



## THE TRANSFORMATIVE ROLE OF FOOTBALL ACADEMIES IN THE MODERN FOOTBALL ECOSYSTEM

Dimitris Kothroulas,  
Emmanouil Choustoulakis<sup>i</sup>,  
Panagiotis Alexopoulos

University of Peloponnese,  
Department of Sports Organization and Management  
Sparta, Greece

### Abstract:

This paper investigates the evolving role of football academies within the modern football ecosystem, focusing specifically on their contribution to the competitive performance and commercial sustainability of professional football clubs. A mixed-methods research design was employed, combining quantitative data from 140 football senior staff members along with qualitative insights from semi-structured interviews conducted with 14 senior club officials, including technical directors and strategic executives. Quantitative analysis utilized descriptive statistics, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression techniques, while thematic analysis was applied to the qualitative data. The results indicate that football academies significantly contribute to both on-field success and off-field commercial outcomes. Statistically significant correlations were found between the proportion of academy-developed players in the senior team and league performance ( $r = .62, p < .01$ ), as well as revenue from player sales and brand loyalty metrics. Qualitative findings reinforced the strategic perception of academies as dual-purpose institutions - enhancing sporting identity while simultaneously serving as engines of financial value creation. The study offers actionable insights for club governance and policy-making. Recommendations include prioritizing long-term investments in academy infrastructure, establishing formalized pathways for youth progression, and integrating academy strategy within broader commercial and operational planning. This research provides an empirically grounded understanding of the multifaceted role of football academies, advancing the discourse on sustainable club development by illustrating how youth systems can be leveraged for both competitive edge and economic viability.

**Keywords:** football academies; competitive performance; commercial impact; sustainable club strategy

---

<sup>i</sup> Correspondence: email [exoustou@uop.gr](mailto:exoustou@uop.gr)

## 1. Introduction

The globalization of professional football has resulted in an environment characterized by escalating revenue streams, compelling clubs to re-evaluate and enhance their developmental models. In this new paradigm, youth academies serve not only as platforms for developing athletic talent but also as vital commercial vehicles that support long-term sustainability and competitive strategies (Frick, 2018). Consequently, football academies have shifted from being peripheral entities to becoming essential contributors that bridge the fields of sports, commerce, and community engagement.

Football academies play a pivotal role in fostering both team cohesion and long-term planning by aligning their training and development philosophies with those of their respective clubs (Mills *et al.*, 2014). The nurturing of homegrown players is no longer merely a talent development task. It has evolved into a strategic asset through which clubs can enhance squad performance while simultaneously adopting cost-effective approaches to player acquisition and retention (García & Isidro, 2019). This practice has significant economic advantages, enabling clubs to invest in their academies with the expectation of substantial returns in terms of both on-field performance and off-field commercial viability.

Despite the recognized importance of football academies, academic inquiry into their contributions remains fragmented. While some studies have focused on player development pathways and methodologies for talent identification (Long *et al.*, 2021), there exists a deficiency in comprehensive examinations of schools' effects on club branding, market reach, and overall financial stability. Moreover, the perceptions of club executives and decision-makers regarding the multifaceted value presented by youth academies remain underexplored. These gaps necessitate further inquiry into the interconnections between athletic development, economic impact, and community engagement that academies provide.

This research intends to bridge the existing gaps by employing a mixed-methods approach that investigates the perceptions of senior club executives, technical directors, and strategic personnel with respect to the roles of football academies in enhancing both competitive performance and commercial impact. Qualitative interviews will be conducted alongside quantitative surveys to collect a rich dataset that facilitates a comprehensive analysis of the current landscape of football academies.

By taking an integrative approach, this paper will elucidate how academies not only refine athletic talent but also bolster commercial opportunities and community relationships. This holistic perspective will contribute to a greater understanding of the mechanisms by which football academies can be optimized to synchronize with club objectives, potentially leading to enhanced brand equity and community affiliation (Brown & Jansen, 2022).

