

# The Conspectus of Escapism and Relaxation Amid English Premier League Fans in Marine Base Waterfront: Real or Imagined?

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The mass media as a consciousness industry satisfies diver's needs to its heterogeneous and varied audiences. Each of the media (Television or Radio) is presumed to affect perceptions and behaviour in a distinctive way due to its reach, frequency and penetration. They can affect the society and society can also affect the media. Deriving from the foregoing, Ayedee & Manocha, (2020) argues "television is an electronic device that brings informational and entertainment programme: it grasps all the ages and almost all the interests of the living. Right from the international programmes, it caters for the needs of all viewers: hence, television holds the highest mode of entertainment and information.

Obono & Madu (2018) agrees with this position saying: television is an important medium of communication in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is used for several reasons including information, education, entertainment and persuasion. Unlike other media structures, television has the advantage of utilizing vision for mass communication,( p.4) Lindholm (2019), adds, the relationship between sports and television has for the most part been mutually beneficial and has, for the most part, only grown deeper over time. Television, allows sports to reach audience that are too far away to attend sporting competitions live.

Every weekend during football season and some week days, viewing centers in marine base water front in Port Harcourt are full, stuffy and rowdy as football fans flock in their numbers to go and watch their favorite clubs slug it out on the pitch. These have given room for relaxation, fun and in some cases elude the vicissitude of life. The English premier league fans are obsessed with the game of football but the brand of football which the foreign leagues offers distinguished itself and, presently occupy a special place in their hearts. While contributing to this discourse, Adebayo, Akintude & Falase (2017) note that in African cities and villages, fans connect and identify with football clubs in Europe through digital spectatorship, symbols and imagination. Through the activities of large privately owned media companies, live soccer games from all over the world, especially Europe, are reaching millions of people via video theatres or trans-local stadiums.

Due to the social, political and cultural negotiations that occur in these virtual public arenas, scholars now acknowledge their relevance and impact of football viewing and fandom on the African society.

Bonte-Friedhelm (2018) describes with a more detailed view that the English premier league is the world's best league because it offers the most exciting football (soccer). Even with smaller teams, it is rare to see a boring game. This is because attacking and quick-pressing soccer is valued. Players are encouraged to get the ball forward quickly, or catch their opponent off guard. It is a sight that fans all over the world enjoy.

The English premier league (EPL) has generated a massive fan base in many Nigerian cities and towns. According to Adetunji (2010), "70% claim to be fans of the (EPL) since the proliferation and increasing affordability of satellite Television or pay TV broadcast in Nigeria. Indeed, Majaro-Majesty (2011) mention that fans have put in place" "association of supporters" with slogan as Manchester United (Man U) the kings of England, "Up Man U" or "One Love" Arsenal- "Gunnars for Life" Chelsea-"the Blues." "the sky is always blue" or "the Billionaires club" Liverpool-"you can't walk alone" "Up Liverpool" Manchester City (Man City) "we are the real citizen"

## II. THE EPL GLOBAL VIEWERSHIP AND POPULARITY

The success of the premier league is firmly predicated in its enduring popularity at home and abroad. The actions and drama on the pitch, the passion, emotion, devotion and traditions of the teeming fans who follow the games in packed stadiums and on various social media platforms, and those who seat in front of television sets at home and viewing centers, to watch home-grown talents and a host of international players, all contributed to the unique and growing global appeal. The English premier league signed \$8 billion contract with two cable channels, allowing them to broadcast games from 2016-2019, and this staggering sum is only for the domestic broadcasting rights. The league will generate another \$5 billion over the same period from international TV deals (Premierleague, 2015).

As it stands, the English premier league has more quality players regularly competing than any other league in the world. In Euro 2012, the EPL supplied 74 players, almost 20% of the total number, whilst the Bundesliga came second with 48 players, LaLiga with 32, and Serie A with 31, (Spacey, 2020). The 2019 African Cup of Nations in Gabon filled 26 premier league players, (Redmond, 2020). In addition, 47 African footballers are currently playing for the 20 EPL 2019/2020 teams with Nigeria and Ivory Coast leading with 6 players each, leading Senegal very slightly, (Gwegwe, 2019). Most specifically, the EPL is what every young African footballer dreams of, and certainly millions of African fans love to see one of their own competing in one club or the other.

