

Word Count: 6590

LEVERAGING BEHAVIOURAL INSIGHTS TO ADVISE NORWICH CITY ON BOOSTING MATCHDAY REVENUE

Tylan Thomas (ECO - Student)

Executive Summary

This consultancy report examines how behavioural economics can be harnessed to enhance matchday revenues and attendance at Norwich City Football Club (hereafter Norwich). Motivated by the widening financial gap between lower-division clubs and the Premier League, this study asks: How can the matchday experience be changed to influence spending patterns and attendance at Norwich?

Findings suggest that modest time-bound rewards, social-norm activators, and gamified penalties can each recalibrate fan routines and increase per-capita spend. By aggregating theory and practice, this work offers Norwich's commercial team an insight into what similar sized clubs have done to inform them on future interventions.

Recommendations for Norwich City Football Club

Through the culmination of literature and case studies, the following recommendations have been made to Norwich to influence fan behaviour and subsequently boost matchday revenue. "Big games" do not require extra encouragement for the regular match goer, so therefore the greatest marginal gains lie in less desirable fixtures where incentives can have their greatest influence, making this the subject of much of the recommendations.

1. Food and Beverage Promotions

Food and beverage promotions should be used on midweek games to lower the perceived effort of attending. When a game is scheduled after work, many may deem the arrangement of dinner as a hassle that they cannot be bothered with. By offering a discount on food, the club is lowering this barrier by combining what could be several arrangements for the evening into one. A quality offering also has the potential to permanently shift behaviour, encouraging fans to attend games earlier in future when there is no promotion with the promise that they will be satisfied. Increased revenues will follow as fans shift their pre-match attention to the stadium instead of the local area.

2. Engaging Family Zone

Weekend games that are less enticing to the average supporter present the opportunity to gain traction from families. As parents make plans for the weekend, having a "family zone" which opens pre-game makes it easy for parents to choose matchday at Norwich as their "day out" compared to making several plans to fill the day. By doing this, the club is also encouraging a group to attend for an extended period, meaning that more is likely to be spent on concessions and merchandising whilst also embedding the behaviour of going to the game into young fans' minds.

3. Enticing New Fans

Norwich has a strong base of season ticket holders which can be leveraged during games that “fair-weather” fans do not view as being worth going to. This can be done by offering discounted additional tickets to season ticket holders for games that are unlikely to sell-out, making sure that ticket revenue is being preserved as well as maintaining the potential for concession and merchandising revenue.

4. Disincentivising No Shows

Finally, the simplest way to increase matchday spending at a club like Norwich, who have a high proportion of season ticket holders, is to ensure that attendance equals ticket sales. By disincentivising no shows through the potential loss of their season ticket once a threshold is met, fans are encouraged to either attend or sell on their ticket, therefore increasing the possibility of concession and merchandising sales on matchday.

1. Introduction

Football clubs outside of the top divisions of English football are becoming ever more reliant on matchday revenues to stop the disparities between themselves and their counterparts playing at the elite level becoming too wide. Due to the inequality in broadcast revenues between the Premier League (Average earning £121 million (Deloitte, 2021)) and even the Championship (Average earning £23.5 million (Deloitte, 2021)), clubs who participate in the latter or below must make every effort to maximise their matchday revenue, whether this be through ticket sales, in-stadium hospitality, concessions, or merchandising. For Norwich, whose revenue streams must balance the aspirations of Premier League competition with the realities of Championship budgeting, understanding the subtle drivers of fan engagement and spending is essential for progress. Whilst traditional commercial strategies have been used at Carrow Road, there are still opportunities to fully capitalise on the psychological and social impulses that guide individual decisions on a matchday.

Behavioural economics offer a rich toolkit for unpacking these opportunities. Whether it be through framing, nudges, or drawing on the human mind's natural loss aversion, these tools have been used across society for a long time to encourage individuals to make decisions that they themselves believe to be in their best interest. Despite proven efficacy in sectors such as public health and personal finance, less research has been done on how this can be used in live-sporting events, with an even smaller amount looking into how this can be applied within English football. Whilst there are some examples in the general sporting context - such as Barilla et al. (2008) looking into the effects of merchandising on matchday attendance on American sports and Rand et al. (2020) analysing how interventions can increase attendance and participation at fitness venues – there is little systematic synthesis of how such techniques might enhance the matchday experience and therefore per-capita spending at mid-sized clubs like Norwich.

This therefore leads the dissertation to ask the following question:

- *How can the matchday experience be changed to influence spending patterns and attendance at Norwich City FC?*

With the goal being to:

- *Advise Norwich City FC on what the most effective way of improving the matchday experience to positively influence spending patterns is*

In terms of relevancy, this question and goal leads to an analysis which can be directly referenced by Norwich's commercial and matchday operations teams as they try to refine their delivery of service, allowing a maximisation of revenues through an uplift in the fan experience. More broadly, it speaks to an under-served niche in sports-economics, sports marketing, and sports management, offering lessons for clubs with similar fanbases and resource constraints.

To address this, the methodological approach undertaken is a scoping study using the following desk-based research:

1. Behavioural Economic Frameworks

To begin, we aim to draw together concepts from a range of behavioural economic concepts in an aim to understand not only what works to create behavioural change, but also what is applicable to the case study at hand. Such models allow us to understand social cues, cognitive biases, and choice architecture, along with which are most pertinent in the environment of a football matchday.

2. Analysis of Empirical Evidence from Sport

Next, the aim is to narrow the scope of behavioural studies by analysing empirical studies in sports and entertainment, along with hospitality to compare outcome measures in settings that are relatable to that of Norwich. This gives us further nuance on what behavioural techniques have been used, and where available, proven to have the greatest success in the industry, providing insights on transferability.

3. Application to Norwich City FC

Finally, the insights gathered will be used to advise how Norwich can alter their current matchday operations to initiate behavioural change among spectators, giving them an opportunity to increase matchday revenue. By drawing on publicly available interventions used by other clubs, we can compare how well Norwich does against these and suggest additions to their matchday programme.

By conducting this review, two main contributions to the literature are made. Firstly, it aggregates the current literature of behavioural economics related to live-sporting events, offering a more concise point of reference for those interested in this relationship whilst also extending it to English football – an area which has largely been neglected in this area. Secondly, it achieves the goal of the consultancy project by using contextual strategies of similar clubs to advise Norwich on what could be done to maximise matchday revenue. These recommendations can ensure that future matchdays at Carrow Road are both more enjoyable for fans and more profitable for the club.

By having a single club impetus, a unique balance is struck between academia and applicability. The insights generated will serve Norwich's commercial needs and provide a blueprint for other similar clubs.

2. Literature Review

Through synthesising theoretical frameworks of behavioural change with empirical evidence from interventions in both sport and non-sport contexts, this section provides a review of the existing academic literature required to effectively advise Norwich. It proceeds in four parts: (1) theoretical frameworks for behavioural change; (2) applications in non-sport; (3) sports and entertainment interventions; (4) emerging evidence in football, and (5) gaps and contribution.

2.1 Theoretical Frameworks for Behavioural Change

Behavioural change research aims to explain why individuals deviate from the “Rational Actor” model (i.e., why do they not do they not always evaluate their goals, options and possible outcomes in order to optimise such to suit their self-interest). Evidently, we do not act on these assertions, with the common interpretation that cognitive biases and social influences systematically shape decisions (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979). There are several frameworks which aim to guide the application of behavioural change techniques, with the following being just two examples:

The COM-B Model (Michie, van Stralen & West, 2011), which posits that behaviour (B) occurs when capability (C), opportunity (O), and motivation (M) interact. Capability covers psychological and physical skills, opportunity includes environmental and social contexts, whilst motivation comprises reflective and automatic processes. By taking these into account we have a basis on which to map change through identifying the most effective levers.

Building on this, the EAST Framework (Behavioural Insights Team, 2014) provides a checklist for planning behavioural interventions with the goal of making them applicable to real world problems. By making the change Easy, Attractive, Social, and Timely, you are incentivising individuals to partake through reducing their perceived effort.