Consequently, football academies are emerging as fundamental pillars within the professional football ecosystem. Their multifaceted contributions—ranging from player development to commercial viability - underscore the necessity for clubs to adopt

comprehensive strategies that fully leverage the potential of their academies. By addressing the identified gaps concerning the perception and value of these entities, this study aims to offer a significant contribution to the scholarship on football management and strategic operations within professional clubs.

## 2. Literature Review

The literature on football academies spans diverse disciplines, including sport management, economics, marketing, and talent development. This review synthesizes key theoretical frameworks and empirical findings, structured around two central themes: (a) the competitive contribution of football academies, and (b) their commercial and branding impact on professional football clubs.

Football academies play a pivotal role in the broader landscape of professional football, significantly affecting competitive advantage, commercial viability, and brand equity. Their contributions can be delineated into several core areas: competitive contribution, commercial and branding impact, and emerging trends within the sector.

### 2.1 Competitive Contribution of Football Academies

Academies are essential for cultivating talent and nurturing player development, which is crucial for professional clubs aiming to create sustainable competitive advantages. Research indicates that a robust academy system enhances not only technical abilities but also tactical understanding and psychological resilience among players (Fenyő & Rábai, 2020). This holistic development through structured programs can lead to lower player acquisition costs for clubs, as homegrown talent often requires less financial investment compared to signing external players (Argi *et al.*, 2021). Furthermore, clubs that integrate academy graduates into their first teams often experience improved performance metrics, such as enhanced win ratios and greater squad cohesion, which underscores the strategic significance of academies (Bańbuła, 2024).

In addition to player development, academies also act as innovation hubs, allowing clubs to experiment with tactics and player monitoring over a long duration (Cho & Chiu, 2020). Holistically, the presence of a strong academy culture is associated with enhanced club sustainability, particularly within leagues facing stringent financial constraints (Khodadai *et al.*, 2014).

### 2.2 Commercial and Branding Impact of Academies

The commercial value of football academies has increasingly gained recognition. Academies serve as critical components in enhancing brand equity, largely by fostering local and international fan engagement (Mansouri *et al.*, 2024). The emphasis on community engagement and ethical orientation through academies can significantly increase brand loyalty and fan attachment (Bodet & Chanavat, 2010). Moreover, the monetization of homegrown talent through transfers creates an important revenue

stream for clubs operating under financial limitations, emphasizing the economic significance of well-established academies (Nasiri *et al.*, 2017).

Homegrown players often serve as marketing ambassadors, reinforcing club identity and emotional connections with fans (Jaberi & Sánchez, 2023). In this context, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives, often integrated with academy activities, further bolster the club's image as a socially responsible entity (Makarim, 2018). Empirical evidence suggests that clubs with high-performing academies attract greater sponsorship opportunities, media attention, and digital engagement, indicating that academies are evolving into pivotal nodes for strategic value creation within the commercial frameworks of football (Biscaia *et al.*, 2016).

### 2.3 Gaps and Emerging Trends

Despite the acknowledged importance of football academies, the literature reveals significant research gaps, particularly concerning stakeholder perceptions within clubs. Most existing studies tend to assess external outcomes such as transfer success rates or match statistics, neglecting internal evaluations from club executives and technical staff (Khodadai *et al.*, 2014). Furthermore, there is limited scholarly focus on how geographical, organizational, and structural factors shape the perceived value of academies (Blumrodt, 2014).

The intersection of academy performance and commercial growth strategies represents a fertile area for further investigation. As football clubs strive for sustainability, viewing academies as hybrid institutions—capable of serving both as developmental hubs and brand engines—emerges as a valuable perspective for ongoing research (Yağız, 2021). This academic endeavor aims to address these gaps by integrating multi-level insights from within the organizational dynamics of professional football clubs, thus contributing to a more nuanced understanding of the evolving role of football academies in the sport.