Again, since its formation in 1992, the premier league has continued to attract world class managers from various leagues globally. Some have tested success but many have struggled to cope with unruly fans, board expectations and the ever-evolving complexities in top-flight football. Managing a football team especially in the EPL requires a diverse array of talents and a substantial knowledge of the game as well as being tactically astute, managers should be able to work individually with players to motivate and discipline them. Their instructions need to be communicated effectively, and they must anticipate the physical and psychological conditions of their players. This is the standard of the premier league philosophy and driving force that endeared high profile managers. Many talented tacticians fail because they don't have the authority to lead. Hence, managers who epitomize this character and have translated their ability into remarkable success in the English Premier League are, Liverpool –Jurgen Klopp, ManCity –Josep Guardiola, Chelsea – Thomas Tuchel), Arsenal – Mikel Arteta , Man United - Louis Van Gaal, Chelsea- JoseMourinho, Chelsea- Carlo Ancelotti, Arsenal - Unai Emery, Man United - Sir Alex Ferguson, Liverpool –Rafa Benitez, Chelsea- Fabio Capello, ManCity –Manuel Pellegrini, Tottenham - Mauricio Pochettino, Liverpool -Brendan Rodgers, etc. Some managers have had their best season in the English Premier League to date while others will be hoping to erase their memory as soon as possible.

Regardless, there are also other factors which prime the English Premier League to its zenith popularity:

- i. *Fans and Followers:* Unarguably, the English premier league has huge fans and followers all over the world and everyone supports their favorite team. The premier league is well ahead of other football leagues like La Liga. On average, an EPL game is watched by over 12 million people from around the world. This number is well ahead of other European leagues which have average views between 2-4 million. More interestingly is the fact that its followers are spread out throughout the globe. According to Maribella (2019), TV audience shows that 16.1% of the EPL audience came from the United Kingdom, Asia and Oceania-32.5%, Middle East and Africa-22.6%, Europe-19.5%, South and Central America-5.7%, North Caribbean-3.6%.
- ii. *Financial Strength of EPL:* The English Premier League (EPL) has maintained a strong and decent financial status which has been its driving force as one of the highest paying league globally. When it comes to revenue the EPL is far better than other leagues. This is as a result of improved television revenues and cost control the league net profits in excess of £78 million, exceeding all other football leagues. In 2017/2018 season, the Premier League had the highest revenue of any football league in the world with total revenue of £5.3 billion (\$6.2billion). However, some of the richest football clubs in the world are in the Premier League. For the 2017/2018 season, the central payments were estimated to £2.4 billion across the 20 clubs. Each team received a flat participation fee of £34.8million and additional payment for TV rights (40.7million), commercial rights (4.83million) and the merit pay will be based on the final league position of the team.
- iii. *Influence of the Language:* The English Language is obviously the most spoken globally with over 1.12 billion speakers. It is the most commonly spoken language in the USA, UK, Australia, and New Zealand. English is also widely spoken in several countries due to the colonial past of the British Empire.
- iv. *Standardized Commentary:* Nonetheless, the commentary of the EPL is the driving force of the highest standard football commentators; Jim Beglin, Peter Drury, Jon Champion, Martin Tyler and many others who ran commentary for Raidió Teilifís Éireann (RTE), British Telecom (BT) Sport, and National Broadcasting Company (NBC) Sports, even the pre-match presentations are of high standard lead by John Dykes (Prince-Wright, 2016).
- v. *The Live Stream Coverage:* To date, the English Premier League matches are streamed live. The popularity of the league has increased with the ease of watching the events from anywhere. In 2015/2016 season, the EPL reached over 4.2 billion people from 156 countries and over 200 territories. The existing broadcasters, SKY and BT have already signed to broadcast 200 games out of 380 matches a year, which goes up to 168 live matches in the current circle.
- vi. *Football Club Local Derbies:* The Premier League features an array of tension-soaked derbies that is a must watch. England host top-level league which in turn provides a wealth of local derbies. Conversely, the Manchester Derby is considered to be one of the oldest football rivalries with the first game between Man City and Man United contested in 1881. The battle between Aston Villa F.C and West Bromwich Albionm, Football Club (F.C) is called West Midland derby.

