective owner. However, the potential for more investors to enter the LOI is slim due to its unfavourable business environment.
Main Research Question

How can LOI football clubs increase their revenues through marketing activities?

For LOI clubs to increase their revenues through marketing activities and at the same time produce a team on the pitch every week, it is very difficult due to their limited budgets. However, the clubs mustn’t use their limited budgets as an excuse to not conduct marketing activities and set creative and innovative strategic plans to increase their revenues. The clubs must use their brand and continue to develop their brand in order to become more attractive to the stakeholders and potential investments. The clubs must understand the four components of brand equity and try to gain control of these components with the use of their marketing activities in order to increase their brand value.

As mentioned, stakeholders are an important factor to increase revenues and are a long term source of revenue for the clubs. The three important stakeholders within the clubs in this case study are the supporters, sponsors and investors/owners. The number of these can increase by creating a strong brand and relationship between club and the mentioned stakeholders. Potential for investors will only increase when the clubs brand value develops and the business environment becomes more favourable for the investor. As mentioned before the LOI is an expensive league to play in. As for sponsors, clubs are currently attracting them by offering customised packages and informing them on the history and values of the football club in order to try and create an attachment between the sponsor and the club. However, these sponsors are mostly locally based and a stronger brand must be created in order to attract bigger sponsorship deals. Traditional media and social media are being used to increase the number of supporters attending matches and this is mostly done on low scale level in the lead up to match day. However, promoting the game is often difficult for the clubs due to their limited budgets but the opportunity is there on social media to generate free publicity through creative thinking.

Merchandise revenue is relatively small for the clubs within this study and relies on the balance of supply and demand as well as the design of the jerseys. The clubs can take a creative approach in the manufacturing of the jersey such as the idea presented by Daniel Lambert of Bohemians in order to try boost sales and revenue. However, as long as attendance figures are remain low within the LOI, merchandise sales will remain a low source of revenue also. However, merchandise has the potential to be a good revenue source and also a great tool for increasing brand awareness.
6.1 Revenue Increasing Model for LOI Clubs

The model below is based on the model presented in the literature review. However, this model has been modified due to the findings from the data collection in order to be suitable for LOI clubs.

![Revenue Increasing Model for League of Ireland football clubs](image)

**Increased Revenues:**
- Match Day Revenue (Gate Receipts & Sales within the Stadium)
- Commercial Revenue (Sponsorship & Merchandise)

The difference between the model for larger European football clubs which was explained in the literature review and the model presented for the LOI football clubs is the absence of the broadcasting rights as a revenue source. This is due to the LOI clubs having to seed their broadcasting rights to the FAI in order to compete within the LOI based on the participation agreement.
7.0 Recommendations

The recommendations chapter will provide the LOI clubs with some ideas and guidelines for how they can increase their revenues through marketing activities.

1. The clubs must come together and pressure the FAI’s leadership in terms of promoting the league and call for transparency in terms of the participation agreement. The clubs should also come together and discuss their options in terms of leadership. A long discussion is necessary on whether clubs should take control over the league themselves again (which was the case prior to 2007) and separate from the FAI. For example the broadcasting rights situation is a massive factor in the scenario. Broadcasting revenue is the main source of revenue for football clubs all around Europe but is non-existent within the LOI. Clubs must challenge the FAI on this or potentially take control of the league and seek the potential avenues available for getting the league broadcasted so that extra revenue can come into the clubs.

2. Clubs need to work on the development of their own individual brand and make it more attractive for investments. The clubs must look closely at the four components that influence brand equity. The clubs have to believe in the benefits that their brand brings to supporters as an emotional attachment and to sponsors. The clubs must continue to push the image of the club through its tradition and history through their marketing activities. The clubs also have to believe that their brand can achieve bigger sponsorship deals and not rely on locally based sponsors.

3. Although budgets are limited, the clubs still need to place more emphasis on their marketing activities such as setting campaigns and having a strategic plan towards marketing rather than doing it sporadically. If a strategic plan and goals are set out, it would become easier for brand awareness to increase.

4. The clubs must begin to counteract the negative image of the LOI brand as a whole together. There needs to be more emphasis on the talented players within the LOI and clubs must begin to build up players’ profiles in order to make them heroes to the younger generation. The players should be involved in marketing activities and ex-Irish Internationals within the league should be used to make the game more attractive also. These ex-Irish Internationals
returning to the league should also be used to counteract the negative perception of the LOI as a whole also.