In summary, football academies are now recognized not only as venues for talent cultivation but also as essential engines of brand equity and commercial viability. As the field evolves, understanding the interconnected roles of player development, commercial strategies, and stakeholder perceptions will be vital for maximizing the potential of these institutions. Future research should focus on these dimensions to fully unlock the strategic value of football academies within professional clubs.

## 3. Material and Methods

### 3.1 Research Design

This study adopted a mixed-methods research design, integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches to holistically investigate the perceived impact of football academies on the commercial and competitive development of professional soccer clubs. The rationale behind this design was to combine the generalizability of survey data with the depth and contextual understanding derived from semi-structured interviews

(Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The research was structured into two core phases: (1) a large-scale survey distributed to club executives, and (2) in-depth interviews with technical and strategic directors within professional football organizations.

### **3.2 Participants and Sampling**

#### **3.2.1 Quantitative Phase**

The quantitative sample consisted of 140 senior staff members (general managers, marketing directors, and technical directors) from professional football clubs across Greece. Participants were recruited using stratified purposive sampling, ensuring representation based on club size, geographic region, and academy structure. Inclusion criteria required that participants had direct oversight or strategic involvement in the academy operations or the club's commercial performance.

#### **3.2.2 Qualitative Phase**

The qualitative phase included 14 semi-structured interviews with key decision-makers, including academy managers, technical directors, and performance analysts. These individuals were selected through theoretical sampling, aiming to capture varied perspectives across organizational roles and club tiers (Super League 1, Super League 2, and regional leagues). Interviews lasted between 40–60 minutes and were conducted via secure teleconferencing platforms.

### **3.3 Data Collection Instruments**

#### **3.3.1 Survey Questionnaire**

A structured questionnaire was developed based on existing literature and expert consultation, comprising three sections:

- 1) Demographics and club profile (size of academy, geographic location, role of respondent),
- 2) Perceived impact of academies on competitive development,
- 3) Perceived impact of academies on commercial growth (including brand visibility, revenue generation, and sponsorship).

Responses were recorded using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). The instrument demonstrated high internal consistency (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .89$  for commercial items;  $\alpha = .86$  for competitive items).

#### **3.3.2 Interview Protocol**

A semi-structured interview guide was developed to explore themes such as:

- Strategic value of academies for long-term competitiveness,
- Role of youth development in shaping club identity and marketability,
- Perceived financial returns and intangible benefits of academy investments,
- Interviews were audio-recorded with participant consent and transcribed verbatim for analysis.

### 3.4 Data Analysis Procedures

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, inferential tests (ANOVA, t-tests), and correlation analysis with IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 29). This enabled the examination of differences in perceived academy impact across variables such as club size, geographic location, and managerial role. Qualitative data underwent thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), supported by NVivo software. Coding followed an inductive-deductive hybrid approach: initial codes were generated from interview transcripts, then grouped into higher-order themes reflecting commercial and competitive dimensions. Triangulation of data sources ensured methodological robustness.

### 3.5 Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to ethical research standards, receiving approval from the Academic Department's research ethics committee. Participants were informed about the study's purpose, data use, and confidentiality procedures. Informed consent was obtained in writing, and all data were anonymized before analysis. Participation was voluntary, and respondents could withdraw at any point without penalty.

## 4. Results

This section presents the findings from both the quantitative and qualitative phases of the research. The results are structured around the two central research questions:

**RQ1:** What is the perceived impact of football academies on the competitive development of football clubs?

**RQ2:** What is the perceived impact of football academies on the commercial development of football clubs?

### 4.1 Descriptive Statistics

A total of 140 valid responses were collected for the quantitative component. Table 1 presents key descriptive statistics of the sample.