The North London derby is the rivalry between Arsenal and Tottenham. This local derby is in England based North London. Both teams have massive fans that have recognized each other as one of their biggest rivals. It is one of the fiercest derbies in time immemorial. The Everton and Liverpool derby is called the Merseyside derby. The Merseyside derby is one of longest-running top-flight derbies in England which has been playing continuously since 1962-63 season. The Tyne-Wear derby is the name given to the rivalry between Sunderland and Newcastle United. This derby always has the unpredictability of the fixtures which means that they can often show unexpected results that can be turning point to the whole league.

- vii. *The Big Team Fierce Rivalries*: The match between Manchester City and Manchester United is one of the most watched football rivalries. The home ground of Man City is City of Manchester which is located just 6.4km miles from Man united home ground Old Trafford. This close proximity of the stadiums adds more fire to the rivalry.
- viii. *Chelsea and Liverpool Rivalry*: The rivalry between this clubs has always been fascinating and one of the most anticipated events. Both teams are equally capable to defending goals and wait for the right instance to score goal. This is one of the awaited rivalries in English Premier League.
- ix. *Northwest Derby (Manchester United vs. Liverpool)*: The rivalry between Manchester United and Liverpool is known as the Northwest Derby. This is a high-profile inter-city rivalry between English professional association football clubs Liverpool and Man United. It is also recognizes as one the biggest rivalries in the association football world and is considered the most interesting and famous fixtures in English football.
- x. *Competitiveness among the Big Six*: The competition for the title race is always fierce amongst the big six when compared to other leagues. The top EPL clubs commonly known as the big six presents tension-soaked competitions that attracts global audiences. This is also one of the popularity of the league. Available records show that since the inception of the premier league in 1992, the Big Six have continued to win the League title. Among the top six clubs, four clubs, Manchester United (13), Chelsea (5), Arsenal (3), and Manchester City (3) have been crowned more than once but Leicester City shocked the book makers and won the EPL 2015/2016 season. In general, the battle for the top four spots for Champion League qualification is even more interesting. Apart from the top clubs, others have been emerging competitive and are providing to be tough. It is not just about the top six teams but it is equally at the bottom clubs jostling to survive relegation. These teams in the relegation zone have also sustained the tempo till the last day of the season. This competitive nature and randomness

of the league draw extra attention and attraction of global spectatorship.

- xi. *Time of Telecast*: The flexibility of the telecast time is incomparable. The time of telecast plays a major role in the Premier Leagues popularity. Unlike the Champions League, the times of telecasting are suitable for many countries and continent like India and China. The premier league matches are generally fixed during the weekends in a time of 2.00 pm to 12.00 midnight which is a perfect time for people in that region watch with ease at home. More importantly, the time slot is the best about the premier league as the football fans can comfortably watch their favorite teams play. This ensures the viewership for the future as people of every generation can watch the event which is a reassurance for the enormous popularity of the league. For example, in far away India, the EPL matches are aired live on Saturdays, it is broadcasted in the evenings and late evenings and at times in midweek's which perfectly suits the Indian timing.
- xii. *Players Salary in English Premier League*: It is evident that the salaries of the English premier league clubs are very high. Top players from various countries step into the EPL as they are offered high-value contracts. As it stands today, Alexis Sanchez is the best example. When he left Barcelona and join arsenal for a whopping transfer fee of £31.7 million, the Chilean talisman has scored over 30 goals with more than 14 assists in the 2016/2017 season. In addition, as a result of the raising television deals, there was a sharp rise in player wages. The resultant effect was that, the average EPL player earns about £75.000 per year which in (2018/2019) an increase in average annual salary came to £2.99 million. However, the total salary in the 2018/2019 season for the 20 EPL clubs was £1.62 billion. Of this figure, the highest club wage of the 20 clubs was Manchester United £6.5 million. The ratio of the wages of the highest paid team to lowest paid in the EPL is 6.82 to 1. With respect to the lower differential between team wage bills in the premier league, it is often considered as being more competitive than other top European Leagues.
- xiii. *Transfer Deals in the English Premier League*: The English Premier League team attracts top players from other leagues due to its transfer deals. Many top players are attracted if the offer is good. Every season high transfer fees are being set by clubs. In January 2018, the EPL top flight clubs have spent a £419.5 million and are expected to soar higher in the coming years. Obviously, the premier leagues fee has been gradually increasing. So far the, the highest transfer fee paid by an English premier league club is £89 million for Paul Pogba.
- xiv. *English Premier League and Match Attendance*: Remarkably, the average attendance of the League