Gneezy et al. (2020) look at behavioural change through an incentive based approach and how tangible rewards or penalties can reshape behaviour through four key mechanisms. (1) Habit formation, where repeated rewards build a stock of desired behaviour that persists post-incentive; (2) Habit disruption, where temporary abstinence incentives erode existing undesired routines; (3) Present-bias mitigation, by front-loading or frequently pacing payments to align immediate costs with long-term benefits; and (4) Barrier reduction, through subsidising or simplifying actions to lower the cost of switching. An effective program design will match incentive structure and timing to the specific behavioural challenge, to allow change to take place and be sustained.

2.2 Applications in Non-Sport

Behavioural interventions have been used effectively across society. Public health, finance and healthcare services have benefitted immensely from leveraging these interventions with the following examples exhibiting such.

Within health, Johnson & Goldstein (2003) carried out a study on whether defaulting organ donation from opt-in to opt-out would affect actual donation rates. This was due to there being an “attitude-action” gap between the support of donation and registration, leading the review to analyse whether presumed consent (opt-out) could save more lives. Using data from 1991–2001 on cadaveric donations per million population and controlling for infrastructure, education, religion, and year effects, the analysis showed that switching to opt-out raised actual donation rates by 16.3% - showing that defaults can shape life-and-death outcomes.

Allcott (2011) also used a behavioural framework to assess whether leveraging social norms would be effective in increasing household energy conservation. Households received periodic mailings showing how their usage ranks against neighbours and an “injunctive norm” label (“Great,” “Good,” or “Below Average”) plus customized “action steps” for saving energy. By simply providing consumers with this information there was an average 2% reduction in electricity consumption – equivalent to an 11-20% price increase – illuminating that making normal behaviour apparent to consumers can positively cause change.

Thaler & Benartzi (2004) demonstrate how nudges can encourage employees toward higher savings while preserving opt-out freedom through their “Save More Tomorrow” (SMarT) design. The design is a prescriptive commitment which has four key features: Pre-commitment, linked increases gradual ratcheting and easy opt-out. One of the field implementations demonstrated that from 315 eligible workers, 162 (78% of those approached) joined SMarT. Through four annual raises, average savings of SMarT participants rose from 3.5% to 13.6% of salary, with 80% retention through year 4. Given its scalability and strong field results, SMarT offers a powerful tool for improving retirement preparedness

2.3 Applications in Sport and Entertainment

These interventions are also beginning to be applied across live-sporting events, fitness venues and hospitality, with implementation being introduced to increase consumer spending across merchandising and concessions sales, along with overall attendance.

Boyd and Krehbiel (2006) attempted to identify which promotional tactics most effectively boost MLB home-game attendance, analysing all home games in 2002. The results show that any promotion raised attendance by 3,240 fans on average ($p < .01$), with bobblehead giveaways having the single most powerful (effect = 6,674; $p < .01$), followed by a giveaway + special event (6,525; $p < .01$). Whilst this is not directly related to consumption on matchday, it does demonstrate that behavioural techniques can positively influence sports fans.

In an aim to increase attendance and engagement at commercial gyms, Rand et al. (2020) trialled several behavioural techniques to find what was the most effective. Although they found that stand-alone reminders and one-off incentives had little effect, it was shown that combining problem solving with pros and cons exercises or pairing goal setting with

reviewing the said goals can indeed have a significant impact on participation and attendance.

2.4 Emerging Evidence in Football Contexts

Whilst academic work on behavioural change within football remains scarce, there are some examples of the relationship between fan behaviour and attendance.

Shakina, et al. (2020) used data on 1,114 Brazilian State Championship matches (2013–15) to decipher whether an uncertain outcome within a game or a “brand team” being involved had a greater effect on attendance. The results showed that matches featuring historically successful “brand” clubs drive significantly higher attendance even when the outcome is almost certain, and that there is only a relationship between uncertainty attendance when a brand team is not involved. Overall, the study finds that fan emotions are more powerfully swayed by star clubs than by competitive balance, meaning that clubs like Norwich must provide extra incentives to make sure that matchday revenue is upheld.

2.5 Gaps and Contribution

So, despite robust evidence for behavioural change in health, finance and entertainment, the transfer of these insights to live football experiences is severely underdeveloped. The literature review suggests that there are few sports-based studies that have applied comprehensive frameworks (COM-B, EAST) to map interventions across matchday touchpoints. As mentioned, there is very little work on anything to do with behavioural change among football fans, meaning that this is a new space where football specific counterfactual controls (team performance and weather) have to be accounted for.

As well as aiming to advise Norwich’s commercial strategy, this dissertation aims to address these gaps by carrying out a desk-based review that draws together behavioural frameworks and intra-industry evidence to map out how these can be used. The result aims to provide a coherent set of recommendations that are based on both theory and empirical insights, therefore creating an environment for behaviour to shift on matchdays.

3. Case Studies

This section delivers six club case studies: Norwich City, Hull City, Fulham, Brentford, West Bromwich Albion, and Swansea City. These clubs have been chosen due to their likeness in size to Norwich, but also their diverse geography to provide variation. The goal is to provide summaries that illustrate the club's origins, demographics, recent sporting performance, revenue analysis, season ticket sales and promotional activities to be used for evaluation at the end of the chapter.

3.1 Introduction

Sport clubs engage in a range of traditional economic activities that are of very significant commercial value. These include: the selling of tickets for in-person attendance at sporting events; securing advertising and sponsorship deals; hiring players, athletes, managers, and other personnel; and the sale of merchandise.

The reliance of the different forms of revenue that these economic activities generate has evolved over time. Historically, match-day revenue was the primary source of income for clubs and continues to be so for those lower down the pyramid. Since the formation of the English Premier League (EPL) in 1992, money received from broadcasting rights have become the dominant revenue driver, particularly at the highest levels of football. In 2022/23, for example, EPL clubs received £3.2bn in broadcast revenue compared with £867m in matchday revenue.

The following case studies on selected football clubs provide insight into on how revenue and sources of revenue have evolved since 2011/12, their sporting performance, the composition of their fan base (attendance, season ticket holders) and information relating to promotional activities associated with the matchday experience (where known and sourced from website material and club financial accounts and reports). The first case study is Norwich, which is chosen since it is the club that this study is providing recommendations to. The subsequent case studies are chosen as close comparators to Norwich based on criteria primarily associated with size/composition of fan base and sporting performance.

3.2 Case Study 1: Norwich City Football Club (Norwich)

Norwich were founded in 1902 and have spent the majority of their history in the top 2 tiers of English football, with their most successful spell coming in the late 80s and early 90's where they placed third in the inaugural Premier League season in 1992/93. They have also won two League Cups in 1962 and 1985.

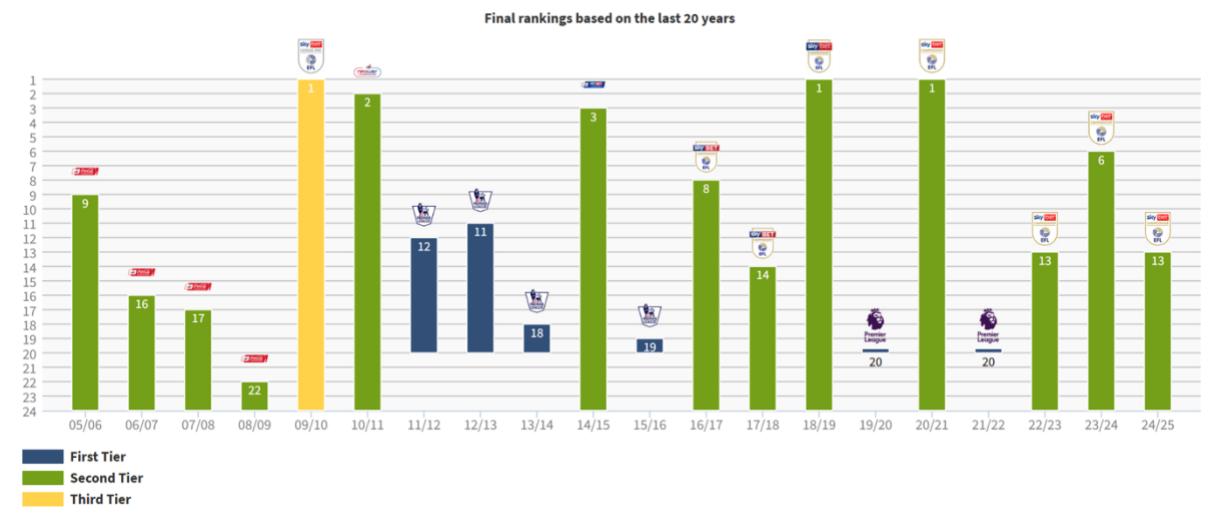
Despite being the largest city in the east of England, Norwich has one of the smallest fan catchment populations out of the case studies, with 143,900 people residing in the city (ONS, 2023).