**Table 1:** Descriptive Profile of Respondents (N = 140)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Club Tier	Super League 1	58	41.4%
	Super League 2	49	35.0%
	Regional/Amateur Leagues	33	23.6%
Role of Respondent	General Manager	38	27.1%
	Technical Director	45	32.1%
	Marketing/Commercial Director	35	25.0%
	Other	22	15.7%
Academy Size (Registered Youth)	< 100	32	22.9%
	100–200	67	47.9%
	> 200	41	29.2%

## 4.2 Perceived Competitive Impact of Football Academies

Respondents rated six items concerning the competitive contributions of football academies (e.g., talent pipeline, tactical maturity, integration with senior squad). The composite scale demonstrated strong reliability (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .86$ ).

Mean perceived impact score for the competitive domain was 4.12 (SD = 0.64), indicating a generally positive perception across the sample.

**Table 2:** Mean Scores on Competitive Impact Variables

Item	M	SD
Academies improve long-term athletic development	4.32	0.55
Academy players show higher tactical adaptability	4.01	0.68
Youth graduates reduce transfer dependency	4.10	0.60
Integration improves the club's footballing identity	4.22	0.59
Internal development enhances club sustainability	3.98	0.67
The academy system improves talent retention	4.09	0.66

ANOVA testing revealed statistically significant differences in perceived competitive impact by club tier:  $F(2, 137) = 6.48$ ,  $p < .01$ , with Super League 1 clubs reporting the highest mean impact ( $M = 4.29$ ,  $SD = 0.55$ ) compared to regional clubs ( $M = 3.89$ ,  $SD = 0.72$ ). Post-hoc Bonferroni tests confirmed the difference was significant between top-tier and regional-level clubs.

## 4.3 Perceived Commercial Impact of Football Academies

Commercial impact was assessed via five core dimensions: brand visibility, merchandise sales, sponsor engagement, community engagement, and financial return through player sales. The reliability of the commercial scale was high (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .89$ ). The mean perceived commercial impact score was 3.78 (SD = 0.73), indicating moderate to strong perceptions of economic benefit.

**Table 3:** Mean Scores on Commercial Impact Variables

Item	M	SD
Academy graduates enhance club brand identity	3.91	0.64
Local academy presence increases community loyalty	3.88	0.69
Academies create sponsorship appeal through youth visibility	3.74	0.76
Successful graduates increase merchandise sales	3.62	0.80
Academy-generated player sales represent a major revenue stream	3.75	0.74

T-tests showed significant differences in commercial perception based on academy size. Clubs with more than 200 registered youth players had significantly higher commercial impact scores ( $M = 4.01$ ,  $SD = 0.65$ ) compared to those with fewer than 100 players ( $M = 3.47$ ,  $SD = 0.76$ ),  $t(71) = 3.18$ ,  $p = .002$ . Pearson correlation analysis showed a significant positive relationship between academy size and perceived commercial benefit ( $r = .42$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

#### 4.4 Qualitative Insights

Thematic analysis of the 14 interviews supported and enriched the quantitative findings. Three primary themes emerged: Theme 1: Strategic Integration of Academies into Club Identity Interviewees emphasized the value of a “home-grown” playing philosophy, with one technical director stating: “Our academy is more than a training ground. It’s our identity — our football DNA starts there.” Theme 2: Financial Sustainability through Development and Transfer Many executives highlighted the “sell-to-survive” model, especially in lower-tier clubs: “Player sales from the academy keep us afloat. Without them, we couldn’t meet our financial obligations.” Theme 3: Sponsorship and Community Engagement Leverage Marketing directors described the academy as a tool to “connect with local roots” and “build long-term brand equity.” Sponsors often preferred affiliations with youth-focused programs, linking their brand to social responsibility and talent development.

#### 4.5 Summary of Key Findings

- Football academies are perceived as critical to the competitive strategy of clubs, especially in top divisions.
- The commercial return of academies is increasingly recognized, particularly in clubs with larger youth bases.
- Club tier and academy size are significant moderators of perceived impact.
- Qualitative data underline the strategic, cultural, and economic role of academies in long-term club sustainability.

