A Work Project, presented as part of the requirements for the Award of a Master's degree in

Finance from the Nova School of Business and Economics.

How can Wolverhampton Wanderers leverage the popularity of Fantasy Premier League –
email communication and league initiatives

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11/01/2024

Abstract

This research paper, titled " How can Wolverhampton Wanderers FC leverage the popularity of Fantasy Premier League", thoroughly examines the Fantasy Football market, focusing specifically on Fantasy Premier League (FPL). Its primary goal is to propose initiatives that enable Wolverhampton to engage effectively with the FPL community. To achieve this, consumer preferences were analysed through a literature review and a survey. This Field Lab proposes two distinct initiatives: a weekly FPL gameweek preview email and the creation of an FPL League. The first was directly solicited from the club, while the latter composed my individual part. Overall, this paper not only provides actionable strategies for football clubs but also establishes a theoretical foundation for future research in the landscape of fantasy football.

Acknowledgements

Keywords

Customer Relationship Management; Fantasy Premier League; Fan Engagement; Digital Marketing; Data-Driven Fan Initiatives; Digital Strategy; Population Characterization

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Abbreviations

CAGR – Compounded Annual Growth Rate	PL – Premier League
Wolves – Wolverhampton Wanderers	FPL – Fantasy Premier League

1.Introduction

1.1 Fantasy Premier League and Fantasy Football Background

The Fantasy Premier League (FPL) game was introduced in 2002, being created by International Sports Multimedia but owned and operated by the Premier League. Currently, the game is free and can be played via the Premier League website or its mobile app. It represents the official fantasy football game related to England's top football league. In these types of games, players have to choose a group of footballers they believe will perform well in real-life sports with a limited budget, creating their own team. For instance, if you choose Ronaldo for your team and he scores in his actual match over the weekend, you earn additional points. Ultimately, the team with the highest accumulated points emerges as the winner. There are a lot of fantasy football games around and it is important to mention the rules vary from game to game. However, in most of them, you have the ability to transfer in and out players of your team during the competition at stake, creating a long-term dynamic instead of a single interaction. One of the main factors that brings players into these games is the existing ability to play against friends inside private leagues that can be created. Moreover, there are usually prizes for the overall winners which also brings further incentives for players. With that said, there are also other big fantasy sports games such as basketball, american football, and hockey, amongst others. Currently, the Fantasy Sports market size is expected to grow from $26.98 billion in 2023 to $49.53 billion by 2028, at a CAGR of 12.92% during the forecast period (2023-2028), numbers that illustrate the importance of this industry (ReportLinker, 2023).

Concerning FPL specifically, the premise of this game is simple as FPL players have a budget to choose between the different real-life footballers from any Premier League club. The players that are expected to score the most points are the ones with the highest prices, creating various dilemmas for FPL players as they want to optimize their budget and create the best possible

squad. Subsequently, participants compete across 38 gameweeks, mirroring the 38 matches each Premier League team has within a season from August to May. Each gameweek is marked by a deadline, representing the final opportunity for FPL players to adjust their teams before the kickoff of Premier League games. At the end of the 38 gameweek period whoever scores the most points wins. The Premier League itself stands out as the world's most-watched football league (Rajput, 2023), and its fantasy football counterpart holds the distinction of being the most widely played (Bhavsar, 2022), boasting a staggering 11 million participants. Since its inception, the game has sustained an impressive CAGR of its users of over 25%, witnessing a doubling of its player base over the last five years (Appendix 1).

Remarkably, the game's popularity has transcended national boundaries, with more than 70% of current players hailing from outside England. Additionally, FPL has cultivated a robust social media presence, amassing over 5 million followers on its Twitter (X) account. These numbers are associated with the continuous process that FPL players engage in throughout the season to enhance their performance in the game. This involves monitoring players' performances and staying updated on injury reports, with social media playing a big role in this journey. Looking at these numbers, it becomes evident that the popularity of FPL is on the rise. The perspectives for the future are even more promising given that, in this digital transformation era, the requisites of the youngest demographic are comprehensively addressed by FPL, accommodating the typical traits of short attention spans and the tendency for "dual-screening" observed amongst the contemporary generation of viewers (Wapinski, 2021). Some papers even define this generation as the Gen G (Gamers), given their preferences for competitive and interactive environments. This generation is referred to as the most technologically savvy, competitive, and socially connected. Thereby, the main challenge for marketers is to meet their expectations for fun, challenge, and sociability (Zichermann & Linder, 2010). In light of the

prevailing digitalization era, FPL is poised to sustain its growth and can become a very useful tool to satisfy the needs of the next generation.

1.2 Problem Identification and Project Background

With that said, within this industry, we identified an opportune moment for companies to strategically target this demographic. Furthermore, we both felt that the fantasy football industry was one where we could create value for any potential partner, given our extensive knowledge about FPL coupled with our management and finance backgrounds. Our understanding is derived from over six years of active participation in the FPL community, during which we have achieved notable success. Both of us have attained positions within the global FPL Top 0,01% and have secured the first and second spots in the Portuguese leaderboards. From our perspective of being FPL players for so long and being part of its community, we both agreed that PL Clubs' involvement with FPL has always been sporadic or even non-existent and we perceived that clubs have an opportunity to leverage the FPL success in much better ways than they were currently doing. This idea is supported by Alexandra Willis, the director of digital media and audience development at the Premier League, who stated: "Ideally, we would love every club to be able to broaden the appeal of the game and create their own depth of engagement with their own fans around FPL." (Willis, 2023).

Overall, this project's aim is to help Premier League clubs to leverage the current success of the digital phenomenon that is FPL. At an early stage, we focused on developing ideas as to how Premier League clubs could leverage the success of FPL by shaping their communications, their digital content and their overall marketing strategy to enhance the relationship with the fans that play FPL. Following initial brainstorming and research, the chance to meet with Wolverhampton Wanderers (Wolves) arose, providing an opportunity to present our project.

Wolves are an English football club founded in 1877 located near Birmingham that has been a stable presence in the Premier League for the past five years. Currently the club amounts over 2.5 million followers on Instagram and has more than 50000 fans registered as FPL players. The goal here was for us, FPL experts, to recommend to Wolves some possible initiatives they could implement to target this population. When we first met, it was evident that Wolves were keenly interested in the topic as, right from the start, the club recognized the substantial impact of this digital game. Furthermore, they shared with us that, in the previous months, they had been in discussions with the Premier League concerning a data project that now allowed them to identify which of the registered Wolves' fans are playing FPL. This created an immense opportunity for Wolves as the club could now directly target this population with personalized communications and initiatives. After hearing our thoughts and initial recommendations, the club showed interest in an initiative concerning the email communications that would be sent weekly to the FPL players registered on the Wolves database. It was then set that we should develop this recommendation and we were also incentivized to explore any other possible recommendations we believe would be adequate for Wolves. In summary, our realization was that despite its digital prominence, the Premier League clubs were not allocating the attention that this phenomenon deserved given the massive benefits that could arise from exploring it. In this regard, we believe our thesis can be relevant for any stakeholders trying to understand this population and how to leverage this tendency.

2. Literature Review

Thoroughly studying the existing literature on FPL is key to enhancing our knowledge regarding FPL players and their consumer habits. By gaining a deeper insight into this demographic and their preferences, we will be able to recommend effective initiatives for a PL club to successfully engage with the FPL community and capitalize on the game's widespread popularity. Extensive research revealed a notable scarcity of publicly available literature on

Fantasy Football and more specifically FPL, posing a considerable challenge to our investigation. However, we still managed to identify two recent studies on the topic, from which we can extract valuable insights to aid our research. We will start by studying a paper on Fantasy Football conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, which specifically analysed a sample of FPL players. The study characterized the average Fantasy Football player as a male aged 25 to 34 who on average spends 1.5 hours up to 3 hours per week on the game. The sample was presented with a range of potential motivations for playing the game, including enhancing social interaction, gaining a sense of control, seeking competition, enhancing the enjoyment of watching football, engaging in gambling, or simply for entertainment purposes. While all responses received sufficient votes to be deemed relevant, the most selected motivations were the pursuit of competition, the desire for pure entertainment, and enhancing the enjoyment of watching football. This final incentive holds particular significance, given that nearly two-thirds of managers acknowledge that they view fantasy football as a complementary activity to their live football game-watching experience. Other key takeaways from the study are that 70% of the managers consider fantasy football as an effective source of escaping their daily routines and that most of the sample was negatively affected by the suspension of fantasy football at the advent of the pandemic, leading to the feeling of boredom (Dastidar & Roy, 2023).

Furthermore, the paper we found most relevant was from Daniel Whittaker regarding the information behaviour in the FPL community. The study's sample provides valuable insights into the demographics of FPL players. As mentioned in the previous study, the majority of participants are male (97%). The sample is evenly divided between UK and non-UK residents, which is an interesting indicator that highlights the diversity of FPL players despite the game being affiliated with the English football league. Additionally, a substantial portion of the participants fall within the young adult age range of 18 to 44, with an average weekly time investment in the game exceeding 30 minutes. On average, each respondent had 3 or more years

of experience playing FPL. Other key insights are that the most committed players tend to actively engage in the online fan community and spend many hours each week conducting research on information related to the game. FPL players describe relationships with others as being a key part of their motivation for playing, this activity is most clearly shown on Twitter (X), a social media that FPL managers use to encounter information, but also to engage in interactions with other players. Moreover, another key social media is YouTube, where players spend hours each week consuming videos that are produced by other members of the FPL community. This infrastructure of social sites, such as Twitter (X) and YouTube, rewards the sharing of the information work of the players in the form of likes, followers, subscribers, and views leading to a possible monetary reward (Whittaker, 2022). While the previous articles offered intriguing insights, we believe that they fall short of providing a full grasp of the FPL population's characteristics and behaviours. This gap hinders our ability to efficiently tailor our initiatives to cater to their needs. In light of this realization, we are obligated to find new avenues to find insights.