Norwich currently competes in the second tier of English football, the EFL Championship, where they have remained for the past three seasons including 2024/25. Often described as

a "yo-yo" club, Norwich have alternated between the Premier League and Championship in recent years, typically facing relegation after just one season in the top tier (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Sporting Performance (League and League Position): Norwich City Football Club

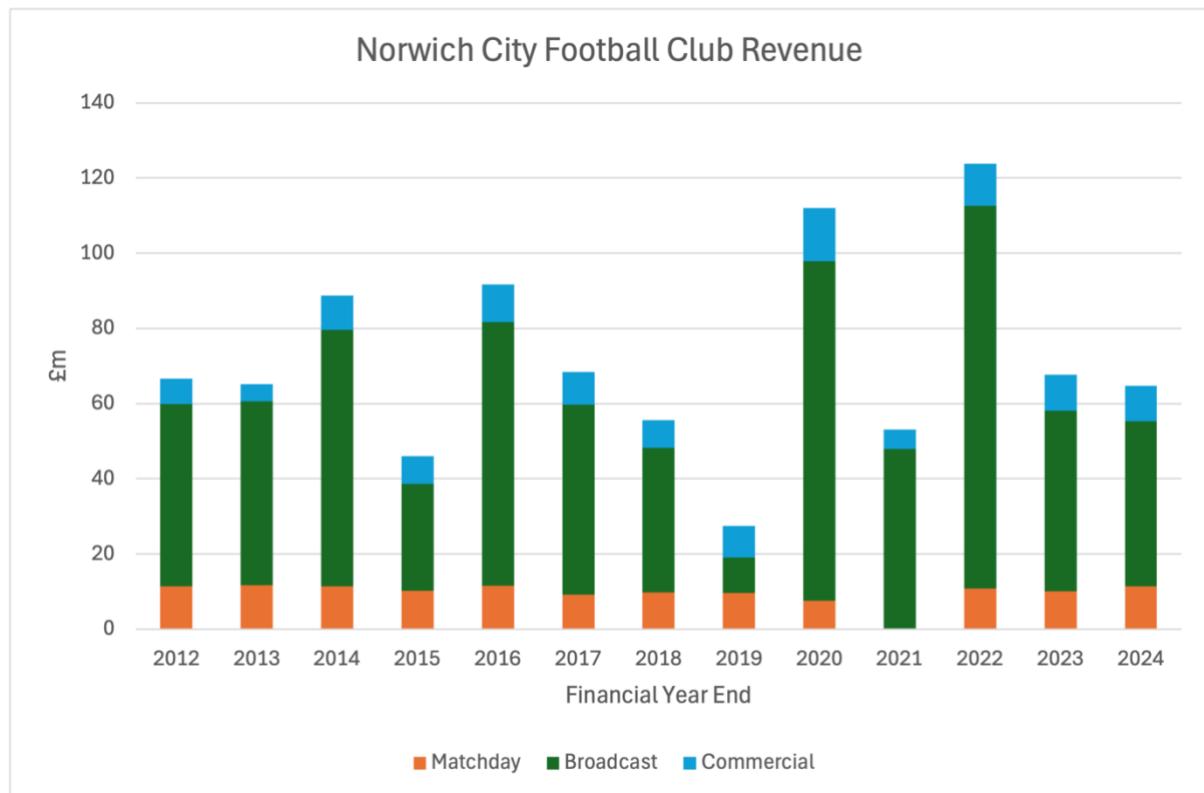
HISTORICAL PLACES



Source: Transfermarkt.

As illustrated in Figure 2, Norwich's overall revenue is heavily influenced by the league in which they compete, with significant financial gains associated with Premier League participation particularly from broadcast income. For example, the 2019/2020 season, when Norwich were competing in the Premier League, saw a near tenfold increase in broadcast revenue when compared to the previous season. The following season (2020/21), following Norwich's relegation back to the Championship, broadcast revenue more than halved despite being in receipt of parachute payments.

Figure 2: Norwich City Football Club: Sources of Revenue 2012-2024



Data source: Company Financial Accounts

In contrast, matchday revenue tends to remain relatively stable both over time and across leagues. The obvious exception was during the 2020/21 season where matchday revenue was severely affected by the pandemic in which almost all matches that season were played in empty stadia.

One of the reasons for the stability in matchday revenue is due to Norwich having a high proportion of season ticket holders. The current capacity of Carrow Road (Norwich's stadium) is 27,244 with around 75% of this capacity associated with season ticket holders. As will be discussed later, this is a high figure relative to the other case studies. On the one hand, this provides the club with a guaranteed source of income but, on the other hand, the club may be missing out on additional revenue streams due to the behaviour of season ticket holders. This is because season ticket holders typically tend to arrive at the stadium close to kick-off time. In doing so they generally spend less than causal (non-regular) fans. It is also the case that season ticket holders may not show up at all. The prevalence of no-shows has been an area that has attracted attention in the academic literature in recent years (see, for example, Schreyer et al., 2018; Karg et al., 2021; Popp et al., 2024).

This has resulted in Norwich introducing some promotions in 2024/25 to encourage attendees and specifically to encourage attendees to arrive at the stadium earlier. A free drinks promotion was offered to fans that arrived at the stadium at least 45 minutes before kick-off for the match against Millwall on 26th December (3pm kick-off) and the match against Queens Park Rangers on 29th December (12:30pm kick-off).

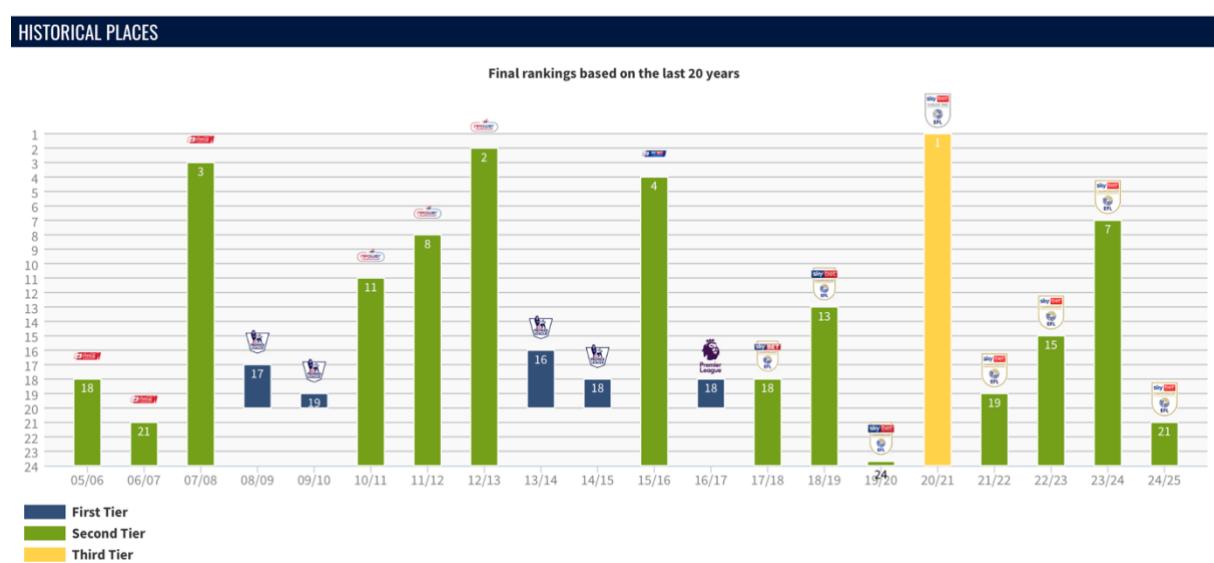
3.3 Case Study 2: Hull City Football Club (Hull)

Hull were founded in 1904, and after decades in lower divisions they made their first ever Premier League appearance in the 2008/09 campaign, although they were subsequently relegated that same season.