marks the attractiveness of it. Indeed, the cheers of live audiences not only impact players on the field but also those watching the game on TV. During the 2018/2019 season, the EPL football has been played in 58 stadiums since its formation. In reality, there have been gradual improvements in the capacity and facilities in England stadiums, with some clubs moving to new-built stadiums. The 2017/2018 season saw a lot of audience and the organizers faced problems with the accommodation. For example, Wembley Stadium, the temporary home of Tottenham Hotspur, has an average seating capacity of 90,000 while Dean Court, the home of Bournemouth, has a capacity of 11,360. The overall capacity of the EPL in 2017/2018 season is 806,033 with an average capacity of 40,302.

In the 2016/2017 season, an average attendance of the club was 35,838 for the premier league matches with an aggregate attendance of 13,618,596. This marks an increase of 21,126 recorded in the premier Leagues first season which was held during 1992/93. With the Leagues establishment in 1992, the recorded average attendance of 36,144 was set during the 2007/08 season. This record was later overcome in the 2013/14 season which showed an average attendance of 36,695 with an attendance of just fewer than 14 million, the highest average in England's top flight since 1950. This recorded stadium attendance also acts as a significant source of regular income for the premier league clubs.

- xv. *The Role of the Media in Premiership Coverage:* The media have continued to play a significant role in broadcasting the popularity of the EPL with a view to its massive coverage of live matches. With the competitiveness among the various channels telecasting the fixtures of the league shows how famous the league is. From British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) to ESPN, SKY and BT all have used their massive reach to project the EPL to global acceptance. Regardless Sky and BT paid £5.136 billion to renew their contracts with the Premier League for another three upcoming years which lasted to 2018/19.
- xvi. *The Unexpected Twists and Turns of the EPL:* The unpredictability and competitiveness of the EPL also added to its popularity. With the Big Six teams fighting for the title, Leicester City winning the EPL title during 2015/2016 season was something none of the football pundits expected. The same team that was relegated two years back to lower division then came back as the winners defeating big clubs like Manchester United, Chelsea, Liverpool, Man City, and Arsenal.
- xvii. *Betting in English Premier League:* Betting in EPL continues to grow on yearly basis with millions of bounds bet across the world each weekend of the season. Sports betting are a billion-dollar business

which has popularized the league. Betting in the premier league is even more interesting as the results are unpredictable. The bets are provided in various websites and the favorite and underdogs are fixed based on their performance over a period. Premier league being one of the world's most competitive football leagues, betting provides its own unique challenges to both beginners and serious football bettors.

- xviii. *Additional Events in English Premier League:* The Premier League has an international promotional event like the Premier League Asia Trophy that is held every two years. The event is a two-day competition which was inaugurated in 2003 and is the only Premier League-affiliated competition to be conducted outside England. Premier league front liners, Arsenal, Liverpool, Chelsea, Manchester City, Man United and Tottenham Hotspur have all participated in the PL Asia Trophy. Since its inception in 2003, it has been conducted in Malaysia, Hong Kong, China, Thailand, and Singapore.

#### *EPL Today*

The English premier league is carried by 80 broadcasters in 212 territories worldwide; an average game is watched by over 12 million people. With this astonishing numbers the EPL is unarguably the most popular league in the world. Compared to other European league, its closest rival is Spain's La Liga which draws an average of over 2 million fans per game. The league's top two teams, Real Madrid and Barcelona negotiate their own TV contracts since they are able to get more money from the global TV audiences than selling La Liga as a whole, James and Roeder (2016). Unfortunately, other top leagues like Serie A draws 4.5 million viewers for an average game while Germany's Bundesliga draws 2 million viewers. However, the global popularity of the EPL is as a result of high-tempo, blood-and-thunder style of soccer compared to the slower more technical European style making the English premier league a quicker, more open, and more physical and more attractive game for international viewers.

Yet, the proportion of English players in the league has slightly increased from 36% in the 2014/15 season to 37.7% in 2019/2020 with many foreign players now playing in England, (Edward, 2019). Another innate quality of the English premier league is that the league popularity is due to its highly competitive nature.