To oppose the scarcity of literature surrounding fantasy football we decided to also study the literature around fantasy sports in general. Despite the differences in sports and cultures, we hypothesized that there would be some aspects in common between all fantasy sports players. It is crucial to note that in our exploration of these topics, we observed a limited number of studies on the subject. The most pertinent studies for our hypothesis were not recent, dating back 10 to 20 years. Consequently, these studies may not be entirely up-to-date, particularly considering the substantial advancements in fantasy sports during the digitalization era of recent years. Nevertheless, we acknowledged and took into account this temporal aspect when delving into them. Analysing the studies, we started by directing our attention towards comprehending the motivation behind fantasy players, seeking insights into the factors that prompt individuals to participate in fantasy sports. This was pivotal for us since, as advocated in the paper

Understanding Why People Play Fantasy Sport: Development of the Fantasy Sport Motivation Inventory (FanSMI), grasping the reasons for playing fantasy sports can provide sports marketers with important information about new and existing target markets (Lee, Seo, & Green, 2013). This same study also reinforces the idea that "Marketing strategies and tactics can then be designed to cater to the needs of fantasy sports participants as they have been for traditional sports fans". With that said, regarding the motivations of fantasy sports players, we came across a multitude of varied theories. This first study we mentioned went to the lengths of referring that thirteen different dimensions that can justify one playing fantasy sports, with these dimensions being game interest, gambling, hedonic experience, escape, competition, prize, bonding with friends or family, social interaction, substitute for a losing team, becoming a general manager/head coach, sport knowledge application, and love for the sport (Lee, Seo, & Green 2013). Another study we investigated, made it simpler by just accounting for four main reasons as to why people decide to play fantasy sports: gambling, social Interaction, competition, and entertainment/escape which were all proven as relevant (Dwyer and Kim, 2011).

Furthermore, we also found interesting articles concerning the American football fantasy industry. Of course, we acknowledge that these conclusions are circumscribed to the ambit of this particular sport but we still found them interesting given they further fueled our hypothesis. With that said, a good conclusion we were able to retrieve from analysing American football fantasy players is related to their behaviours, as we found evidence that Fantasy American football players consume more, impacting the clubs' revenues, this being by attending live games, watching games through media or even merchandise purchases, and have deeper points of attachment to their team (Drayer et al. 2010). Furthermore, a key takeaway from another study is that this population constitutes a highly desirable form of consumer, delivering a range of tangible (revenue) and intangible (loyalty, attachment, word-of-mouth, reputation) benefits

for the sport and the league (Karg and McDonald 2011). Both concepts are fully in sync with the objective of this thesis, elucidating the significance of fantasy sports players and advocating for clubs to establish initiatives specifically designed to engage this demographic.

Overall, after this analysis we still assessed we had insufficient insights regarding this population and thereby decided to study it even further. To achieve this, we conducted a survey to examine the preferences, behaviours, and profiles of these players. Nonetheless, to formulate the different questions we used the studies previously scrutinized as a benchmark. Ultimately, the aim of this survey was to retrieve data concerning the FPL population that would allow us to discern how a club could capitalize on the escalating popularity of this phenomenon.

3. Survey to FPL population

3.1 Survey structure

The survey comprised a total of 16 questions, encompassing a range of formats, including multiple-choice questions, Likert-type scales, and straightforward rating queries on a scale of 1-10. The design aimed to provide a swift and convenient experience for respondents, while ensuring the collected data would be highly insightful for our analysis. All these questions can be found in Appendix 2. Moving on to the structure of the survey:

Introduction and Demographics

First of all, we started with a brief section concerning some basic information about the respondents. This section had 3 questions where the topics covered were age (they had to select between different age groups), gender, and country. These answers would help us to understand the general profile of an FPL player.

FPL Experience

Then we moved on to a second section related to the respondents' FPL experience, where we aimed at understanding which kind of FPL player they are. We start by inquiring whether

respondents support a particular Premier League club or are general fans. Following this, we delve into understanding the self-perceived expertise level of respondents as FPL players on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 signifies a novice and 10 designates an expert. Additionally, we inquire about the number of seasons they have actively participated in FPL. The latter question is crucial given it allows us to differentiate between the different kinds of FPL players for the next section. With that said, we decided to branch the users to different sections based on the number of seasons they have played FPL for. Participants with 1-2 seasons of play would be directed to a specific section, allowing us to examine the profile of less experienced users. Those with 3-5 seasons of experience would be directed to another section for analysis. Finally, participants with more than 5 seasons would be routed to a distinct section, enabling us to study the profile of the more veteran users. This segmentation facilitates the assessment of potential variations in opinions inside our sample based on their FPL experience, without hindering our ability to comprehend their overall perspective. The number of seasons played by users was used as the parameter to split the population, given it is a clear and objective criterion.

FPL Behaviours and Preferences

Although users were categorized into three groups, the questions posed remained consistent across all groups, facilitating a direct comparison amongst them. In this section, we aimed to understand how a club could target these users. To achieve this, it is crucial to understand their reasons for participating in FPL, drawing on hypotheses derived from our literature review. We also sought insights into the amount of time they dedicate weekly to consuming FPL content, the sources of information they rely on, and even requested them to rate, on a scale of 1 to 10, their likelihood to engage with specific types of posts. Overall, the aim here was to study the respondent's preferences and it was the biggest section of the survey including 8 questions.

FPL club initiatives

Finally, to conclude the survey we had users ranking some possible FPL initiatives we believe could be adopted by Premier League clubs. This question would be very helpful for our work given we would have a clear conclusion about which kind of initiatives respondents would prefer to see. With that said, we chose five different types of initiatives based on some of the current practices we have seen adopted by clubs and on the literature review, especially thinking about what fantasy players are looking for when they play these games, and simply asked respondents to rank them in order.

3.2 Survey results

The survey gathered 409 responses that were collected between September 14th and October 8th of 2023. Furthermore, most of them came from our post in the subreddit "FantasyPL", a forum dedicated to FPL. We also published the survey on Twitter, on some FPL-related websites, and on Discord, while also contacting some FPL content creators on social media. All communications referenced that it would be helpful for an FPL-related master thesis and that the completion time was short, with the average time taken by each user to complete the survey being 5 minutes and 11 seconds.

Firstly, in terms of Introduction and Demographic, we can identify that, in our sample, there are predominantly young adults aged from 25 to 34, which represent 44% of the population, while the age brackets 35-50 and 18-24 represent almost the rest of the population, with 25% and 21%, respectively (Appendix 2.1). As seen in Appendix 2.2, 95% of our sample identified as male. This observed distribution aligns with the insights drawn from the articles examined in our Literature Review. Finally, in our sample we have 116 different countries represented and, as expected, the most popular is the United Kingdom, but with only 26% of the sample, which also proves the diversity of FPL players and that the game is not only played in the UK. No other nationality could reach 10% of the sample size, but the USA, Portugal, Ireland, and Norway are the ones that came closer with 9%, 7.5%, 5.5%, and 4.4%, respectively (Appendix

2.3). The strong representation of Portugal is biased, as it stems from the fact that the survey was circulated amongst Portuguese individuals within our network, consequently amplifying the presence of Portuguese responses. It is interesting to note that countries with strong football leagues like Spain, Germany, Italy, and France represent only 2% of the sample, which can lead us to the hypothesis that the users from countries with weaker football leagues tend to favor the widely viewed Premier League and, therefore, are more likely to play FPL.

Moving to the FPL Experience questions sector, 69% of our sample supports one club, while 31% are general fans (Appendix 2.4). In a deeper analysis, we can see that 84% of the UK nationality people in the sample support a club compared to only 63.6% of the non-UK nationality, which is expectable as people tend to support a team from the place where they live or where they were born. It is important to identify this factor in the population since we hypothesized that it is much easier for Wolves to target a general fan with an FPL initiative rather than a supporter of a PL Club other than Wolves. Regarding the FPL level and as seen in Appendix 2.5, 92% of respondents consider themselves to be a 6 out of 10 player or above. This statistic is logical, given that these are participants who were willing to answer an online survey about FPL, so they should have a high interest in the game that will contribute to a higher mastery of it. To end this section with an objective question that could be used to segment the sample, we asked about the years each respondent has been playing FPL. Unsurprisingly the previous confidence in FPL level is backed by the years of experience of the respondents. As seen in Appendix 2.6, only 14% have been playing for 2 or less years and those will be segmented to Group 1, representing the more novice players. Also, 39% of the population has been playing for 3 to 5 years, and those will represent our Group 2, which has people with intermediate experience. Finally, Group 3 will be made up of the experienced players that have been playing for 6 seasons or more, who represent only 47% of our sample.

Having established three distinct groups, we can now proceed to the subsequent section. Starting with the reasons that made respondents start playing FPL, from the data we can see in Appendix 2.7, 80% of the sample chose "Competition against friends" as one of the causes to start playing. Moreover, "More entertaining when watching games" and "Test football knowledge against others" have proven to be popular, with 55% and 42% of votes, respectively. The answers were homogeneous between groups, meaning that the reasons for entering FPL in recent years are similar to the ones from the past decade. As we can see in Appendix 2.8, only 7.6% of the sample consumes 30 minutes or less per week of FPL content. In terms of variance between groups, results show that the higher the experience of the player, the higher the number of hours spent weekly on the game, proven by the fact that 62% of Group 3 dedicate over 2 weekly hours to the game compared to 44% of Group 1 and 49% of Group 2.

Regarding which social media are used by our sample to consume FPL content, we can identify in Appendix 2.9 a strong preference for Reddit with 76% of the population claiming they use it at least sometimes, but these results are biased since, as mentioned before, most of the respondents came from our post in Reddit. The other two social media that respondents also use considerably are YouTube and Twitter(X), with 49% and 42%, respectively, using it at least sometimes. It is interesting to note that the social media preferred to consume FPL content by our sample are more guided towards informative content compared to the less used like Facebook, TikTok, or Instagram where the content is targeted more for entertainment purposes and has a shorter time-lapse. This information goes hand in hand with our hypothesis that FPL players are mainly looking for data and information that helps them make decisions inside the game. In addition to the aforementioned social media platforms, our sample also utilized other channels to make decisions in FPL. As we can see in Appendix 2.10, the Official FPL website/app claimed a substantial 49% of the votes, while free Data Platforms such as SofaScore or Transfermarkt accounted for 36%. Furthermore, non-paid websites exclusively

dedicated to FPL also received significant attention, securing 31% of the votes. Moreover, very interestingly, PL Clubs websites are already used by 9% of our sample even though most of them barely have any content regarding the game. This data is a sign that PL clubs here have an opportunity to further explore, given there is already initial interest from the FPL players to resort to official club platforms to help in their FPL decision making. In terms of variations in preferences amongst the groups, while there is a general similarity, the trend indicates that as a player gains more experience, there is an increased likelihood of opting for paid Expert websites. Specifically, 16.6% of Group 3 members utilize these platforms, contrasting with only 7% in Group 2 and a mere 3.5% in Group 1.

Furthermore, moving to the Likert scale questions, in Appendix 2.11, 55% of our sample chose 7 or above out of 10 when asked if FPL makes them watch Premier League games that they would not usually watch, with 38% choosing either 7 or 8. This is a positive indicator for Premier League Clubs, as FPL players are more likely to watch a higher quantity of weekly games (not only involving their club) thus being more dedicated to the sport, illustrating the power of FPL and why clubs can benefit from it. Regarding how likely our sample is to engage with a post concerning a player that they own in their FPL team, the most voted option was 1 out of 10 (not likely) with 22% of the votes. Nonetheless, the answers were very dispersed and 42% chose 6 or above, meaning there is some interest regarding these kinds of initiatives for FPL Clubs. This data can be seen in Appendix 2.12.