The club is in the East Riding of Yorkshire in Kingston upon Hull. In the 2021 Census (ONS, 2023), the region was reported to have a population of 267,000.

Hull also currently operate in the EFL championship, with a similar “yo-yo” like performance to Norwich since 2011/12. They have spent most of their time in the Championship during this time with several stints in the Premier League and one season in EFL League 1, in which they achieved promotion back to the Championship immediately (see Figure 3).

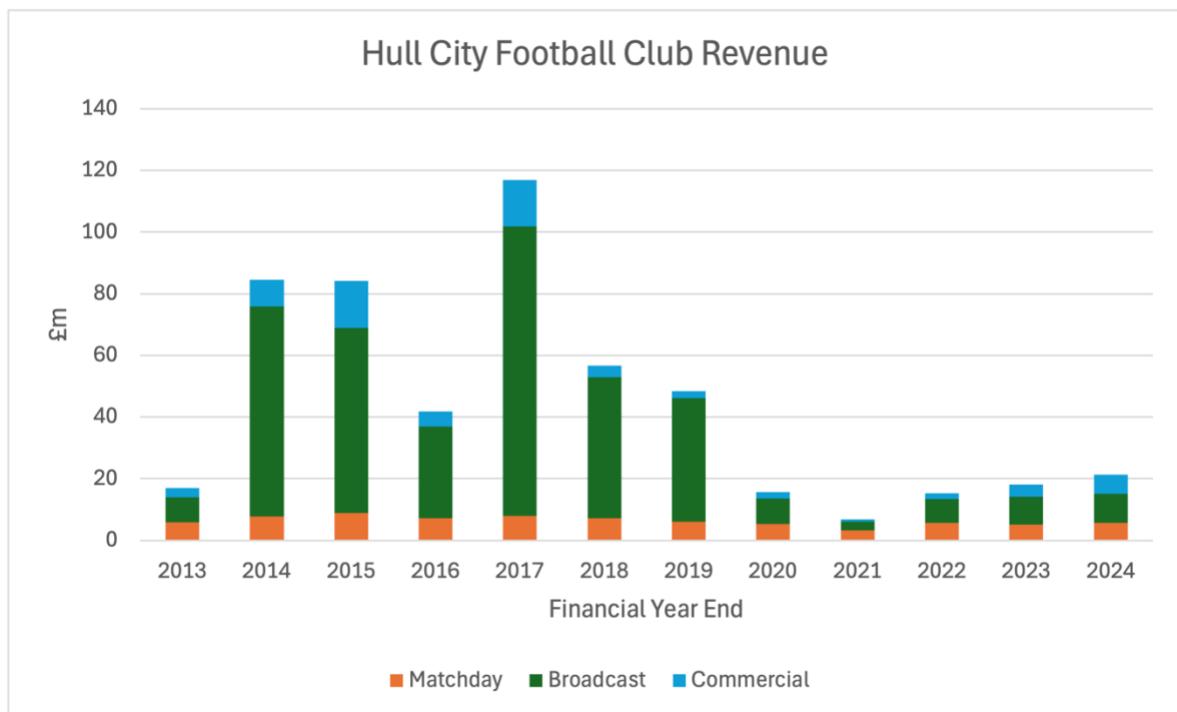
Figure 3: Sporting Performance (League and League Position): Hull City Football Club



Source: Transfermarkt.

We can also see from combining Figures 3 and 4 that there is a strong correlation between Hull City's revenue and the league that they are competing in. From the data we can see even further disparities between inter-league revenues due to their season in EFL League 1 during the 2020/21 season. At the end of that year, their financial accounts reported a mere £6.8 million compared to their last Premier League season in 2017 where it exceeded £116 million; almost a 20 times difference. The significance of broadcast revenue is also exhibited here, with the 2017 season resulting in a broadcast revenue that was almost 15 times that of the total revenue in the 2020 accounts (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: Hull City Football Club: Sources of Revenue 2013-2024



Data source: Company Financial Accounts

Whilst matchday revenue is relatively consistent across seasons, it has altered slightly when looking at the trend in which the club appears to be heading. Between 2014 and 2017, the time in which they were in the Premier League in 3 of the 4 seasons, they were receiving an average of £7.9 million through matchday streams compared to £5.5 million since their promotion from League 1 in 2021.

Although this is not the most significant of differences, it is still a larger proportional change than Norwich, and could once again reflect their season-ticket holder ratio. Hull's MKM Stadium holds 25,586 fans, with around 60% being season ticket holders. However, average attendances for most seasons fall between 12,000 and 21,000, making season ticket holders a larger proportion of overall attendees. This has probably been what has kept matchday relatively stable and not directly proportional with overall attendance figures. Whilst this does bring stability, it also means that in order to increase matchday revenue Hull either need to attract more fair-weather fans or change the habits of season ticket holders who are 'stuck in their way'.

Hull City's approach focuses on creating an immersive matchday experience that draws fans in earlier. For example, their dedicated matchday page details the Junior Fan Park, first opening in October 2024, which opens well before kick-off. This area features, face painting, balloon art, and even interactive games like giant Connect Four or football challenges. The idea is that by offering a fun, engaging pre-match environment, fans (especially families) are encouraged to arrive earlier. The extended matchday experience paves the way for fans to explore and spend on food, merchandise, and other offerings throughout the stadium.

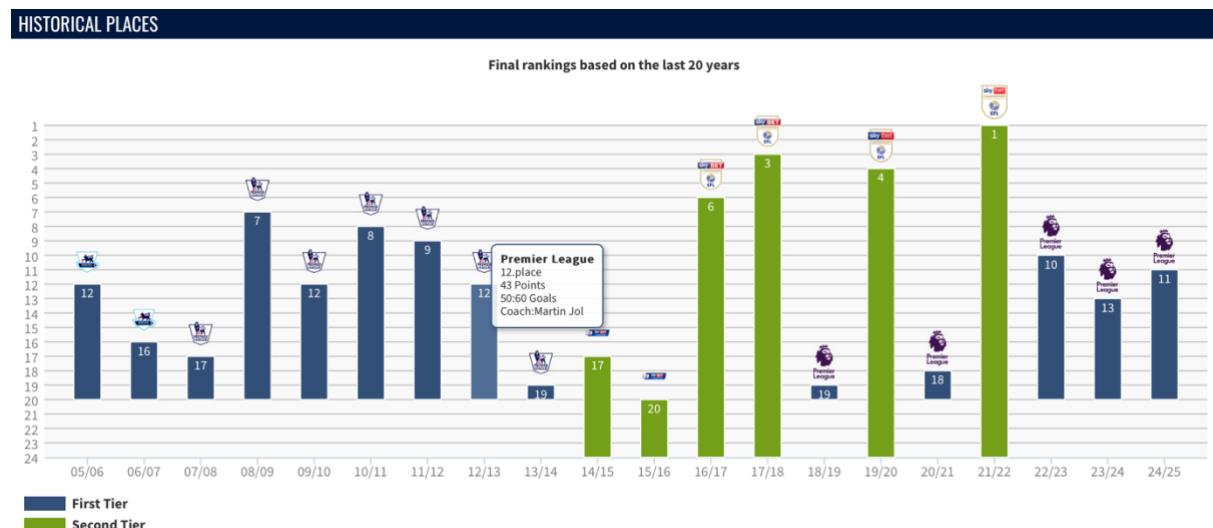
3.4 Case Study 3: Fulham Football Club (Fulham)

Established in 1879, Fulham FC is London's oldest professional club, playing at Craven Cottage. They have been characterised by their community roots and reached the top tier of English football in 1949, and mainly oscillated between the top two divisions of English football ever since.