#### *EPL Is Real*

Millions of fans, players, coaches have cried in football games after winning or losing. To many, tears are an expression, sadness and weakness. Tears are always connected to emotions too strong to contain and are to be used sparingly and wisely. Crying for joy or despair is the uppermost expression of happiness and ecstasy or another form of releasing stress. Tears of sadness, pain, grief, and tears of joy, empathy, frustration

and relief, quiet tears of despair, angry, bitter tears are most definitely central to human experience but people in different cultures also cry for different reasons.

According to Fermie (2020), Arsenal appeared to have edged Olympiacos when Aubameyang struck with seven minutes of extra time left to play. The Gabonese looked to be in tears after smashing the ball into the net but less than ten minutes later, he appeared to be crying again but for a different reason. On this point, Team talk (2020) elaborates; I have no words, it's unbelievable, Klopp said. Becoming champions with this club (Liverpool) is unbelievable. It's for Kenny Dalglish, it's for Steve Gerrard. You are all legends. We all admire you. It's easy for me to motivate the team because of our history. But it's an incredible achievement of my players. What they did over the last two or three years is exceptional. It is a pure joy for me to coach them.

In football, tears can also play an important role in communication and the extraordinary thing is that, tears don't just telegraph our state of mind to others but can evoke strong emotions in the people who witness them. Tears are universal that may have evolved as a kind of signal, a signal that was valuable because it could only be picked up by those closest to us who could actually see our tears. McNulty (2018) observed that, England's divested players could barely drag themselves off the turf as they slumped in front of their fans at Moscow's Luzhniki Stadium. England had history in their hands and a first world cup final since 1966 in their sights as the clock ticked past 10pm only to let it all slip away and so leave this historic city with familiar feelings of despair and disappointment. Lee (2019), also added on this, Pep Guardiola's men thought they had pulled off a sensational comeback in a crazy game with Tottenham but Video Assistant Referee (VAR) disallowed their injury-time winner.

Transcending language and borders, nothing delivers drama, joy and despair quite like football. Some are outrageous, some sad, some downright bizarre, all are true. Congruent with this, Caygill (2018) maintain that, it was a miserable night for Argentina and their superstar forward Lionel Messi on Thursday night as they lost 3-0 to Croatia in their Group D clash. Fans in Buenos Aires could only react in shock as the double world champions were beaten emphatically to leave their hopes of reaching the knockout stages hanging in balance. Salt (2019) opined that Fans reacted to the news that Fulham have been relegated from the premier league, the cottagers' woes on the return to the top flight have been evident all season as fans channeled Wizard of Oz and joked, there is no place like home after relegation from the premier league was confirmed, A 4-1 away defeat to Watford ensured an instant return to the championship.

Williams (2018) while contributing to this discourse said, to taste the sweet, you must first have faced the pain. The joy of finally achieving your goals of succeeding where you would previously flounder makes the ultimate attainment all the more satisfying. When dreams are shattered and as a team you stoop

and pick up the pieces and dare to dream again, the agony of the past can either shackle you or inspire you. Panama has dealt with both sides of the fortune in recent times. The joy reaching their maiden World Cup in Russia 2018 contrasts sharply with the desolation felt just four years earlier. Then, after a long, tough qualifying campaign, a place in their first World Cup finals in Brazil in 2014 dangled tantalizingly in front of them, waiting to be claimed. Their dream was within their grasp. But that final step can be the hardest one to take.

Football can be such a cruel game. Fans watch their team lose each week but some losses are harder to take because of the opponent or just the score. Some are so bad that even if you are not a fan of the loser it can break your heart. Some losses are infuriating while others are just humiliating. According to Maitra (2019) the North London derby is all about raw emotions, passion and fierce rivalry between two England's most prestigious football clubs. Arsenal and Tottenham Hotspur locked horns at Emirates this evening in order to get back to winning ways after suffering defeats last weekend. The game as always was scintillating and the Gunners down by two goals staged a sensational come back to restore parity.

### III. FOR THE EPL TO BE REALLY REAL

The World Wide Web (www) existence was basically a primarily means of making information easily available and accessible since its inception. It has developed several uses such as a real time communications medium (video-conferencing on the web) e- Commerce, Video Gaming, Twitter, face book, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, Snapchat, etc. According to filo *et al.* (2015), the social media is increasingly popular among internet users. In particular, this is true of two social media platforms Facebook and Twitter. Statista (2021), observed that Facebook record nearly 2.6 billion monthly users unarguable the largest social media site while Twitters monthly active user number have hovered consistently around 300 million for a while.