Moving to Appendix 2.13, concerning the question about the satisfaction of our sample with the attention given by PL clubs to FPL, the results show very heterogeneous opinions. Most respondents seem to be indifferent regarding this topic as the most voted answer was 5, with 36% of the votes. The second most voted option with 13% of the votes was 1, showing there are also some respondents that are highly unsatisfied. Only 4% of Group 1 chose this option, so the more unsatisfied respondents seem to be players with more experience. Finally, the last

Likert questions, we asked respondents about their interest in FPL content made by PL clubs other than the one they support. As we can see in Appendix 2.14, the most voted option was 1 with 19% (perhaps due to club rivalries), but the answers were spread out and 48% of the sample voted 6 or above, which shows there is some interest from the FPL players to see content from all the clubs in the league regardless of who they support.

For the final section, we asked respondents to rank five possible initiative types that a club could invest in. As we can see in Appendix 2.15, the results show that respondents, in general, appreciated two initiatives and disliked one. The ones respondents preferred were "Post more informative videos about players' data that helps your decision making" and "Creation of club specific leagues with more monetary or other tangible rewards", each being selected in the top 2 by 56% and 49% of the sample, respectively. So, similarly to what we found before, FPL players are mainly looking for information and data to help them in their decision making in FPL. Not only that, but they also want to participate in leagues created by clubs to have the chance to win some prizes and increase their incentives. The initiative less liked by our sample was the "Creation of content with FPL experts posted on the club's social media" with 43% of the sample ranking it the worst of the available options. To justify this, we hypothesized that FPL managers perceive the FPL experts as unbiased sources of information, and it does not make sense to see them affiliated with any club. After gathering these insights, we had in-depth data on the FPL population which allowed us to effectively develop initiatives targeting them.

4. Recommendation – FPL Gameweek Email Preview

4.1 Context

As reported in the introductory part of the paper, when meeting with James Gibbins, the Wolverhampton Wanderers Supporter Insight and Loyalty Manager, he explained to us that a contextual change had happened recently as Wolves. After working alongside the Premier

League, Wolves could now identify which registered users on their platforms play FPL. Consequently, Wolves now had the ability to instantly target them and even create communication initiatives to properly target these users, engaging with them and further improving their relationship. Accordingly, the club was interested to hear our ideas on how to leverage this new factor. After presenting our initial set of recommendations, James expressed particular interest concerning the email communications that could be sent directly to FPL players working as a preview of each gameweek. The email would be a briefing of the key data points regarding the upcoming Wolves FPL match. We believe that using email is a very cost-effective way to communicate with these users given it is a way to enhance brand loyalty on a regular basis at low expense (Merisavo & Raulas, 2004). Moreover, email communication is currently considered one of the most successful marketing activities involved in building a brand and improving relationships with customers, having one of the highest click-through rates amongst the different marketing channels (Hudák, 2017).

In order to develop this recommendation, we firstly examined the current state of Wolves regarding FPL to see how they are currently tackling this issue. Afterwards, we performed a benchmark analysis to see how other Premier League clubs are acting on this subject and lastly, we indicated our recommendation as to how this email communication idea should be implemented. It is also important to mention that throughout this process we used the insights we retrieved from our survey, mainly that FPL players prioritize content that helps them in their decision-making. Overall, the main purpose of this initiative would be for Wolves to foster the engagement with the registered FPL players on their database, increasing the total impressions and traffic on their platform. Considering the social aspect of FPL, implementing this change might even create a ripple effect, ultimately increasing the number of registered users for Wolves on their platforms given that nowadays some fans may not be registered because they do not see the benefit in doing so. In conclusion, by potentially expanding the number of

registered users and strengthening the relationship with this group, Wolves would also be able to retrieve more data from this group which would also lead to huge benefits.

4.2 Wolverhampton Wanderers' current state analysis

To be able to suggest the most adequate email recommendation to Wolves, we started by analysing their current initiatives regarding FPL. Right now, there is no email communication sent to supporters related to the topic, so we analysed their activity on social media and websites concerning these subjects. Currently, Wolves publishes a gameweek preview article referred to as FPL MD (so for example, FPL MD2 when previewing Gameweek 2) that is supposed to be released each week. At the date of starting this project, Wolves had published an introductory article previewing the start of the season (8th August 2023), followed by an FPL MD2 on the 17th of August 2023. However, the initiative wa**s** forgotten**,** only being published in MD6 again (22nd September 2023), showing that it is not a key initiative for Wolves. Before going deeply into the article content, it is important to highlight that this post not only has irregular timings of publication but is also not promoted on any other Wolves' social media such as Twitter (X) or Instagram which definitely harms the potential reach of the article.

The article itself has 3 main sections. It starts with a Last Time Out section ([Appendix 3.1](#)), where Wolves highlight two players (one from Wolves and one from the opposition) that performed well in the Wolves' previous match with small texts concerning the players' performance and indicating their current price in FPL. Then it has a This Week section ([Appendix 3.2](#)), where the same rationale from Last Time Out is applied but to the upcoming games. So, a player from Wolves and a player from the opposition team that Wolves are going to play next are selected and highlighted as probable FPL high scorers in that game. The style is the same as in the previous section, with texts covering the main ideas and the prices of players. Our assessment is that the text format throughout both sections is not the most appealing since both sections could be more visual and present more useful data for FPL

players, specifically some other KPIs concerning the players' performances that are objective and easy to understand. Finally, it has a section concerning the current Wolves FPL Fan League (Appendix 3.3), showcasing the FPL team of the current leader in the league in a text format. From our FPL experience, we do not believe this section is very useful for FPL players nor is it visually appealing, but we understand the incentives it gives to the players in the Wolves FPL Fan League since it highlights the performance of the current leader. It is also worth mentioning that throughout the article Wolves tend to redirect users to some of their other social media posts, which we believe to be a good idea given it increases the total engagement in Wolves' platforms. Being this the only current FPL initiative adopted by Wolves, during this project we also transmitted them this feedback about how they could possibly improve this initiative as you could see in Appendix 4. Crucially, throughout this analysis we inferred that some of the features present in the FPL MD are relevant for the development of the email recommendation.

4.3 Benchmark

Our investigation examined practices adopted by leading football clubs concerning providing game previews to their supporters. This research covered three key dimensions:

-Match Previews published on the PL clubs' websites – This research aimed to identify crucial elements covered in game previews that we can link to FPL and possibly incorporate in our recommendation.

-The FPL articles published on the PL clubs' websites – This research served a dual purpose: initially, to establish the extent of awareness and efforts amongst football clubs regarding FPL, and subsequently, to examine possible elements for our recommendation.

-Match Preview email communications sent by clubs to the registered supporters on their database – This research focused on covering the differences between website and email communications, examining visual and content-related distinctions.

Starting with the previews of the games, we verified that most of the clubs follow a similar approach. Premier League clubs, as expected, publish an article on their website usually 1 or 2 days before each match that usually follows the same structure. The article typically starts with information on how to watch the match and promptly provides updates on team news, often quoting insights from both coaches' press conferences. Subsequently, the article incorporates various features, with the most found including summaries of past encounters between the competing teams and brief discussions on their recent form, showcasing results from previous games. Notably, certain clubs, such as Arsenal and Chelsea stand out for their approach, featuring small-scale tactical analyses of the opposition's strengths. Moreover, clubs like Liverpool engage with their supporters by encouraging predictions for match outcomes and subsequently sharing the collective responses, a distinctive feature we found particularly intriguing (Appendix 5).

Regarding FPL content directly available on club websites, our examination revealed compelling insights. Amongst the 20 clubs in the Premier League, only 3 consistently feature FPL information on their official platforms, Brentford, Aston Villa, and West Ham. While most other clubs do not entirely overlook FPL, their engagement is sporadic and marked by a more selective approach. For instance, Manchester City distinguishes itself by hosting a dedicated FPL show on YouTube where former players and FPL experts discuss and preview some gameweeks (usually 3 to 4 times a season). Analysing the clubs that are more regular and starting with Aston Villa, the club formed a partnership with Fantasy Football Scout, a widely recognized fantasy football expert platform. In collaboration with them, Aston Villa consistently releases a monthly article guiding fans on which of their players to target for upcoming fixtures. Moving on to West Ham, they stand out as one of the most consistent contributors in this domain. The club routinely publishes a comprehensive preview for every gameweek throughout the season, not only highlighting key West Ham players but also offering

insights into opposing players who may interest FPL players. Brentford, in contrast, adopts a distinctive and extensive approach by dedicating an entire section on its website to FPL news. This section not only aggregates official communications from the official FPL Twitter account but also provides detailed statistics for Brentford players. Notably, Brentford's FPL news section gathers all the Brentford published articles that may be relevant for the FPL population such as team news recaps, opposition analyses and match previews, amongst others.

Lastly, concerning direct email communication on match days, we also verified that it is a usual practice amongst clubs, with over half of the Premier League clubs regularly sending emails either prior to or on the day of a match. Notably, some clubs utilize these emails not solely for match previews but as weekly summaries encompassing broader club activities. Throughout these emails, a recurring strategic objective emerged: while previewing the match, the aim was to steer recipients towards the club's website, inserting hyperlinks to a variety of content, including quizzes, podcasts, and promotions for club merchandise. Even within the match previews themselves inside the email, the usual practice is for clubs to simply give a brief introduction of a topic and then strategically lead the users into a more extensive article about the topic on the club's website. Overall, the topics touched upon in the email match previews align with those featured in the matchday articles on the clubs' websites. Moreover, given our focus was on understanding how clubs engage with fans via email, we confirmed that most of these communications were visually appealing, adopting a simple and easily digestible format. Recognizing this as the standard, we acknowledged the importance of following a similar approach in our analysis.

4.4 Proposed Recommendation

Format – Our recommended email strategy for Wolves involves a newsletter-style format email tailored for registered users in the Wolves database who have an FPL account. A pre-match email would be sent out before every gameweek (1-2 days prior), allowing users sufficient time

to read it and make decisions on their FPL teams before the gameweek deadline. The design concept prioritizes visual appeal, readability through key indicators, and brevity of text. The objective is for readers to effortlessly scroll through the email within two to three minutes, aligning with our benchmark standards. Moreover, the email will contain hyperlinks directing users to other posts inside Wolves' website, offering an in-depth exploration of topics briefly covered in the email. The primary goal is to create a simple and informative communication that fosters user's interest in Wolves' online content, ultimately boosting overall website traffic.