Fulham play their home games in the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham. It is notably one of the most affluent areas not just in London, but in the UK as a whole (median salary in 2024 = £46.2 thousand (Plumplot, 2025). Despite it only being a borough within a city, the high population density of London is reflected by 183,000 residents (ONS, 2023).

Even though Fulham have spent most of the last 25 years as a Premier League club, since 2011/12 they also seem to have adopted the “yo-yo club” tagline. Operating in the Premier League for the last 3 seasons, they have re-established themselves comfortably as a “mid-table” side (see Figure 5).

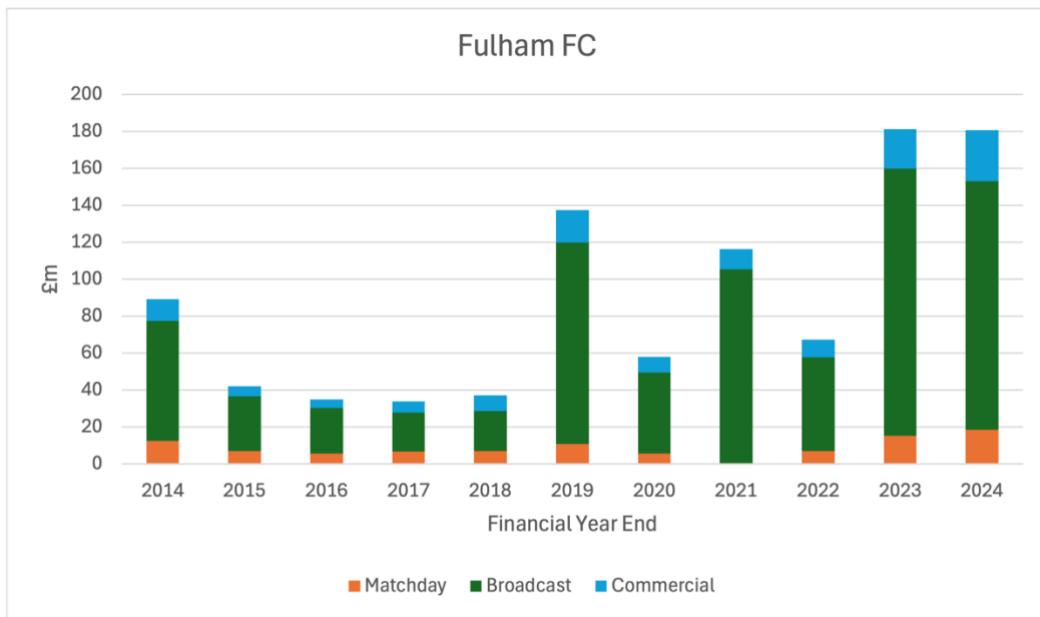
Figure 5: Sporting Performance (League and League Position): Fulham Football Club



Source: Transfermarkt.

Broadcast receipts dominate Fulham's income in top-flight years (peaking around £140 m). Since the launch of 'The Riverside', the refurbishment and upgrade of their premium stand, they have seen matchday revenue rise steeply to £15 and £18 million in 2023 and 2024 respectively, an increase from £6.8 million in the year prior to the stand being built. The COVID-19 season triggered a 75 % drop in matchday income, but broadcast streams remained largely intact thanks to contractual protections (see Figure 6).

Figure 6: Fulham Football Club: Sources of Revenue 2014-2024



Data source: Company Financial Accounts

Craven Cottage typically sells about 20,000 season tickets (around 78 % of capacity). While this ensures a solid core fan base, once again it must be highlighted that high season-ticket saturation can limit single-match sales and fan turnover, potentially capping ancillary spend per attendee.

In terms of promotional activities, Fulham's 'Family Zone' was introduced in 2017 in partnership with Konami and encourages families to arrive up to an hour and a half before kick-off so that the children can meet the club mascot and engage with other young Fulham fans. They also carry out giveaways and offer club related faces painting at select games. By doing this, it incentivises junior to ask their parents to attend games earlier so that they can enjoy the pre match activities, meaning that whole families are already in the stadium and potentially spending money rather than just a single ticket holder on their own. Also, in August 2024 they offered alcoholic beverages for just £1 when arriving between one and three hours before the game to avoid issues with their new ticketing system, once again making sure that fans are in the ground early with an extra hour to kill before kick-off where they will likely spend more.

3.5 Case Study 4: Brentford Football Club (Brentford)

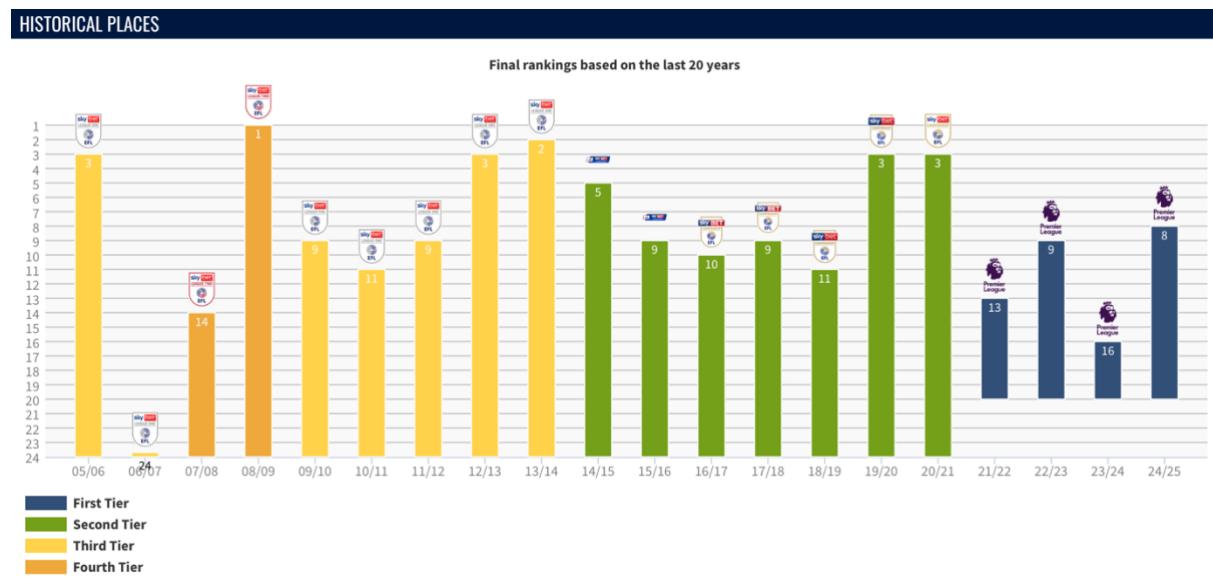
Founded in 1889, Brentford have spent much of their history in the lower leagues of English football. However, after shifting towards their strategy and recruitment process to one that

is heavily data driven, they have risen up the leagues and reached the Premier League for the first time in 2021.

Brentford's G-Tech Community Stadium is also located in West London in the London Borough of Hounslow. The population of the borough is 288,200, another reflection of London's dense population (ONS, 2023).

Despite Brentford spending a similar amount of time in the Premier League compared to Norwich, they are an example of steady progression rather than "yo-yo-ing". Expanding the sample slightly, since 2008/09 they have played in every professional league in England after promotion from EFL League 2 that year. Since 2011/12 they have spent three years in League 1, seven years in the Championship and the last 4 in the Premier League whilst also being on course towards their highest league finish to date this season (see Figure 7).