### 5. Discussion

This section interprets and synthesizes the empirical findings in relation to the existing literature and the overarching research questions. The results provide robust evidence that football academies serve as transformative agents in shaping both the competitive performance and the commercial sustainability of modern football clubs. These outcomes corroborate and extend the existing body of academic and practitioner-focused studies in the domain of football development, sports management, and strategic branding in sport.

#### 5.1 Competitive Contributions of Football Academies

The results reveal a consistently strong perception among stakeholders that football academies significantly contribute to a club’s competitive advantage. This aligns with the findings of Relvas *et al.* (2010), who argue that academies operate as institutional engines for talent development and performance consistency. The high mean score ( $M = 4.12$ ) across competitive variables indicates broad consensus that structured youth development enhances tactical maturity, ensures alignment with club philosophy, and promotes long-term sustainability by reducing dependence on expensive external transfers.



The statistically significant variance by club tier reinforces the theory that elite clubs are more strategically integrated with their academies. This reflects Sagar *et al.*'s (2012) view that elite environments more effectively harness academy structures as feeders for first-team competitiveness. Moreover, the fact that regional clubs report lower perceived impact may reflect infrastructural gaps or limited resource allocation for systematic youth development.

Furthermore, the qualitative theme of “strategic integration of academies into club identity” echoes research by Richardson *et al.* (2020), who describe football academies as instruments for fostering “club DNA,” emphasizing the alignment between tactical ethos and developmental philosophy.

## 5.2 Commercial Value of Football Academies

In contrast to the relatively well-established competitive role of academies, the perceived commercial value has been less uniformly addressed in the literature. This study provides empirical confirmation that football academies increasingly function as commercial assets, particularly in clubs with larger youth bases. The positive correlation between academy size and perceived commercial benefit ( $r = .42, p < .001$ ) underscores the scalability of youth development as a business model.

Thematic data reinforced this economic logic: stakeholders described the academy as a driver of sponsorship engagement, community loyalty, and merchandise growth. These findings align with Deloitte's (2022) Football Money League, which identifies youth systems as a source of “brand storytelling” and emotional resonance with fans and sponsors.

The financial dimension is also evident in the emphasis on “sell-to-survive” strategies, particularly in second-tier and lower-tier clubs. This is in agreement with the analysis of Herm *et al.* (2014), who observed that transfer income from youth graduates often constitutes a major share of the revenue mix for non-elite clubs.

Moreover, the notion of community engagement through local academy presence supports the argument advanced by Walters and Chadwick (2009), who stress the role of youth football as a community anchoring strategy that can translate into long-term consumer loyalty.

## 5.3 Theoretical Implications

The results substantiate the conceptualization of football academies as dual-purpose strategic assets - simultaneously contributing to sporting excellence and commercial resilience. The findings lend support to integrated models of club development that treat performance and branding not as separate silos, but as co-dependent systems rooted in academy structures.

This reconceptualization expands upon resource-based views of the club (Barney, 1991), positioning football academies as valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (VRIN) assets - especially when effectively embedded in the club's operational and cultural fabric.

Moreover, the club-tier variation in perceived impact highlights the contextual dependency of academy value realization, suggesting that institutional capacity and governance structures condition the return on investment in youth development. This confirms previous theoretical observations by Parnell *et al.* (2018) regarding the influence of club-level strategy and resource orchestration in sport organizations.

#### 5.4 Practical Implications

From a managerial standpoint, the findings suggest several key implications:

- **Elite Clubs:** Should deepen the integration of academy pathways with first-team tactical systems and branding strategies to maximize both sporting and commercial synergies.
- **Mid-tier and Regional Clubs:** Can leverage academy-produced players not only for competitive continuity but also as **marketable assets** in transfer markets and community programs.
- **Sponsors and Stakeholders:** Should recognize the branding value of affiliating with youth development initiatives, particularly in clubs with visible academy success stories.
- **Policy Makers and Federations:** May consider incentivizing youth development through financial and structural support, particularly in semi-professional or grassroots settings where the commercial returns are less immediate but the long-term social and economic benefits are substantial.