The final prototype of our email can be found in [Appendix 6](). We will now detail its structure and contents that are going to be in it, as well as explain why these pieces together provide FPL players with a concise and exhaustive summary of all the information they need to make their FPL decisions regarding the specific previewed game in the email. So, the following proposed structure encompasses the following elements:

Header – The Header serves as an opening section presenting essential information about the upcoming game. We recommend incorporating key details such as team badges, team names, the stadium hosting the game, the scheduled date, kick-off time, and, lastly, the television channel set to broadcast the event. This approach guarantees that users gain immediate access to the fundamental details of the game, providing them with the necessary context to comprehend all the information presented in the email thoroughly.

League Table – The presentation of the Premier League Table headlines the position of the teams involved. This element proves to be efficient as it allows for a quick analysis, offering FPL players a comprehensive overview of each team's performance throughout the season.

Last three matches of each team – While the overall performance throughout the season holds significance, what holds even greater value from the perspective of an FPL player is the team's recent form. For instance, if a team faced losses exclusively in the initial two months but has

remained unbeaten in the subsequent four months, the league table may not accurately reflect the team's current strength. To address this challenge effectively, we have opted to present the results from each team's last three Premier League matches. This method ensures a brief analysis time while offering sufficient insights to discern the current form of a team.

Next three matches of each team – When selecting a player for their FPL teams, players expect the footballers they select to score points in the long term. To ensure they make the correct decision, FPL players often analyse the quality of upcoming opponents. The rationale behind this lies in the perception that facing a stronger team can limit a footballer's point-scoring potential. In response to this challenge, our solution involves providing the upcoming three fixtures for each PL team following the game highlighted in the email. This additional insight allows FPL managers to assess the competitive landscape beyond the immediate fixture, helping them make informed decisions that align with their long-term strategy.

Team News – This section holds significant importance for FPL managers, as their ability to score points in FPL is directly dependent on the active participation of the footballers they have selected for their teams. This means that if any player owned by FPL managers is at risk of missing a match, it significantly hinders their point-scoring potential. Consequently, staying informed about the availability of players is crucial for FPL managers to optimize their team's performance, and, in our gameweek preview email, Team News is an indispensable feature. To streamline this information, our design highlights two to four key players per team who are either injured or have uncertain availability for the upcoming match. Beneath each highlighted player, a clear visual indicator is used for quick comprehension. A green check emoji signifies that the player is fit to play, a question mark emoji denotes uncertainty regarding their availability, and a red cross emoji conveys that the player is indisputably unavailable. Incorporating this presentation ensures that readers can efficiently assess the status of their players and make well-informed decisions to enhance their team's success in the FPL.

Line-up Predictor – In addition to Team News, we propose the inclusion of a "button" with a hyperlink that directs users to an external page within the Wolves' website, if readers click on it. This page would enable users to select the anticipated line-ups for Wolves in the upcoming game. Subsequently, users could view the collective results from all participating fans, and it would be a valuable reassurance for FPL managers, offering insights into whether the players they own are likely to start or not. We believe this feature is feasible since the option for users to choose their predicted line-up already exists on the Wolves website.

In-form players – While the significance of a team's form has been highlighted earlier, an even more crucial factor for FPL managers is the individual form of players. In FPL, points are collected based on player performances, moreover, the correlation between a player's form and the team's overall performance is not always direct. For instance, if Salah scores a hat-trick, his FPL score remains unaffected by whether Liverpool wins, loses, or draws. Therefore, understanding a player's recent individual performance is key. In our approach, we aim to provide FPL players with insights into the recent performances of key players. To achieve this, we identify the three main performers from each team, utilizing a metric known as "form" available on the FPL website. This metric reflects the average points a player has scored in the last four meetings. By selecting players based on their highest form, we offer FPL managers a snapshot of the standout performers. To enrich this data, we also include statistics on the number of goals and assists these players have accumulated in those meetings, providing managers with a comprehensive understanding of why these players have been exceptional in recent matches.

Past Meetings – Understanding the recent history of matches involving the teams can prove helpful in predicting game outcomes. It not only assists in identifying the team most likely to win but also provides insights into whether the match is likely to be high-scoring, favoring forwards in FPL, or low-scoring, which is advantageous for defenders. To present this data effectively we would include the results of the last five encounters between the teams in the

Premier League. For readers seeking a more in-depth understanding of each game, hyperlink buttons accompany each result, directing them to the match reports within the Wolves' website. This approach not only enhances reader engagement but also encourages exploration of additional articles within the Wolves' website.

Score Predictor – To aid Past Meetings in providing readers with insights into potential game outcomes, we've added Score Predictor. This feature already exists on the Wolves' website and would operate very similarly to the Line-up Predictor. In our email, it would appear as a button with a hyperlink that directs users to the Wolves' website. Here, users can predict the score for the upcoming game, and subsequently, view the aggregated results from the entire fan pool. This allows readers to understand the expectations of Wolves fans regarding the game's outcome, providing a comprehensive overview of anticipated scores.

Top Scorers Against Opposition – While acknowledging that past performances don't definitively predict future outcomes, when FPL managers identify a pattern of a footballer performing at a certain level against a specific opposition, this information becomes a key factor for their decisions. To streamline this valuable information, we highlight the top two players expected to play, who have historically scored the most goals in this matchup. This strategy ensures that FPL managers receive insights to inform their strategic decision-making process.

Wolves FPL pick for the game – Finally, the conclusion to end our email is to recommend a Wolves footballer whom FPL players should consider adding to their teams in the upcoming gameweek. The recommended player is the one who has consistently stood out across the various metrics throughout the email and is anticipated to yield the highest FPL points in the upcoming game. While the decision is primarily data-driven, it's essential to acknowledge that the choice may involve a degree of subjectivity. In such cases, Wolves have the flexibility to make the final decision on which footballer to endorse in the recommendation.

4.5 Final Remarks

Upon discovering that Wolves now had the ability to grasp which share of their registered users play FPL, the idea of a weekly email regarding the preview of the FPL gameweek emerged, catching the interest of James Gibbins who was very keen on its implementation.

As validated by our survey, players mainly consume FPL content with the purpose of enhancing their decision making inside the game. Our final email prototype capitalizes on this factor, given that it includes a series of sections that provide a summary of all the relevant data for the upcoming game of Wolves. The goals of this recommendation were to boost fan engagement and to increase traffic on Wolves' platforms. The social pillar of FPL could also lead to an uptick in registered users, as FPL players are required to register on the Wolves website to access this exclusive content. Moreover, an analysis of other Premier League clubs' approaches to FPL revealed a significant gap in regular addressing of the topic, positioning this initiative as an opportunity to stand out in an underserved market. To fortify our recommendation, a benchmark was performed concerning the email communication practices of other clubs, guiding us to understand the usual format of these messages. In summary, this section holds intrinsic value, not solely due to the depth of the proposed recommendation, but also for its contextual analysis of the prevailing approaches adopted by Premier League clubs towards FPL.

5. Recommendation – FPL League Creation

5.1 Context

Firstly, it is mandatory to contextualize the reader into what are the leagues inside FPL. As we highlighted earlier, FPL players recognize the game as having a foundation in competition. Yet, what remains unexplored is the crucial role that leagues play in fostering this competitive spirit. Much like traditional sports, the objective of FPL players is to outscore their peers, securing the top position in the leagues they join. This achievement not only brings recognition for their success but also opens the possibility of receiving tangible rewards. These leagues can take various forms, ranging from private amongst friends to publicly accessible with millions of participants. This diversity allows players to tailor their experience based on their preferences.

While the game itself already generates some leagues, every registered account has the ability to create a league. Typically, users establish leagues to compete with their friends, however, certain companies have seized this opportunity as a strategic marketing tool. The creation of leagues in FPL by companies is not something new and has been done mainly by sports betting companies. By promising attractive rewards to the winners, a company persuades players to join their league, and in return they get to showcase their brand name and engage with potential new clients. Given that from the side of the players there is no hassle to enter an FPL League (the process is free and quick), if a player sees an advertisement of an FPL league with captivating rewards, that will most probably translate into him joining it, meaning the penetration rate of this initiatives is expected to be extremely high.

Recently, we also started to see Premier League clubs getting involved in these initiatives and the benefits seem to extend even further. The creation of a club specific league is a great way for clubs to enhance their interaction with their fans and to increase their online presence. Running an FPL league encourages fans to visit the club's website more regularly, boosting

online traffic and interactions. Moreover, this idea can attract non-Wolves fans who are enticed by the potential rewards, fostering their interest in the club. Furthermore, this initiative provides a platform for collecting data on fans, which is useful for the club's marketing strategies, helping them tailor promotions to better suit their audience.

This aligns with the fact that the creation of a club specific FPL league falls into the category of game-based marketing since its premise is to convince the target audience to compete against each other in FPL to win rewards while cultivating their passion for Wolves. According to current literature on the topic, most of today's savvy consumers have an unlimited range of possible choices for how they spend their spare time, resulting in a loss of effectiveness from traditional marketing messages. To address this challenge, strategically combining game mechanics such as challenges and rewards with the product presents a remarkable opportunity to effectively captivate this evolving consumer demographic (Zichermann & Linder, 2010).

Throughout the existence of FPL, there has always been a general league, nowadays named "Overall", where all the players who have registered to play are automatically enrolled in. Although this is the most renowned league, it is important to note that there are many leagues, that are divided into different categories, So, in order to create an initiative for Wolves that leverages leagues, it is important to understand what kinds of leagues exist and their different characteristics. Two main categories of leagues are relevant to our study.

Firstly, "General Leagues" are leagues where players are automatically entered after they register into the game. Most FPL managers will be enrolled in five different "General Leagues". As mentioned before, the "Overall" league ranks all the players that created a team. Additionally, we have a league that joins all the managers from the same country. Moreover, users supporting a specific club within the Premier League are automatically placed in a league alongside fellow fans of that club. Lastly, it's worth noting that both the "Second Chance" and

"Gameweek" leagues fall under the category of "General Leagues," although they are not relevant to our study, so they won't be explained any further.

Secondly, "Invitational Classic Leagues" are private leagues that can be created by any registered account in FPL. After its inception, players can only join the league after the creator shares with them the access code. Although they are mainly used for players to create private leagues to compete with friends, this type of league is relevant for our recommendation, since all the initiatives done so far leveraging FPL leagues have been done through them. Other types of leagues might exist like the "Broadcaster League", but, as they are not relevant for the recommendation, those will be considered out of our scope.