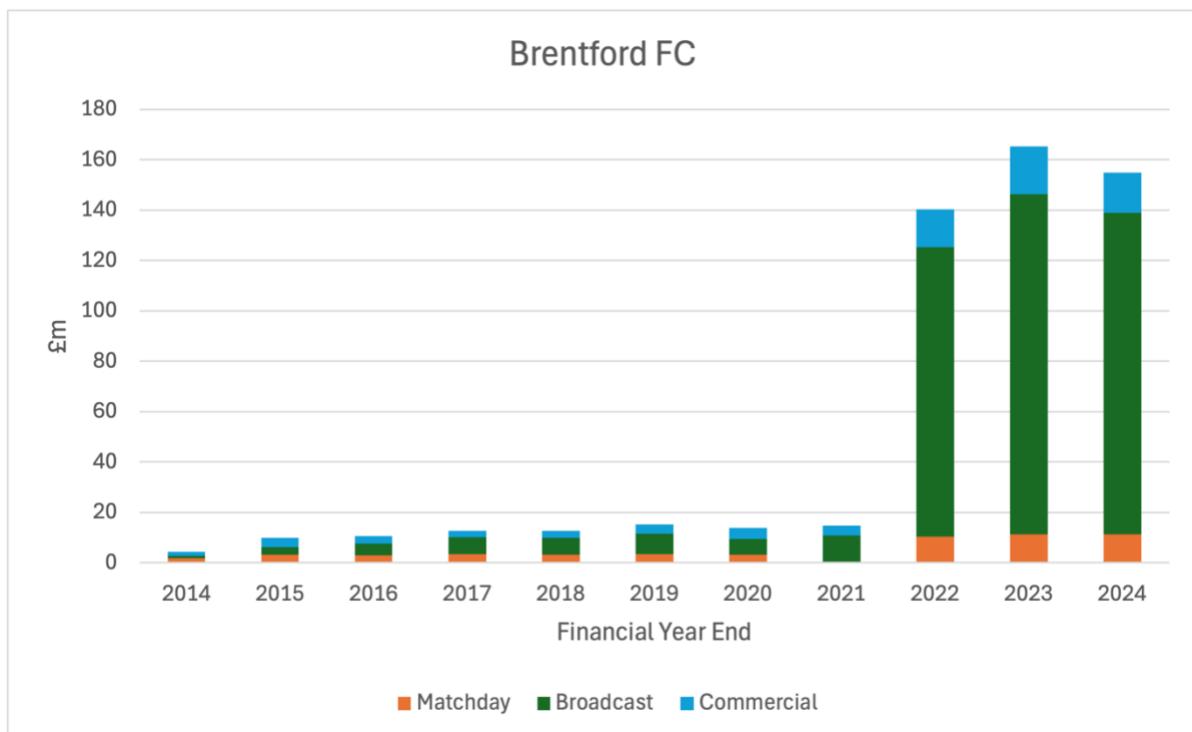
Figure 7: Sporting Performance (League and League Position): Brentford Football Club



Source: Transfermarkt.

Prior to 2021, Brentford's broadcast revenue was rather minimal, sitting around £6 million per year, however in recent years they have experienced the treasures that the Premier League beholds, seeing it elevate to £114 million in 2022 after their first full season in the league. They are also examples of how a new ground can boost revenue; whilst their move from Griffin Park to the G-Tech community stadium saw a delayed revenue increase due to the Covid-19 pandemic, they are now achieving matchday revenues over £11 million compared to £3 million prior to the move (see Figure 8).

Figure 4: Brentford Football Club: Sources of Revenue 2014-2024



Data source: Company Financial Accounts

Brentford have the smallest stadium capacity of any of the case studies provided, with a capacity of only 17,250. With around 11,000 season ticket holders, they are also left in the predicament of balancing consistent revenue whilst also trying to change matchday behaviour to increase this metric.

The club has put in significant effort to make sure that fans both attend and spend. Through their 'Every Seat Counts' policy which was introduced in the 2024/25 season, for every game that a season ticket holder fails to attend or sell their ticket for they receive a yellow card. Once 4 yellow cards have been accumulated, they lose their right to renew for the next. Due to their proportion of season ticket holders, it is crucial for matchday revenue that those seats are occupied. They have made announcements around "early-bird" discounts on certain matchdays, encouraging fans to arrive earlier than they would usually to capitalise on the deals. They then compound this with "bundle-deals" to encourage fans still lingering in the concourse to continue to spend even after the initial deal expires. By doing this, the club creates a habit of arriving early, embedding a behavioural routine: early arrival → social time in concourse → positive associations. Over time, fans internalise that arriving early allows for a better matchday experience, even when deals are absent.

3.6 Case Study 5: West Bromwich Albion (West Brom)

West Brom, formed in 1878, are one of English football's founding members. They enjoyed long spells in the topflight until recent decades of fluctuation between the Premier League and the Championship.

West Bromwich is located on the West Midlands on the outskirts of Birmingham. They have the smallest population of the case studies, with 103,000 inhabitants (City Population, 2023).

For the last 4 seasons West Brom have competed in the Championship. Their most successful period in recent times was a run of eight successive seasons in the Premier League between 2010/11 and 2017/18 before relegation back to the Championship. Since their last relegation from the Premier League in 2020/21 they have remained a stable "mid-table" Championship club, reaching the play-offs on one occasion (see Figure 9).

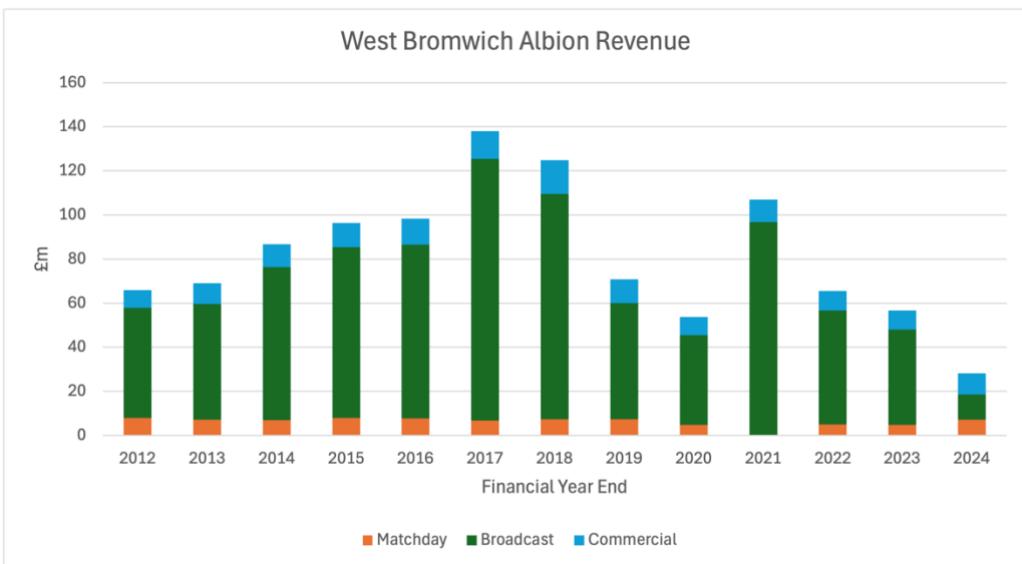
Figure 9: Sporting Performance (League and League Position): West Bromwich Albion



Source: Transfermarkt.

As demonstrated by the previous examples, there is once again a high correlation between West Brom's total revenue and division. They have seen highs of £138 million in 2017, and lows of £28 million in 2024. This is perhaps a reflection of their latest revenue reports marking their longest spell outside of the Premier League, resulting in diminished income from parachute payments that they have not experienced before (see Figure 10).

Figure 10: West Bromwich Albion Football Club: Sources of Revenue 2012-2024



Data source: Company Financial Accounts

With roughly 80 % of the Hawthorne's capacity being dedicated to season ticket holders the club have a strong recurring base. However, high penetration limits casual-ticket sales and late-arrive spend, leading the club to trial dynamic pricing on secondary-market tickets.

They seem to have recognised that most of their supporter base already attend games as season ticket holders and have attempted to capitalise on this with the 'Bring a Friend'. For a Tuesday night game against QPR, the club offered season ticket holders additional £10 adult tickets so that they could encourage their friends to come and support the club – down from the usual adult price of £28. This helped to ensure that the stadium remained full on matchday, and potentially even encouraging season ticket holders who did not plan on going to attend.