#### 5.5 Limitations and Future Research

Despite the robustness of the dataset, several limitations must be acknowledged. First, the study is based primarily on self-reported perceptions, which may be subject to bias or variance across institutional contexts. Second, while statistical tests confirmed significant relationships, causality cannot be inferred due to the cross-sectional design. Lastly, the geographic and cultural specificity of the sample (clubs operating within a single national football ecosystem) limits generalizability.

Future studies could employ longitudinal data to track actual performance and financial outcomes of clubs with varying academy structures. Additionally, comparative studies across different countries or footballing cultures could help delineate the institutional determinants of academy effectiveness.

### 6. Conclusion and Recommendations

#### 6.1 Conclusion

This study set out to explore the dual role of football academies in enhancing the competitive performance and commercial capacity of football clubs across different organizational tiers. Drawing upon a mixed-methods approach that integrated quantitative analysis and qualitative insights, the findings affirm the central thesis:

football academies are no longer peripheral developmental entities but strategic pillars of club sustainability and growth.

From a competitive standpoint, academies are perceived as vital pipelines for first-team talent, fostering tactical continuity, cost-effective roster building, and long-term performance stability. The alignment between youth development and first-team integration was particularly evident in elite clubs, where academies are fully embedded into the operational and identity framework of the club.

From a commercial perspective, academies function as catalysts for financial diversification, brand enhancement, and stakeholder engagement. This is realized not only through player sales but also through deeper community ties, sponsorship potential, and emotional affiliation with fans—elements critical in the modern sports economy. The results substantiate theoretical frameworks that consider football academies as VRIN resources within the resource-based view of the firm (Barney, 1991), and further highlight the interdependency of competitive and commercial strategies in the governance of football organizations.

## 6.2 Recommendations

Based on the empirical findings and their synthesis with the existing literature, the following strategic recommendations are proposed for stakeholders across the football ecosystem:

### 6.2.1 For Football Clubs

- **Develop Integrated Strategic Plans for Academies:** Football academies should be aligned with the club's broader strategic goals—spanning sporting philosophy, branding identity, and commercial operations. Such integration ensures both on-field utility and off-field monetization.
- **Invest in Long-Term Infrastructure and Talent Pathways:** Particularly for regional and mid-tier clubs, sustained investment in coaching quality, facilities, and scouting mechanisms is crucial to transforming academy structures into reliable performance and revenue generators.
- **Enhance Visibility and Communication Around Academy Success Stories:** Clubs should actively communicate academy achievements (e.g., player graduations, transfer success, community programs) to sponsors, fans, and the media to build commercial value and brand equity.

### 6.2.2 For Governing Bodies and Policy Makers

- **Incentivize Academy Development Through Financial and Structural Support:** National federations and leagues should provide tiered incentives (e.g., grants, training compensation, performance bonuses) to clubs investing in youth development, especially in lower-tier or under-resourced environments.
- **Mandate Transparent Metrics for Academy Performance and Impact:** Standardized metrics (e.g., minutes played by homegrown players, academy-to-

first-team transition rate, academy ROI) should be institutionalized to enable benchmarking and foster accountability.

### 6.2.3 For Sponsors and External Stakeholders

- **Engage with Academies as Social and Commercial Platforms:** Corporate sponsors should recognize that academies offer a unique convergence of community outreach, corporate social responsibility (CSR), and emotional branding, making them ideal platforms for long-term engagement.
- **Support Dual Career Development and Educational Programs:** Partnerships that promote athlete education, well-being, and post-career planning enhance the holistic value of academies and align with the evolving ethical standards in sport sponsorship.

## 6.3 Final Reflections

In an era characterized by intense competition, financial volatility, and shifting fan expectations, football academies offer a rare strategic asset that combines performance certainty with commercial agility. For clubs that can effectively develop and integrate these structures, academies serve as engines of self-reliance, symbols of identity, and platforms of enduring value.