5. In terms of social media, the clubs must become more creative and innovative when it comes to their marketing techniques. Creative social media use can generate free publicity for the club and can be used as a tool to increase fan involvement also.

6. The clubs need to make the match day more of an event to increase attendances and to attract the fair weather fan and the theatre goer. This can be done by having musicians play at half time, face painting or family days on regular occasions rather than sporadically over a few years. The clubs could also have activities outside the stadium before games to make the experience seem like a party occasion.
References


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Reflection

Introduction:

In order to carry out this piece of reflective writing on my experience of undertaken the dissertation, the Gibbs reflective cycle will be used. Gibbs’s reflective cycle has six stages including 1) Description, 2) Feelings, 3) Evaluation, 4) Analysis, 5) Conclusion and 6) Action Plan. It is important to note that Gibbs’s model was developed from an earlier reflective model created by David Kolb.

Gibbs Reflective Cycle:

Gibbs Cycle Process:

**Description:**

This reflection is based on my experience in undertaken the dissertation phase of my Master’s degree. I had a period of two and half months to complete my dissertation which was to be 20,000 words in total. The subject of my thesis (how can LOI clubs increase their revenues through marketing activities?) was of my great interest to me as I am a big LOI and Shamrock Rovers fan. The thesis enabled me to interview various clubs, journalists and managers within the LOI which was
exciting for me. Overall, the experience led me to learn a lot about myself which will be reflective upon the next stages of the cycle.

Feelings:

Prior to undertaking my dissertation I felt overwhelmed and frightened about the whole process. I think the idea of having to carry out in depth research into literature, field research and to write 20,000 words from the data collected was terrifying for me at the beginning. However I felt that once I got going on it, that it would become easier and less daunting.

During the experience, I felt more confident in myself that I was capable of doing such a large piece of work. I began conducting research and writing my literature review which I found interesting as the sport product is very complex. The opportunity to conduct interviews with various people within the LOI was exciting and very enjoyable for me. I felt that this was my favourite experience from undertaking the dissertation. As mentioned earlier during the thesis I became more confident in myself and conducting the interviews energised and motivated me even more as I wanted to search deeper into the problems facing LOI clubs and find a solution to their revenue streams. At times I felt under pressure to keep to my time management but overall I felt that I had handled my time well. I was disappointed not to conduct more interviews however and I would have liked to get a larger range of opinions. I would have loved to conduct more interviews with the clubs themselves and I was also disappointed that I was only able to conduct an interview with Anthony Delaney via email due to his busy schedule and my time constraints.

After the experiencing of completing my dissertation I feel relieved that is done first of all. I feel that I have learnt a lot by conducting this research, both on the topic and about myself. As I had to schedule interviews and conduct interviews seeking private information, I feel that my people skills were put to the test. I had to reassure the interviewees that the information that they provided would remain confidential and only for academic use. I believe that I earned their trust which is something that I am proud of. I also feel as though I portrayed professionalism in my approach to the interviews and I feel that this will benefit me in the future.
**Evaluation:**

There were various aspects to the experience that went well but I feel as though my professional approach to the interviews was very important due to them being the most important criteria in order to complete my findings, analysis, recommendations and the thesis overall. As explained this was the most enjoyable part of the experience also. In terms of what went wrong during my experience was probably my time management. Due to time constraints and my own poor time management I didn’t get to conduct as much interviews as I would have liked. This is also shown in the thesis as I was unable to meet with Anthony Delaney due to my time constraints and his busy schedule which was disappointing.

**Analysis:**

To analyse I feel as though the interviews were the best part of my experience because of my professional approach and my people skills. I felt that due to my professional approach and my people skills I was able to gather a lot more information as the respondents were comfortable sharing private information as I had earned their trust. In terms of analysing the worst part of my experiencing which as explained was the disappointment of not conducting more interviews, I feel that the cause was the mismanagement of my time. I feel that the reason being was that I had a laid back approach and I was naïve in terms of not recognising potential respondents busy schedules.