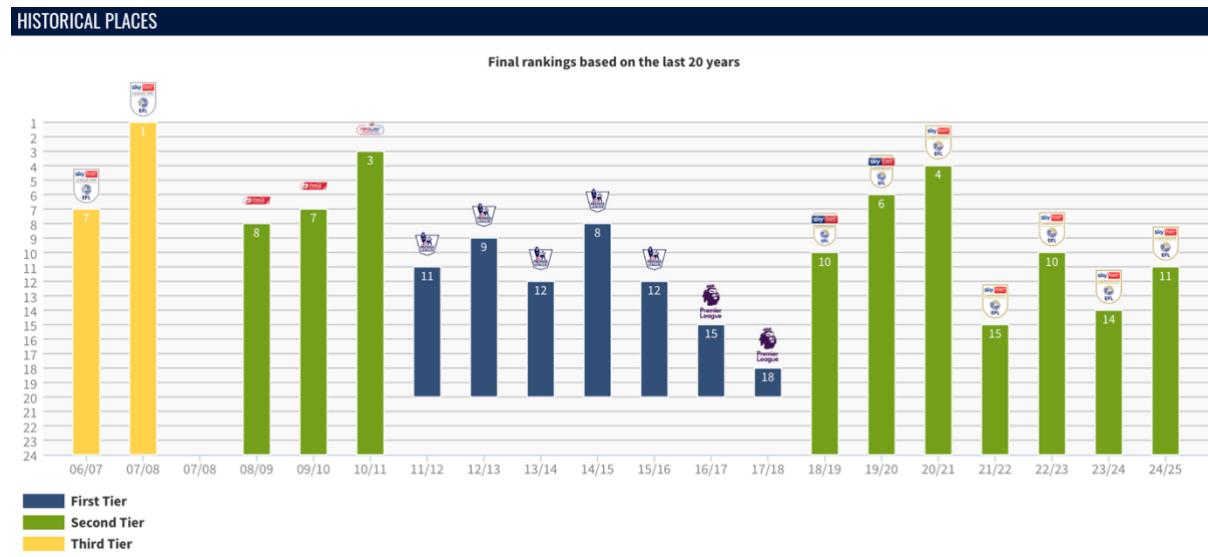
3.7 Case Study 6: Swansea City Athletic Football Club (Swansea)

Swansea City were established in 1912. Most notably, their 2011 promotion to the Premier League made them the first Welsh club to compete in the English top flight, with the success of this period also being highlighted through a 2013 League Cup victory.

Swansea is located along Swansea Bay in south-west Wales, with the total population sitting around 238,000 (ONS, 2023).

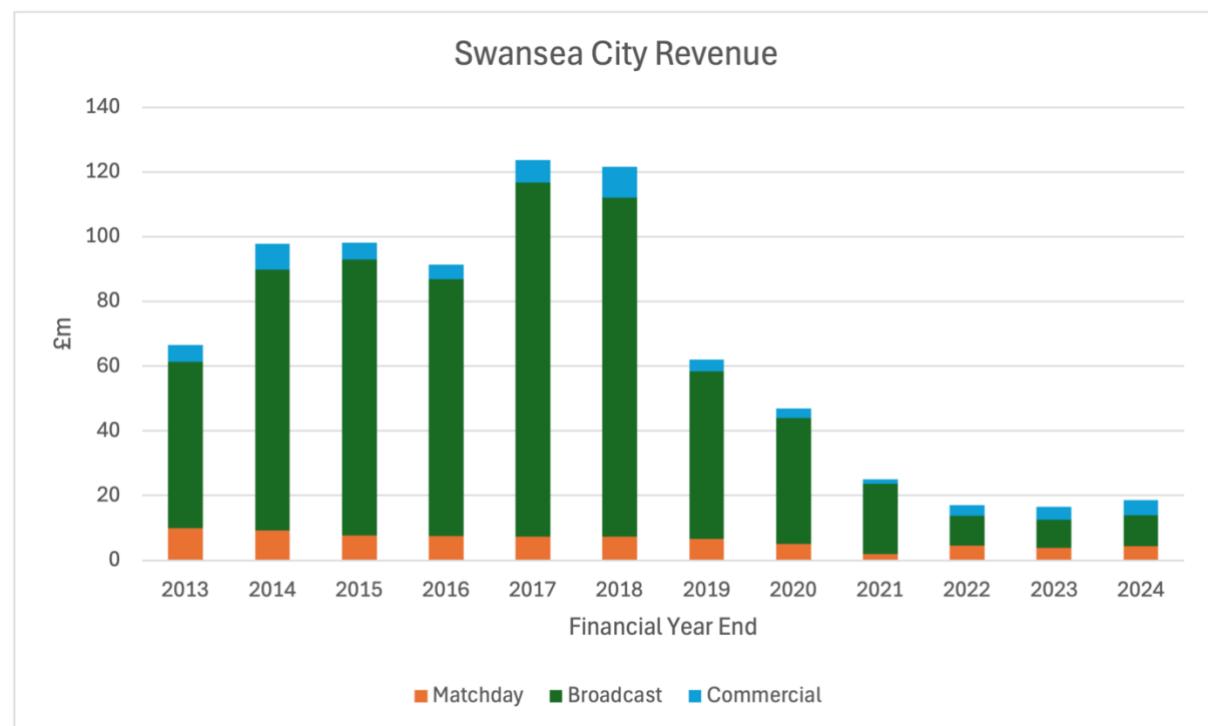
Swansea are one of four professional Welsh clubs to play their football in England, and one of only two to have won a major domestic cup. They also currently play in the EFL Championship and have done so for the last seven seasons. Despite spending most of their history in the second tier of English football, they sustained a seven-season spell in the Premier League between 2011/12 and 2017/18 – the longest in their history (see Figure 11).

Figure 11: Sporting Performance (League and League Position): Swansea City



As Swansea have spent the longest time in the Championship after a relegation from the Premier League, we are able to see how significantly broadcast revenue falls once parachute payments have expired. After receiving £104 million in 2018 (last Premier League season), revenue of this nature steadily fell to £51 million, £38 million and £21 million in the 3 years of parachute payments proceeding relegation. Since then, broadcast revenues have sat around £9 million, demonstrating how significant being a “yo-yo” club can be to club finances when compared to the likes of Norwich and Hull. Matchday revenue also fell by around 50% during the same period (see Figure 12).

Figure 12: Swansea City Football Club: Sources of Revenue 2013-2024



Data source: Company Financial Accounts

Swansea most recently reported that they had around 16,000 season-ticket holders, with a maximum stadium capacity of 21,088. Despite other clubs having earlier deadlines on season ticket acquisition or have adopted a ‘closed-shop’ approach completely, it appears that Swansea are still trying to increase uptake by still having them listed on their website for sale whilst also listing them as the “lowest average adult season ticket price when compared to fellow Championship clubs”. This may be a reflection of the diminished matchday returns mentioned previously making them want to steady revenue even further.

The club are also attempting to bring in more young fans, perhaps to engrave the local club into the kid’s minds and embed the habit of attending games from early on – meaning they do not have to do so later. A collaboration with their kit sponsors, Joma, offer tickets for as little as £1 for kids in local sports, social and community clubs with up to 4 adults free of charge as part of “Joma’s Grassroots Ticketing” initiative.

3.8 Evaluation

From the case studies we can deduce that whilst broadcast revenues dominate the financial landscape of topflight clubs, upon relegation it is match-day behavioural change that offers clubs a tangible lever to smooth income volatility and deepen fan engagement. Across these contexts clubs deployed a suite of behavioural incentives designed to shape when, how, and with whom supporters attend games with, allowing us to consider these across multiple matchday touchpoints in accordance with trying to maximise matchday revenue through the following:

Early-Arrival Incentives

Norwich’s “buy a pint, get one free” offer unlocked a simple psychological cue: rewarding promptness. This encourages fans to arrive earlier, and therefore purchase a higher volume of goods that they wouldn’t have otherwise. Even though the club is not receiving the full profit of the full priced good, there is still a marginal gain which wouldn’t have been made in usual circumstances. Additionally, as the promotion ends 45 minutes before kick-off, supporters are left with a significant amount of empty time that they will likely spend making more purchases due to the social setting. The long-term insight is that modest, time-bound rewards can recalibrate routine fan behaviour, however they must be clearly communicated and limited in scope to avoid diluting perceived value.