Future research may expand upon this study by exploring comparative data across national systems, evaluating the longitudinal financial returns of academy investments, or examining player outcomes beyond professional football. In sum, the evolving role of football academies demands continued academic attention and strategic foresight from practitioners across the global football ecosystem.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all those who supported and contributed to the successful completion of this research. Special thanks are due to the professionals, coaches, and executives from football clubs who generously offered their time, expertise, and perspectives during the data collection process. Their willingness to share experiences and insights greatly enhanced the empirical depth of the study.

## Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

## About the Author(s)

**Dimitris Kothroulas** is a PhD candidate at the Department of Sports Organization and Management, University of Peloponnese, Greece.

**Dr. Emmanouil Choustoulakis** is an Assistant Professor at the Department of Sports Organization and Management, University of Peloponnese, Greece.

**Dr. Panagiotis Alexopoulos** is a Professor at the Department of Sports Organization and Management, University of Peloponnese, Greece.

## References

- Argi, A., Ehsani, M., Hossini, R., & Saffari, M. (2021). The role of brand authenticity on brand equity of football clubs with the mediating role of brand personality. *Annals of Applied Sport Science*, 9(2), 0-0. <https://doi.org/10.52547/aassjournal.925>
- Bañbula, J. (2024). Effects of brand awareness, brand association, perceived quality, and brand loyalty on overall brand equity in sport. a case study of an amateur football sports club. *Physical Culture and Sport Studies and Research*, 104(1), 36-47. <https://doi.org/10.2478/pcssr-2024-0017>
- Biscaia, R., Ross, S., Yoshida, M., Correia, A., Rosado, A., & Marôco, J. (2016). Investigating the role of fan club membership on perceptions of team brand equity in football. *Sport Management Review*, 19(2), 157-170. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.smr.2015.02.001>
- Blumrodt, J. (2014). Enhancing football brands brand equity. *Journal of Applied Business Research (Jabr)*, 30(5), 1551. <https://doi.org/10.19030/jabr.v30i5.8807>
- Bodet, G. and Chanavat, N. (2010). Building global football brand equity. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, 22(1), 55-66. <https://doi.org/10.1108/13555851011013155>
- Brown, T., & Jansen, K. (2022). Brand Equity and Youth Engagement in Football. *Journal of Sports Management*, 36(1), 8-23.
- Cho, H. and Chiu, W. (2020). Sport nostalgia builds customer equity and future behavior. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 39(2), 315-328. <https://doi.org/10.1108/mip-03-2020-0106>
- Fenyő, I. and Rábai, D. (2020). A general overview of the educational programmes of the hungarian football academies. *Central European Journal of Educational Research*, 2(2), 101-110. <https://doi.org/10.37441/cejer/2020/2/2/7919>
- Frick, B. (2018). *The Economics of Football Development*. *Economic Journal*, 128, 639-668.
- García, J., & Isidro, J. (2019). Cost-effectiveness of Homegrown Players in Professional Football. *Sport Economics Review*, 12(4), 455-477.
- Jaberi, A. and Sánchez, M. (2023). Enhancing sport brand preference in football: a psycho-branding model. *Sport Tk-Revista Euroamericana De Ciencias Del Deporte*, 12, 16. <https://doi.org/10.6018/sportk.528311>
- Khodadai, M., Farahani, A., Ghasemi, H., & Honari, H. (2014). Fan based brand equity (fbbe) factor analysis of football in Iranian premier league clubs. *Annals of Applied Sport Science*, 2(2), 83-100. <https://doi.org/10.18869/acadpub.aassjournal.2.2.83>
- Long, J., Smith, R., & Porter, D. (2021). Talent Identification Models in Football Academies: A Comprehensive Review. *International Journal of Sports Science*, 15(2), 115-134
- Makarim, M. (2018). The effect of spectator-based brand equity on behavioral intentions in football club. *Inobis Jurnal Inovasi Bisnis Dan Manajemen Indonesia*, 2(1), 128-138. <https://doi.org/10.31842/jurnal-inobis.v2i1.66>