The reader may naturally question why a PL club should dedicate the effort to establishing an "Invitational Classic League" instead of picking convenience by simply utilizing the pre-existing Wolves "General League" provided by FPL. The reason is that opting to utilize the Wolves "General League" significantly diminishes the potential impact of this initiative. Firstly, this choice restricts the initiative's outreach, as only people who have registered in FPL as Wolves fans are eligible to play. This, unfortunately, misses the major opportunity to attract a broader audience, like general fans who do not support any club and might be enticed to participate. Secondly, a private league creates a more engaged community of fans. This happens since players have to "take action" to enter an "Invitational Classic League", since they need to insert the access code in the FPL app. Consequently, they are likely to have encountered the promotion, familiarized themselves with the rules, and understood the potential prizes. In contrast, players are automatically enlisted in the "General Leagues" without being informed of the initiative in hand. Unless they happen to come across an advertisement for the initiative or receive information through another channel, they are unlikely to follow the regulations and properly participate in the initiative. Finally, the use of the Wolves "General League" inhibits the co-creation of the initiative with a partner company. A partnership can add substantial value

to the FPL League, since collaborating with a sponsor extends the league's reach to the sponsor's existing audience, fostering increased participation and visibility. Furthermore, such partnerships improve and diversify the prize pool, introducing stronger incentives to persuade FPL players to join the league. Importantly, a partnership may also yield direct benefits for Wolves, as sponsors may offer financial compensation to the club for their involvement in the initiative. With that said, the recommendation made in this chapter relies on the condition that Wolves create an "Invitational Classic League", rather than using the "General League".

5.2 Survey analysis

To confirm our hypothesis that FPL players would be interested in this kind of initiative, we tried to find literature on the topic. After delicate research, we could not find any studies regarding FPL players' interest in "League" initiative, given the specificity of the matter. Fortunately, our survey was conducted with the sole purpose of countering the lack of available literature regarding FPL, so we will resort back to it for some further insights.

Initially, we validated the existence of the previously mentioned foundation in FPL, with 80% of the sampled individuals mentioning competition as one of their primary motivations for joining the game. Additionally, 6% of participants noted that the prospect of winning tangible prizes influenced their decision to engage in the game. This interest in winning potential prizes is key for us since the success of the league initiative will be greatly dependent on how well the prize pool of the league can captivate the players to join it, so it is an encouraging sign to have players already naming prizes as a primary reason to have started to play the game.

Most importantly, in the final section of our survey, we requested players to rank between five FPL initiatives that clubs could pursue, and the "Creation of club specific leagues with monetary or other tangible rewards" was one of the most voted options, with 31% of respondents ranking it as their preferred initiative. This is a positive indicator that helps us to confirm that there is

demand for this kind of initiative. Consequently, we can shift our focus to examining how Wolves have approached leagues inside FPL thus far.

5.3 Wolverhampton Wanderers' current state analysis

The creation of a "League" in FPL is not something new for Wolves, as they created one in the season 2019/2020. Unfortunately, this initiative was not successful since the club gave up on the project ever since. After a raw analysis of the initiative, some factors can be identified as the reasons why Wolves did not implement the idea most effectively.

Firstly, to promote the creation of its league, Wolves simply published an article on its website (Appendix 7), meaning that the target customers that the initiative was able to reach were only FPL players who regularly visited the Wolves' website. Although we don't have the precise numbers, one can imagine how harmful this was to the initiative's outreach.

Furthermore, Wolves committed a second mistake, since the club failed to show the winners' prizes to convince the players to join the league. While one can mention that the FPL players might still want to join the league just to compete directly with fellow Wolves' fans, the truth is that they already do that through the previously mentioned "General Leagues", meaning that, without the rewards, there is little to no incentive to join a club specific league. The article mentions "Prizes will be distributed to the best performers over the course of the season", so while the customers are informed of the existence of prizes, they are left to wonder what the rewards might be and if they are intriguing enough for them to want to join the league, creating another possible reason for the lack of success of the initiative.

5.4 Benchmark

Prior to unveiling our final recommendation for Wolves, we will study a similar initiative, which we believe was well implemented. This club specific FPL league was implemented by Watford FC in the season 2021/2022 in collaboration with their main kit sponsor Stake, which

is a sports betting company. Furthermore, the league was named "Stake x Watford $20000 FPL League".

First, in terms of the promotion made for this initiative, Stake announced the creation of the league via a post on Twitter (X), that was also "retweeted" by Watford's account (Appendix 8). Although done in a very effortless way, we believe that the promotion was done very efficiently. As we studied before, Twitter (X) is one of the most used social media by FPL players, so a post through there is an effective way to reach a large mass of players. Furthermore, the post also included a "#FPL", which makes it easier for players to find the publication. Although the post does not provide a lot of information such as the rules, prizes, or the code to access the league, it provides a link where the players can access all that information. To attract the players to click the link which will potentially lead to them joining the league, the post includes an engaging image of one of the most famous Watford players from the squad of that season, Troy Deeney. Alongside that, in the center of the image, the name of the league is headlined, with a big focus on "$20000", which although not clear, leads players to believe that such value is the prize money on the line for the winners, which of course is a very appealing reward for most FPL players.

Regarding the prizes, the league lived up to its name, delivering a total prize pool of $20000 to the 10 best ranked players in the league at the end of the season. The money would be delivered directly to the FPL player's Stake account, this of course is done to prompt the winners to use Stakes's platform. The total prize money was distributed as follows: the first placed winner received $10,000, the second placed participant earned $5,000, the third placed finisher was awarded $1,500, and players securing positions from fourth to tenth each received $500. Besides the monetary prize rewards, the first placed FPL player got a "Signed Watford Home Jersey" and two "VIP tickets to watch Watford". The second and third place also got additional rewards, as each received two "tickets to watch Watford". Overall, we believe that the prize

pool of the league was enticing, especially the monetary rewards, as it was the main factor in incentivizing the FPL players to join the league. Although the monetary rewards were only made possible with the sponsorship of Stake, it is noteworthy that Watford FC also contributed with club specific rewards. Given the amount of time FPL enthusiasts spend watching football games and doing research on the topic, we can hypothesize that they would be highly interested in these prizes.

In this initiative, besides having to join the league in the game, players had to follow some rules to be eligible to receive rewards, from them one stands out as being most relevant to us. The rule is very interesting as it states that players must always have at least one Watford player in their teams, which can be on the bench. As we saw in our survey, FPL players have an interest in the footballers in their team. They actively engage with posts related to these players and closely follow their matches. Consequently, this rule proves strategically advantageous, as it serves as an incentive for FPL players to intensify their focus on Watford's players and games, thereby enhancing their overall engagement. The detail that the Watford player can be on the bench is also crucial as it makes the rule a lot more feasible.

Overall, the implementation of the "Stake x Watford $20,000 FPL League" initiative was well carried out, offering crucial insights into promotion strategies, prize structures, and rule dynamics for an initiative of this kind. Utilizing this initiative as a benchmark, we will now build upon it to formulate our final recommendations for Wolves.

5.5 Proposed Recommendation

When creating an FPL league initiative, there's a pivotal decision to make before delving into considerations of promotion, rewards, and rules. Wolves face a choice between creating the FPL league independently or alongside a partner. This decision is not straightforward as there are both advantages and disadvantages to each choice. Creating the initiative on their own grants

Wolves complete control over every aspect of the league, while avoiding the hassle of approaching the partners to see if they would be interested in participating in such initiatives. But as we mentioned before, a partnership can strongly enhance the potential of the initiative, in terms of promotion reach and the prizes pool. The collaboration could even lead to financial compensation to Wolves and would certainly improve the relationship of Wolves with the company in question. Consequently, securing a partner to collaborate on this initiative is deemed a favorable course of action. In our examination of Wolves' list of sponsors, four companies emerged as potential collaborators for the league creation initiative:

AstroPay – Astropay is a global wallet that provides users with a way to pay, send, and receive money, it is Wolves' "Principal Partner". There is the possibility to provide monetary prizes of the league directly to the winners' AstroPay wallets.

LeoVegas – LeoVegas is an Online Casino & Sports Betting platform and is a "Main Partner" of Wolves. As we saw in our benchmark with Stake, these kinds of companies are usually keen to participate in FPL initiatives. Furthermore, there is the possibility of providing monetary prizes to the winners' Leo Vegas accounts.

6686 Sports – 6686 Sports is an Online Casino & Sports Betting platform and is a "Main Partner" of Wolves. It is a plausible sponsor for the same reasons as LeoVegas.

Monster Energy – Monster Energy is a famous company that sells energy drinks and is one of Wolves' "Global Partners". The key appeal of a partnership with Monster Energy lies in the prospect of reaching a broader audience, capitalizing on the widespread popularity associated with the Monster Energy brand.

When evaluating these potential partners, careful consideration should be given to their strategic alignment with the initiative's objectives, ensuring that the collaboration maximizes the benefits of the initiative for all participants involved.

When it comes to promoting the Wolves initiative, a strategic approach is essential. To kick off the promotional efforts, Wolves should create a comprehensive article on its website, which explains in full detail the initiative, the rules, the prize pool, and provides the access code for the league. To further help, we created our mock-up of this article which can be seen in [Appendix 9](). To effectively reach a broad audience, the strategy should encompass leveraging three key social media platforms that resonate mostly with FPL players, which are Twitter (X), YouTube, and Reddit, as proven by our survey. This approach not only proves to be the most efficient means of connecting with the FPL community but also capitalizes on channels that Wolves can utilize without incurring costs, allowing them to leverage their already popular social media pages. Following the successful model observed in the benchmark, we would recommend creating a publication in text format calling out all FPL players and briefly explaining the initiative, while exposing some of the possible prizes for the winners of the initiative, intriguing players to join the league. To make the post more visually appealing the written text should be accompanied by an image promoting the initiative. Ideally, the image would feature a popular Wolves footballer in FPL. An efficient way to identify this player is by searching which Wolves' footballer has the highest ownership in the game. These kinds of posts are budget friendly, but extremely versatile, as they can be posted on platforms like Twitter (X) and Reddit. Even on YouTube, traditionally a video-centric platform, such posts can now be published. Beyond sharing the post on Wolves and sponsors' social media, it can be adapted for an email campaign targeting registered accounts on the Wolves website, ensuring direct communication with the existing user base.

When considering prizes, we advocate for offerings that are highly appealing to maximize participant engagement in the league. We believe that there should be two types of rewards, sponsor specific and club specific rewards. For sponsor specific rewards, we drew inspiration from the benchmark, and recommended the practice that involves directly depositing monetary

rewards into the winners' accounts, especially effective for sponsors such as AstroPay, LeoVegas or 6686 Sports. This method not only resonates with players' keen interest in financial rewards but also serves sponsors by encouraging winners to actively interact with their products, fostering a pathway to long-term customer engagement.