The social media is changing the way sports starts, clubs, and association's federations, and fans are interacting with each other from live-tweeting games. Spectators are no longer simply watching sports but fans can often get news, insights and commentary straight from the source. These instantaneous and interactive natures of social and mobile technologies make the perfect platforms to fuel sporting desires. More importantly, while fans have taken to social media to share their love of the English premier league, some sporting clubs and athletes are finding it more challenging. If the social media is making it possible for fans to be more engaged, it is also making it possible for sporting professionals to be more accountable for the public to comment on the way in which they in turn engage with their fans and wider community,

Interestingly, the social media platforms pose a minefield for some users, posts and updates by sports officials and athletes that could at best be described as incautious are resulting in those individuals being questioned in the media and sometimes being reprimanded and penalized, (Giulianotti and William,

1994). In addition to this, Giulianotti (2002), also argues that, a secondary thought still potentially beneficial and insightful underscores the examination of various aspects of the information seeking behavior of football fans who follow the teams in the English premier league are literally millions of football fans in the United Kingdom alone and have a reach way beyond their own borders.

Traditionally, the fans of these teams across the globe are connecting with the explosion of the web and all that comes with it. The availability of information concerning any professional football has grown significantly even more so with the English language being the most popular language on the internet, Joinson and Banyard, (2002). Boyd and Ellison (2008) subscribed to this view saying, it is useful for those involved in the football industry to see not only how their fans behave when it comes to the acquisition of football relevant information, but also the role they play in the collection and dissemination of this information. However, supplying information has been an expensive and time consuming business. On a broad scale, parties and institutions which have supplied information have been motivated by money, (Gunter *et al.*, 2002). Grianello and Wheaton (2004) averred that, with the advent of the web, the ability to supply information has been given to just anyone with a computer and internet connection. It is also noted that, the fact that ordinary people spend time passing information freely available for other members of the group (fans) is hugely beneficial for information consumers and particularly fascinating for information scientists as well as other information providers.

Additionally, Halphern and Gibbs (2013) argues that, the corpus of social media content related to sport is particularly rich, with online platforms not merely providing channels for propaganda or marketing but also allowing freewheeling exchange of ideas and debates. Hitherto, McGillivray, (2014), accentuated the obvious noting that, social media's role as a channel of alternative discourse, including discourses of resistance in the field of sport includes resistance of gender stereotype. Popp *et al.* (2016), said, discourses on football transmitted by traditional media outlets can be discoursed and contested on platforms such as Twitter and Facebook, making social media a space for polemics, (Mercier, 2015).

#### IV. EPL IS IMAGINED

It is a known fact that the EPL is the only league when relegation bound team Leicester clinched the title in 2015/16 season and where a bottom team can defeat a top team. What sets the EPL apart is the hot competition for the title. In most European leagues, the title is often a matter of interest for two rival clubs, maybe three, but in the EPL, there are often six clubs. For the first time in history in 2019, four EPL teams (Liverpool, Tottenham, Arsenal and Chelsea) meet in European Cup Finals. This truth is that the semi-final encounter proved that the EPL is far stronger than the other European leagues. Another obvious fact was the incredible atmosphere inside Anfield helped power Liverpool to a famous European victory

in semi-final of champion's league. They thrashed the best team in the world Barcelona and world best player Messi and made history with one of the greatest comeback of all time. Similarly, Tottenham Hotspur, also three (3) goals down against a youthful and lively Ajax, Spurs scored the winner in the last minute.

#### VI. CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that the English Premier League engenders intense emotional engagement and inspires religious devotion from the fans. Hence, the dimensions of audience involvement and followership are core of fandom scholarship. Fans have emotional and physical identification with their club. This emotional and physical identification if properly harnessed can be translated into socio-cultural, economic and political value. Therefore, football could be translated into a cultural product, an economic product (commodity) a political product (ideological or international diplomacy) and a social product (of self-identification and social belonging) simply put, football is a commodity, Fans involvement is a tripartite element of emotional, economic and physical attachment of an audience to his/her team, players and merchandise. It is simply the depth of his/her interest as expressed in loyalty, commitment and passion to the team, its players and merchandise.

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