This strategy could be particularly effective with food and drinks at evening games where fans need somewhere to eat after work. If the club can accompany these deals with a satisfactory food offering, it certainly has the potential to entice regular match-goers into making it part of their game-day routine.

Family and Community Zones

Hull City and Fulham extended this principle to group dynamics. By creating designated “family zones” with kid-friendly activities and group-ticket bundles, they encourage a social norm whereby arriving early becomes part of a shared, intergenerational ritual.

In terms of usage, it may be advisable to implement these “family zones” at weekend games that are less desirable to the average supporter (e.g., an opposition that the home team is expected to beat). This is because the family attending is more likely to view going to the game as an occasion compared to a season ticket holder, so by offering a full day experience you are adding further incentive for parents to choose this as their “day-out”.

Behavioural Penalties and Rewards:

Brentford’s “Every Seat Counts” policy provides a secure baseline to ensure that matchday revenue is being secured on both ticketing and matchday merchandising and concessions. With the club reporting that over 14,000 tickets were sold through their exchange service in the 24/25 season, it can be confidently inferred that the club made significantly more revenue than if the policy had not been in place, demonstrating how this can positively influence absenteeism.

Bring-a-Friend Discount

West Brom’s “Bring-a-Friend” initiative frames the offer as an exclusive benefit for loyal supporters and taps into social motivations—fans are more likely to attend when accompanied by a friend. It demonstrates how a well-targeted, socially anchored price incentive can shift match-day behaviour to boost attendance and encourage group arrival dynamics. Furthermore, by lowering the barriers for hesitant supporters to attend games with their friends who regularly do, the club is “opening the door” for further attendance in the future if they enjoy the experience.

This tactic is once again useful for fixtures that appear trivial to the season ticket holder by giving them a different experience with someone that they wouldn’t go with, as well as empty seats being filled that would have remained empty.

4. Limitations and Conclusions

In this dissertation, I set out to explore how behavioural-economic principles might be applied to enhance matchday revenues and attendance at Norwich City Football Club. Although the original plan included an empirical analysis based on club-provided data, that dataset became unavailable less than 2 weeks before the initial deadline. This forced a rapid pivot to a purely desk-based approach, synthesising established behavioural frameworks, empirical evidence from sport and non-sport contexts, and six comparative club case studies.

Despite this constraint, the study demonstrates that modest, time-bound rewards, social-norm activators, and gamified penalties have been used by other clubs to recalibrate fan routines, bolster per-capita spending and increase overall attendance.

The unanticipated loss of Norwich's data necessarily limits the precision with which we can predict the quantitative impact of any single intervention, but the depth of qualitative analysis within the case studies somewhat offsets this by illustrating how Norwich can implement techniques already tested by others to maintain and boost matchday revenue.

Key contributions of this work include:

1. A comprehensive summary of behavioural-economics framework tailored to live-sporting events, filling a notable gap in football-specific applications.
2. A structured typology of interventions used by mid-sized football clubs to increase matchday revenue
3. Recommendations for weekend and midweek fixtures, designed to lower barriers, amplify social engagement and secure ticket-sale integrity.

To refine the work carried out in this study, future research should seek to secure direct fan-spend and attendance data through partnership with Norwich or a club of a similar nature to empirically validate these recommendations. Experimental pilots would enable precise measurement of uplift and long-term habit formation through highlighting exactly what interventions work against each scenario.

Bibliography

Allcott, H. (2011). Social norms and energy conservation. *Journal of Public Economics*, 95(9-10), pp.1082–1095. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpubeco.2011.03.003>.

Barilla, A.G., Gruben, K. and Levernier, W. (2008). The Effect Of Promotions On Attendance At Major League Baseball Games. *Journal of Applied Business Research (JABR)*, 24(3). doi:<https://doi.org/10.19030/jabr.v24i3.1337>.

Behavioural Insights Team (2024). *Four Simple Ways to Apply Behavioural Insights*. [online] Available at: <https://www.bi.team/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/BIT-EAST-1.pdf>.

Boyd, T.C. and Krehbiel, T.C. (2006). An Analysis of the Effects of Specific Promotion Types on Attendance at Major League Baseball Games. *American Journal of Business*, 21(2), pp.21–32. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1108/19355181200600007>.

City Population (2023). *West Bromwich (West Midlands, West Midlands, United Kingdom) - Population Statistics, Charts, Map, Location, Weather and Web Information*. [online] Citypopulation.de. Available at: https://www.citypopulation.de/en/uk/westmidlands/west_midlands/E63002828__west_bromwich/.

Deloitte (2021). *Riding the challenge: Annual Review of Football Finance 2021 Sports Business Group*. [online] Available at: <https://www.deloitte.com/content/dam/assets-zone2/uk/en/docs/services/financial-advisory/2023/deloitte-uk-annual-review-of-football-finance-2021.pdf>.

Economics Intelligence Unit (2023). *West Bromwich Town Profile*. [online] ArcGIS StoryMaps. Available at: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/0c383e743cc94d1da60c2abc5e5b4bc8>.

ERI Economic Research Institute (2025). *Salary Expert - Average Salary in West Bromwich, United Kingdom*. [online] Salary Expert. Available at: <https://www.salaryexpert.com/salary/area/united-kingdom/west-bromwich>.

Gneezy, U., Kajackaite, A. and Meier, S. (2020). Incentive-Based Interventions. *The Handbook of Behavior Change*, pp.523–536. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108677318.036>.

Johnson, E.J. and Goldstein, D.G. (2003). *Do Defaults Save Lives?* [online] papers.ssrn.com. Available at: https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1324774.

Kahneman, D. and Tversky, A. (1979). Prospect theory: an Analysis of Decision under Risk. *Econometrica*, [online] 47(2), pp.263–292. doi:<https://doi.org/10.2307/1914185>.

Karg, A., Nguyen, J. and McDonald, H. (2021). Understanding Season Ticket Holder Attendance Decisions. *Journal of Sport Management*, 35(3), pp.239–253. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1123/jsm.2020-0284>.

Michie, S., van Stralen, M.M. and West, R. (2011). The Behaviour Change wheel: a New Method for Characterising and Designing Behaviour Change Interventions. *Implementation Science*, [online] 6(42). doi:<https://doi.org/10.1186/1748-5908-6-42>.

ONS (2023a). *How life has changed in Hammersmith and Fulham: Census 2021*. [online] Office for National Statistics. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censusareachanges/E09000013/>.

ONS (2023b). *How life has changed in Hounslow: Census 2021*. [online] Office for National Statistics. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censusareachanges/E09000018/>.

ONS (2023c). *How life has changed in Kingston upon Hull: Census 2021*. [online] Office for National Statistics. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censusareachanges/E06000010/>.

ONS (2023d). *How life has changed in Norwich: Census 2021*. [online] Office for National Statistics. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censusareachanges/E07000148/>.

ONS (2023e). *How life has changed in Swansea: Census 2021*. [online] Office for National Statistics. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censusareachanges/W06000011/>.

Popp, N., Shapiro, S., Simmons, J. and Dastrup, R. (2024). Examining Reported Versus Actual Attendance in College Basketball Non-Conference Games: Do Scheduling Elements Make a Difference? *Journal of applied sport management*, [online] 16(1), p.5. doi:<https://doi.org/10.7290/jasm16s52o>.

Rand, M., Norman, P. and Goyder, E. (2020). A systematic review of interventions to increase attendance at health and fitness venues: identifying key behaviour change techniques. *BMC Public Health*, 20(1). doi:<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-020-09898-6>.

Schreyer, D., Schmidt, S.L. and Torgler, B. (2018). Football Spectator No-Show Behavior. *Journal of Sports Economics*, 20(4), pp.580–602.
doi:<https://doi.org/10.1177/1527002518784120>.

Shakina, E., Gasparetto, T. and Barajas, A. (2020). Football Fans' Emotions: Uncertainty Against Brand Perception. *Frontiers in Psychology*, [online] 11(1).
doi:<https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.00659>.

Thaler, Richard H. and Benartzi, S. (2004). Save More Tomorrow: Using Behavioral Economics to Increase Employee Saving. *Journal of Political Economy*, [online] 112(S1), pp.S164–S187. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1086/380085>.