**Conclusion:**

In conclusion, I should have management time better to get a wider range of opinion and a wider range of data that would have enhanced my research. However, I feel as though I have learnt a lot about myself during this experience in terms of people skills as well as gaining confidence in my ability to work on a large project on my own and be proud of the results. I feel as though I have worked hard on this thesis and that my work ethic was good throughout. However, I feel as though my laid back approach is reflected in terms of the number of interviews conducted and that is something that I must address.
Action Plan:

In the future, I need to manage my time better and be less laid back and naïve in my scheduling. I learnt from this experience I must improve in this area and I must address this area of weakness immediately. I must read up on methods to counteract this laid back approach and give myself more time when scheduling interviews and plans close to a deadline.

Conclusion

Overall this reflection has made me realise the journey I took in undertaking this dissertation and the personal achievement associated with completing a piece of work that I am proud of. The reflection also has made me identify my strengths and weaknesses as well as the contrasts in feelings prior, during and after my experience. I feel as though the Gibbs reflective cycle was of great help in order for me to complete these piece of reflective writing and is also now part of my overall experience.
Appendices

Presentation of Interview Respondents:

Mark Lynch (Shamrock Rovers)

Mark Lynch has been on the board of directors at Shamrock Rovers since 2005 when the fans of the club successfully acquired Shamrock Rovers and transformed the club from a private owned entity into a members owned and run football club. However the club relies heavily on volunteers including Mark who works as the Marketing Officer of the club voluntarily. The interview with Mark took place in a café in Dublin City Centre and went uninterrupted throughout despite the small background noise. Mark provided a wide range of information and gave up over an hour of his time to do the interview and allowed me to ask many additional questions that I had.

Daniel Lambert (Bohemians)

Daniel Lambert has been on the board of directors at Bohemian FC for the last six years. Again, like Shamrock Rovers, Bohemian FC is also a members owned and run football club relying heavily on volunteers including Daniel. Daniel is one of eight board members (seven of which are volunteers) at Bohemian FC and has undertaken the role of commercial director and marketing director in the past. However, he explains that the board is currently looking at reverting back to a board of management as each board member is involved in various roles around the club and not just one specific function. The interview with Daniel took place in an office in Bohemian FC home stadium Dalymount Park. The office was quiet and we were not disturbed at any stage during the interview. Daniel was open and honest in his answers including the additional questions that I raised throughout the interview.

Anthony Delaney (St.Patrick’s Athletic)

Anthony Delaney is on the board of directors at St.Patricks Athletic football club who are owned by wealthy businessman Garrett Kelleher who purchased the club in 2007. However, most of the tasks within the club are done by volunteers who Anthony explains are invaluable. The interview with Anthony took place via email due to Anthony’s busy schedule. Although the themes and line of questioning were the same as the face-to-face encounters, the opportunity to have a flowing conversation and ask additional questions was limited. However Anthony provided valuable information via email nonetheless.
Richard Sadlier (Ex-St.Patrick’s CEO & current LOI pundit)

Richard Sadlier is a former professional footballer who played for Millwall FC in England as well as the Republic of Ireland at underage level. Richard is also ex-CEO of St.Patrick’s Athletic having worked in the position for two years between 2007 and 2009. Richard now works on RTE’s panel of pundits for its LOI coverage including the highlight show on Monday night ‘Soccer Republic’ as well as a pundit for various matches shown live on RTE throughout the season. The interview with Richard took place in a lecture room in Dublin Business School. The interview went uninterrupted and Richard was very open and honest with his answers. Again, this allowed me to ask any additional questions that I had and Richard was more than happy to answer giving me over an hour of his time also.

Martin Russell (Current Limerick FC manager)

Martin Russell is the current manager of LOI premier division club Limerick FC. Martin was also a former professional footballer who played for many clubs throughout his career including Manchester United, Birmingham City, Norwich City, Leicester City, Middlesbrough, and Portadown. He also played for St.Patrick’s Athletic in the LOI. Towards the end of his playing career, Martin became assistant manager at St.Patrick’s Athletic for two years before moving on to become an assistant manager at UCD AFC for a further two years. In 2009, Martin became the manager of UCD AFC and maintained the position for four years before moving on to become the manager of Limerick FC in 2014 where he currently remains today. The interview with Martin took place in his home based in Lucan. Again, Martin answered the question as best he could and with honestly. We were not disturbed during the interview and I was able to ask any additional questions that I had for Martin.