Furthermore, specific rewards tailored to the club are of utmost importance, serving as a means for Wolves to cultivate brand loyalty amongst the winners. While offerings like stadium tours, t-shirts, and other merchandise from the official store are suitable options, we would like to recommend three elements that we consider great additions to the prize pool. Firstly, offering free tickets to attend a Wolves' game not only meets the desires of FPL players but also strengthens the bond between the winners and the club. Secondly, providing the opportunity for winners to meet Wolves' footballers is key. For FPL players, these athletes are their idols, and the chance to interact with them in person represents an exceptional experience that would be cherished. Lastly, recognizing winners publicly through Wolves' social media platforms is an essential prize. Players engage in a demanding and time-consuming competition throughout the entire season, so being publicly acknowledged as one of the league's winners is a distinction that instills pride in every FPL enthusiast.

Finally, with respect to the rules, we highly recommend incorporating insights gained from the benchmark into the initiative. Therefore, for participants to be eligible to win the prizes, they must always have a Wolves player in their FPL team during the competition, even if that player is on the bench. As mentioned before, this rule serves as an incentive for FPL players to intensify their focus on Wolves' players and games, thereby encouraging engagement with the club.

5.6 Final Remarks

In fantasy football, rewards and prizes have consistently served as significant motivators for player participation. This holds true for FPL as well, as evidenced by our survey findings, where

a substantial number of respondents acknowledged being drawn into the game by the prospect of potential rewards. Recognizing this trend, the conception of an initiative, such as the creation of an FPL league with rewards, emerges as a compelling avenue to explore. More importantly, our survey revealed that there is demand for the specific initiative amongst FPL players, ranking it as the second most liked option within our sample.

Besides having demand, this initiative excels in a multitude of ways. Firstly, it is expected to have a high penetration rate, facilitated by the seamless process for players to join the league. From a financial perspective, the creation of the league in FPL incurs no costs, and leveraging club social media for advertising also comes at no expense. So, besides paying designers and writers for the promotion duty, the initiative's costs are solely tied to the prize pool. Ultimately, the primary objectives of the initiative appear promising, as they involve attracting non-Wolves fans to cultivate their interest in the club, fostering increased engagement with current fans, boosting online traffic on Wolves' platforms, and gathering valuable new data on supporters. Moreover, the initiative might create opportunities for revenue generation through the collaborative development of the league with a sponsor, thereby also strengthening relationships with those sponsors. In summary, this initiative distinguishes itself by being a cost-effective avenue to capitalize on the widespread popularity of FPL. Moreover, it can be pursued not solely by a Premier League club, but also by any other stakeholder trying to get involved with the game.

6. Limitations

Delving into an uncharted area as FPL inevitably brought about certain constraints within this work project. This was particularly evident in the context of literature, where the topic had scarcely been explored in any academic paper. Additionally, the subjects of fantasy football and fantasy sports were also found to be outdated. Our solution to tackle this was to survey the FPL population. Inherent to our approach, a significant limitation surfaced in this process given the survey was published on FPL-specific forums and subsequently, only the dedicated FPL players were able to see it. This sample bias creates a limitation to our takeaways, as our survey fails to capture the perspectives of the less committed segment of FPL players. Additionally, some other sample-selection biases emerged in our sample, particularly concerning the nation of the respondents and the social media they used the most to consume FPL content. Not only did we share the survey with our FPL inner circle, increasing the proportion of Portuguese users, but also most of the respondents came from our post in the FPL Reddit, overstating the real importance of Reddit in the FPL community. Furthermore, despite still gathering more than 400 responses, the truth is that we were still limited to this small sample size that is not able to represent the FPL community of over 11 million players.

Moreover, when developing the recommendations, we faced some limitations, particularly in terms of feasibility. Although we acknowledge Wolves' willingness to collaborate on this subject, certain aspects of our ideas extend beyond the FPL scope. The implementation of these ideas requires the integration of additional resources whose availability we are currently unaware of. Some concrete examples of this include the challenge for Wolves to gather a potential partner for an initiative, the ability to retrieve past data from their platforms, and the flexibility to shape a social media strategy coordinated with these initiatives.

7. Conclusion

Considering the characteristics of the current generation of football fans, our assessment is that the industry of fantasy football and, more specifically, of FPL seems poised to continue to grow. Given the limited existing literature on the topic, our study relied on a survey to shed light on various aspects of the FPL population. Notably, the data revealed that players invest a substantial amount of time around the game, displaying a keen interest towards content that helps in their FPL decision-making. A subset of respondents already relies on the websites of Premier League clubs for this purpose. Despite these revelations, our analysis underscores a noticeable gap in the engagement strategies employed by PL clubs with this specific audience, presenting an untapped market opportunity. Addressing this market segment has the potential to amplify both fan engagement and the traffic directed towards a club's platforms.

In this study, we developed three feasible recommendations tailored for Wolves to enhance their connection with the FPL player community. These proposals encompass a weekly email previewing the upcoming gameweek, establishing a private FPL league with rewards for fans, and expanding the player statistics available on the club's website and mobile app. The initiatives provide valuable guidance for stakeholders seeking to implement similar initiatives.

Furthermore, beyond its practical applications, this paper serves as a foundational resource for any future stakeholder in the scope of Fantasy Premier League, offering a comprehensive understanding of FPL concepts, while delving into the behaviours and characteristics of its community. As a conclusion to this thesis, our work not only contributes with practical strategies for football clubs but also establishes a theoretical foundation for future research and initiatives within the dynamic landscape of fantasy football.

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 🏅 Our shirt sponsor @Stake is hosting an @OfficialFPL league where you can win

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This 2-Minute Survey; We Are Two FPL Addicts from Portugal Writing Our Master's

Thesis on How Premier League Clubs Could Better Engage with the FPL Community.

To Aid Our Study We Have Created a Survey for FPL Players. Thank You!' Reddit

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9. Appendix

Appendix 1 – Number of FPL players since inception (millions)
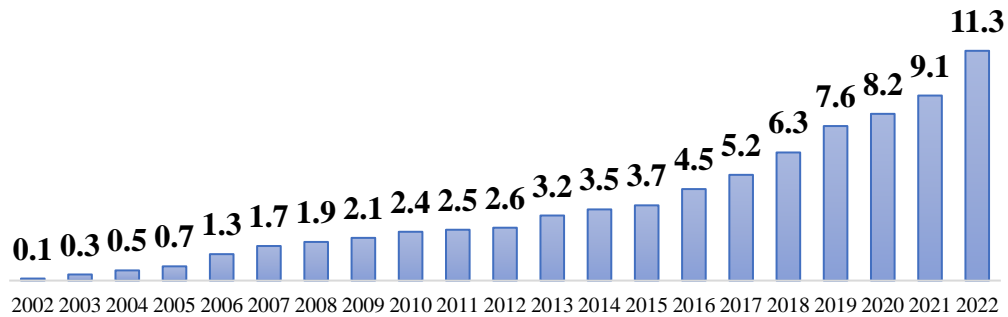
Appendix 2.1 – Survey Results: Age (%)
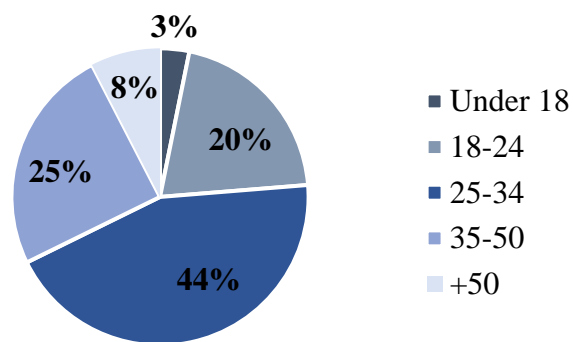
Appendix 2.2 – Survey Results: Gender (%)
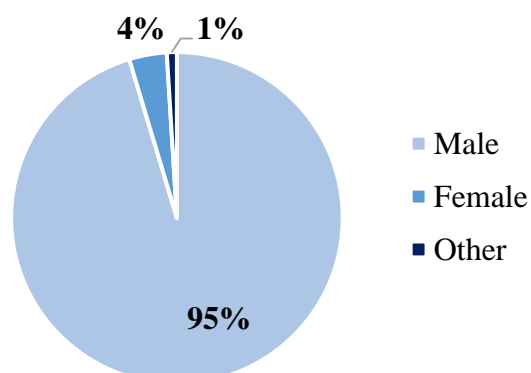
Appendix 2.3 – Survey Results: Country of origin (%)
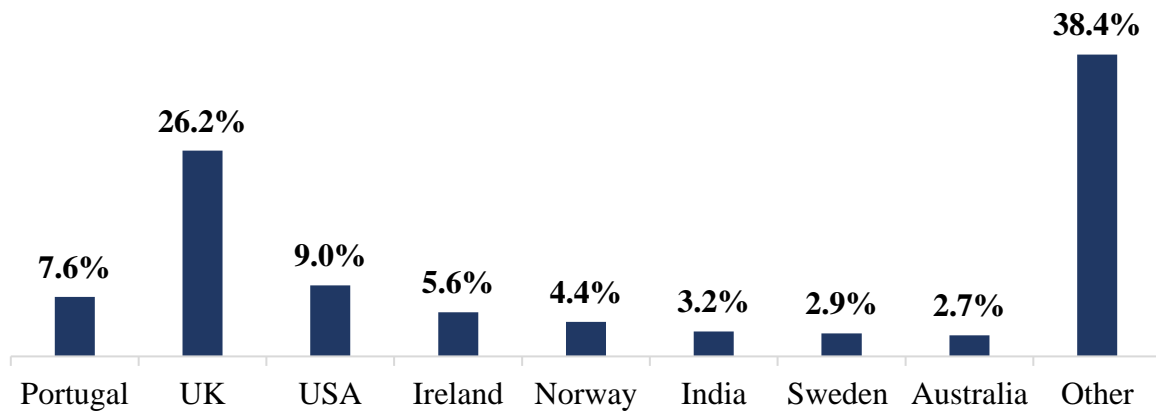
Appendix 2.4 – Survey Results: Club supporters vs General fans (%)
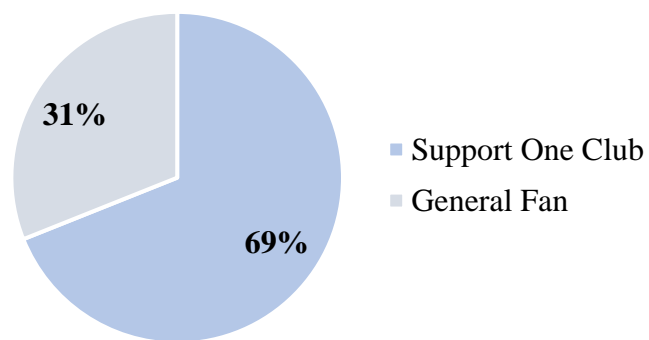
Appendix 2.5 – Survey Results: Ranked FPL level from 1 to 10 (%)
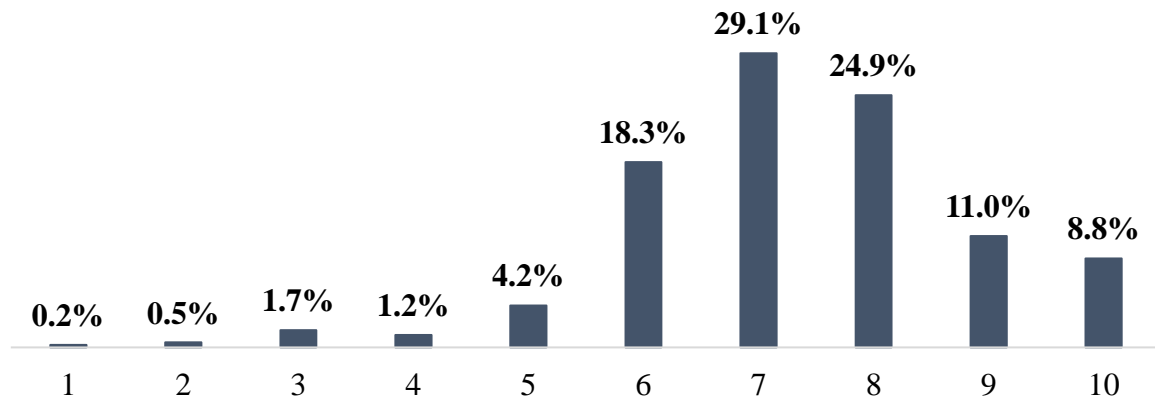
Appendix 2.6 – Survey Results: Number of seasons played of FPL (%)
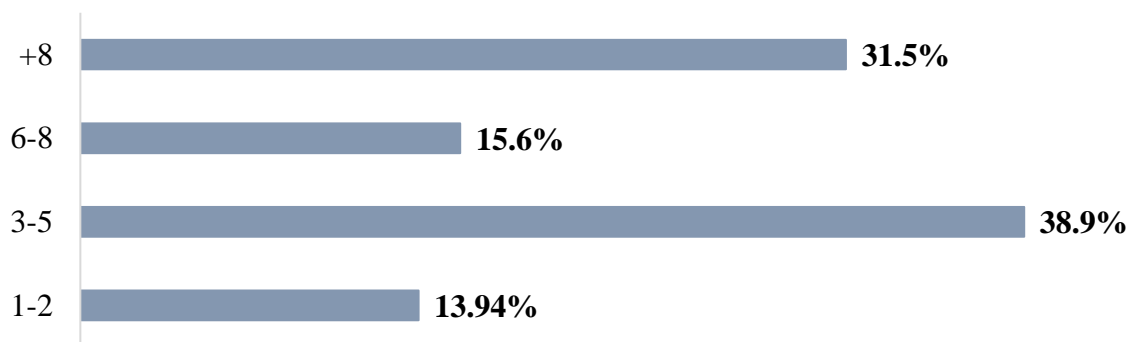
Appendix 2.7 – Survey Results: Reasons to start playing FPL (%)