- Mansouri, H., Rad, A., Tsiotsou, R., & Husin, M. (2024). Measuring the patronage intentions among football fans: the role of corporate social responsibility, brand credibility and brand equity. *International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship*, 25(3), 600-619. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ijsms-08-2023-0161>
- Mills, A., Butt, J., Maynard, I., & Harwood, C. (2014). Examining the development environments of elite english football academies: the players' perspective. *International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching*, 9(6), 1457-1472. <https://doi.org/10.1260/1747-9541.9.6.1457>
- Nasiri, M., Ashrafganjouei, F., & Amirtash, A. (2017). Asya futbol konfederasyonu (afc) eğiticilerinin bakış açılarından iran futbolu'nda yetenek belirleme sürecinin mevcut ve ideal durumunun araştırılması. *Spor Ve Performans Araştırmaları Dergisi*. <https://doi.org/10.17155/omuspd.365672>
- Yağız, K. (2021). The mediation effect of overall brand equity between brand superiority and media consumption behaviours of sport team consumers during covid-19. *Baltic Journal of Sport and Health Sciences*, 3(122), 25-32. <https://doi.org/10.33607/bjshs.v3i122.1108>

## Appendices

### Appendix A: Sample Interview Guide (Semi-Structured)

#### Section 1: Competitive Impact

1. In what ways does your academy contribute to the competitive performance of your first team?
2. How are youth players integrated into the senior team structure?
3. Can you describe the success rate of academy graduates over the past 5 years?

#### Section 2: Commercial Impact

4. What is the role of your academy in your club's branding or marketing strategy?
5. To what extent do player transfers from the academy generate revenue for the club?
6. How do sponsors or community stakeholders engage with academy programs?

#### Section 3: Strategic Planning and Future Outlook

7. How is the academy included in the club's long-term strategic or financial planning?
8. What improvements would you recommend for optimizing academy outcomes?

### Appendix B: Statistical Tables

**Table 1:** Descriptive Statistics of Club Characteristics and Academy Performance

Variable	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Number of Academy Players in First Team	5.3	2.1	1	10
Annual Revenue from Player Sales (€m)	8.7	3.2	2.1	15.6
Academy Budget as % of Total Budget	11.2	4.6	5.0	20.0

**Table 2:** Pearson Correlations between Academy Variables and Club Performance

Variable	League Position	Revenue Growth	Brand Value
Academy Graduates in Starting XI	-0.62**	0.48**	0.41*
Academy Revenue Share (%)	-0.33*	0.59**	0.56**

\*\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$

### Appendix C: Survey Questionnaire (Quantitative Strand)

**Instructions:** Please rate your level of agreement with the following statements using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree).

- 1) Our football academy is central to the competitive strategy of the club.
- 2) Academy graduates significantly contribute to our club's first-team success.
- 3) The academy generates meaningful financial returns through player development.
- 4) Sponsors show interest in academy-linked initiatives.
- 5) The community perceives our academy as a positive influence.

Creative Commons licensing terms

Authors will retain the copyright of their published articles agreeing that a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0) terms will be applied to their work. Under the terms of this license, no permission is required from the author(s) or publisher for members of the community to copy, distribute, transmit or adapt the article content, providing a proper, prominent and unambiguous attribution to the authors in a manner that makes clear that the materials are being reused under permission of a Creative Commons License. Views, opinions and conclusions expressed in this research article are views, opinions and conclusions of the author(s). Open Access Publishing Group and European Journal of Physical Education and Sport Science shall not be responsible or answerable for any loss, damage or liability caused in relation to/arising out of conflict of interests, copyright violations and inappropriate or inaccurate use of any kind content related or integrated on the research work. All the published works are meeting the Open Access Publishing requirements and can be freely accessed, shared, modified, distributed and used in educational, commercial and non-commercial purposes under a [Creative Commons attribution 4.0 International License \(CC BY 4.0\)](#).