Other	7%
Social Interaction with FPL Community	12%
Test football knowledge	42%
Escape betting addiction	5%
More entertaining to watch games	55%
Tangible Prizes	6%
Persuaded by non-official social media	2%
Persuaded by official social media	2%
Competition against friends	80%

■ Total ■ Group 3 ■ Group 2 ■ Group 1
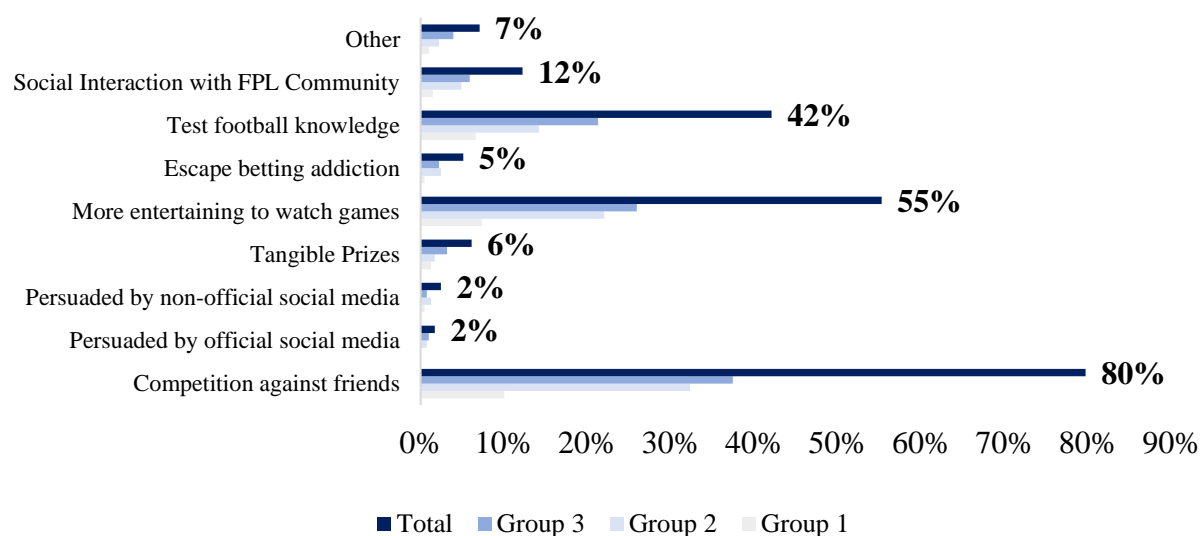
Appendix 2.8 – Survey Results: Weekly time spent on FPL (%)

less than 30min: 7.6% — less than 2h: 37.9% — less than 4h: 31.5% — more than 4h: 23.0%

■ Group 1 ■ Group 2 ■ Group 3 ■ Total
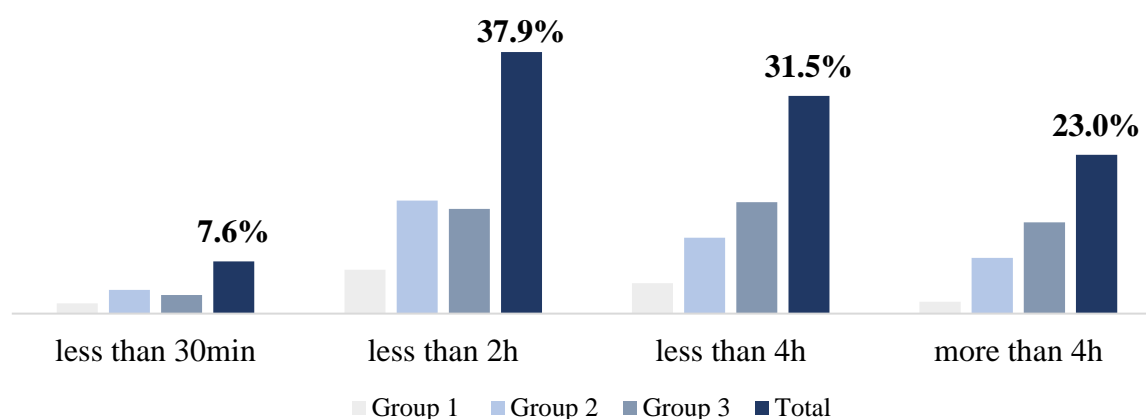
Appendix 2.9 – Survey Results: Social media used for FPL (%)

Insta — Tiktok — Twitter — Facebook — Reddit — Youtube

■ Never ■ Rarely ■ Sometimes ■ Often ■ Always
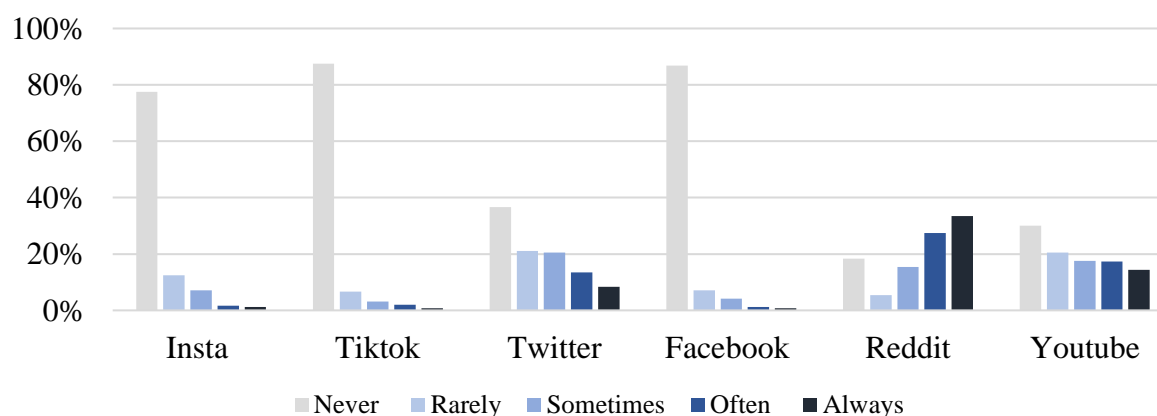
Appendix 2.10 – Survey Results: Sources of information used for FPL (%)
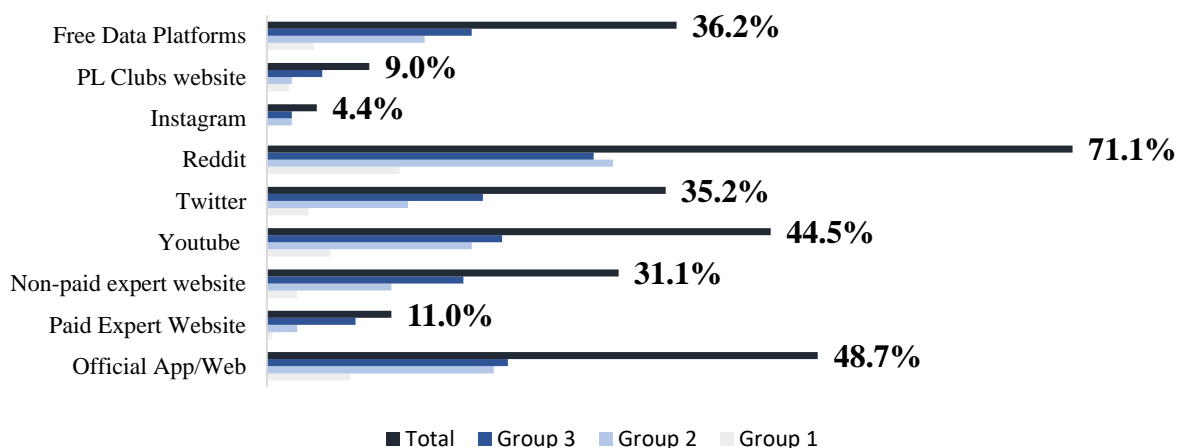
Appendix 2.11 – Survey Results: Rate from 1 to 10, how often does FPL make you watch games that you would not usually watch (%)
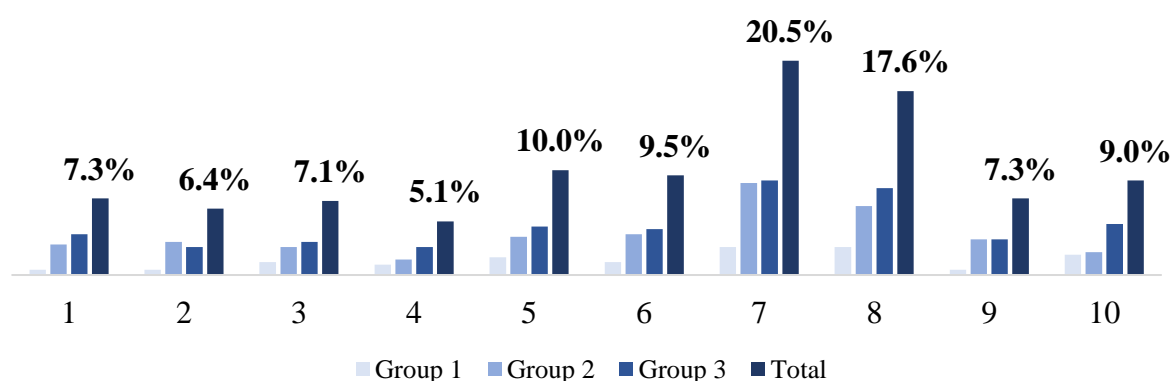
Appendix 2.12 – Survey Results: Rate from 1 to 10, how likely you are to engage with a post concerning a player that you own in your FPL Team (%)
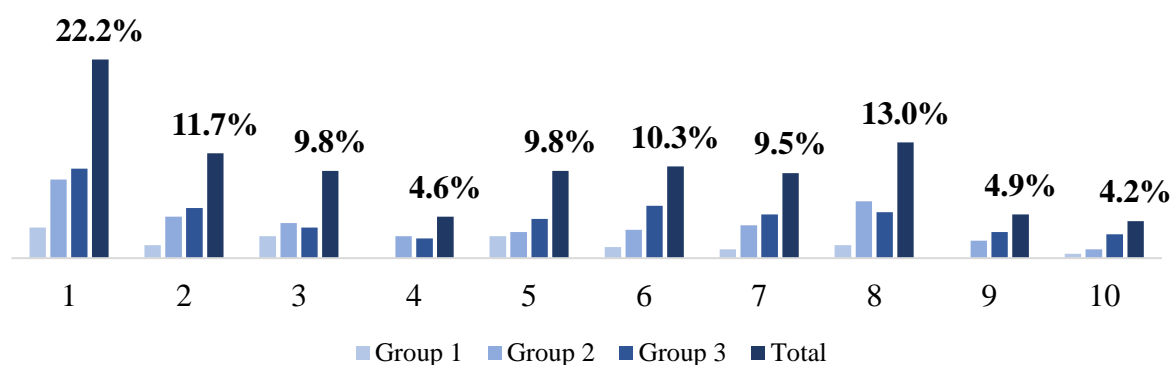
Appendix 2.13 – Survey Results: Rate from 1 to 10, how satisfied are you with the attention given to FPL by Premier League clubs (%)
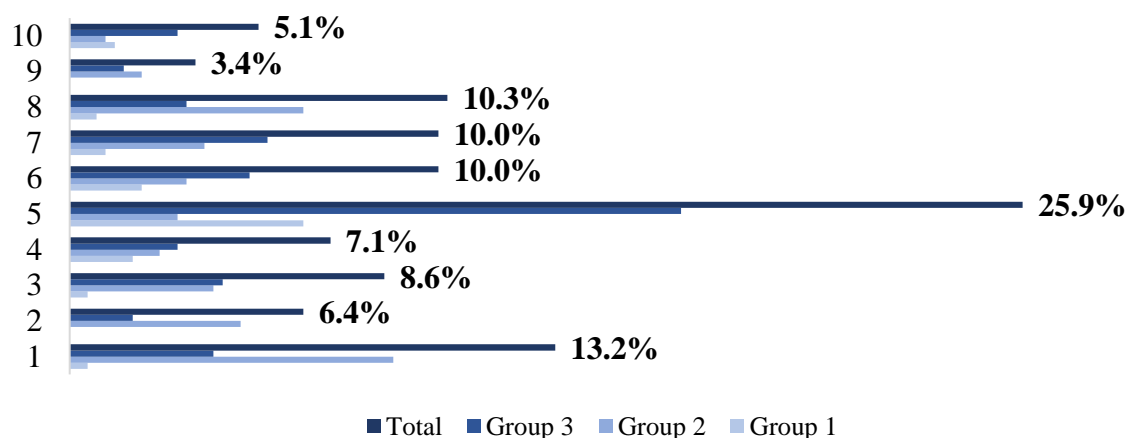
Appendix 2.14 – Survey Results: Rate from 1 to 10, how interested are you in other clubs FPL content on social media (%)
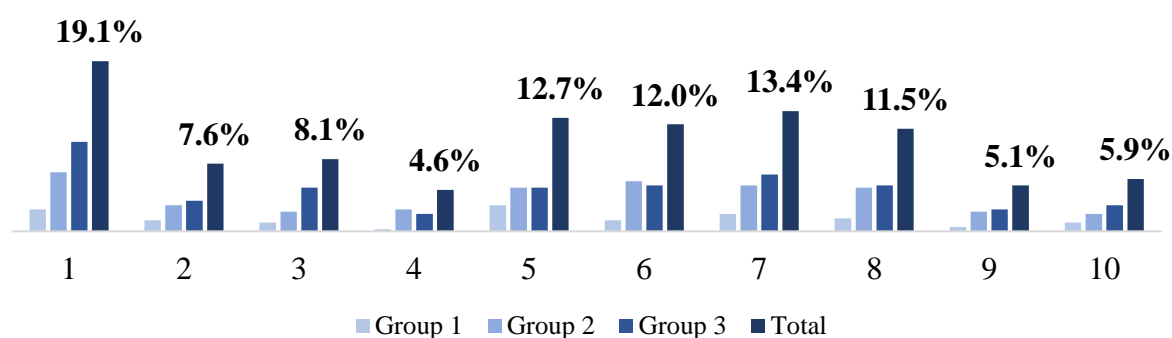
Appendix 2.15 – Survey Results: Preferred 5 FPL initiatives for PL clubs to pursue (%)
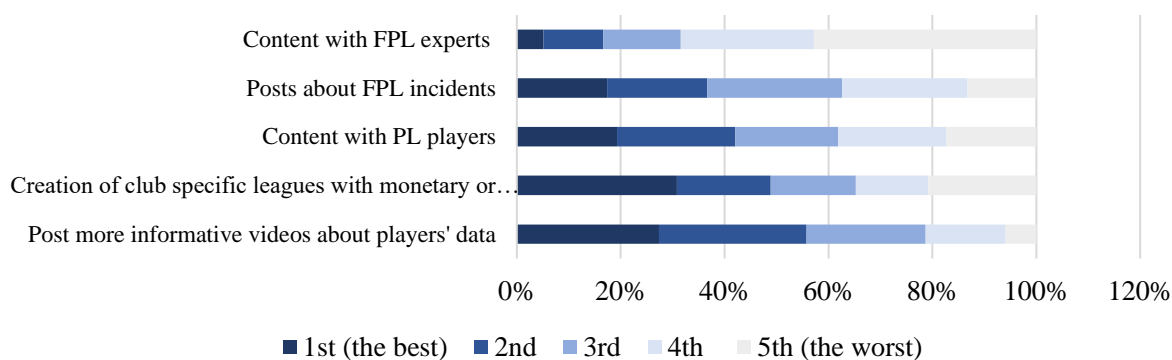
Appendix 3.1 – Wolves FPL MD: Last Time Out

> **Last time out…**
>
> *Wolves | Matheus Cunha | £5.5m*
>
> No player on the pitch had more shots on goal than Matheus Cunha on Monday evening. The Brazilian called Andre Onana into action with a low curling shot and hit the post, while remaining a constant threat, carrying the Old Gold up the pitch before laying others in. Selected by 0.4 % of managers, Cunha could be a clever pick.

Appendix 3.2 – Wolves FPL MD: This Week

> **This week…**
>
> *Wolves | Nelson Semedo | £4.5m*
>
> Wolves kept clean sheets in four of their last five Molineux fixtures last season and Nelson Semedo featured in all of them. The Portuguese led the way for tackles and interceptions from the Wolves defenders on Monday evening. All four of Gary O'Neil's back line from Monday night cost just £4.5m.

Appendix 3.3 – Wolves FPL MD: Wolves FPL Fan League

The leading XI FPL team of Wolves supporters...

Onana (9)

Varane (14) Shaw (5) Ake (7)

Saka (10) Martinelli (5) Eze (3) Bowen C (18) De Bruyne (1)

Nketiah (8) Haaland (13)

Bench Boost: Johnstone (6) Veltman (1) Estupinan (7) Pedro (7)

Appendix 4 – Email giving feedback to Wolves regarding FPL MD initiative

Hi James,

Thank you for sharing the initial design with us, so here is our further feedback.

In terms of the new design, we think it looks really good on the e-mail and that it is a major upgrade to the way FPL MD is presented on the website, so nothing to add on that regard.

In terms of content, we think that this is the area that can be further developed and where we can help to make this a more interesting data source for FPL managers. Covering section by section:

- **Last Time Out:** Although we believe there are more relevant pieces of information to be presented to FPL players other than simply reviewing the past gameweek, for us this section would be improved by having some more easy to read stats (like the total points and ownership) instead of having that much text. Our suggestion would be to incorporate the points, goals, and assists the player performed in the last game. For example:

<div align="center">

Pedro Neto | 5.6M
Total points: 34 Ownership: 3,5%
For GW6
Points:9
Goals:1 Bonus Points:2

</div>

- **This Time Out:** This is very similar to what we recommended in our pdf, with the idea of finishing the email with the "Wolves FPL Picks for the Game". But in our recommendation, there are some contents that serve as a basis for this section and that we believe should be added to take the email to the next level. Those are "**League Table and Last Three**", "**Team News**", "**In-form Players**", "**Score Predictor**" and "**Past Meetings and Top Scorers against Opposition**", which are also in the last pdf we sent in more detail. These sections help to provide data that is relevant to FPL managers, while also justifying the final player recommendations.

    If the idea is for "**This Time Out**" to continue to be a stand-alone section (no more content included), the same rationale here goes for what we just commented on "**Last Time Out**", it really helps to have some more   concrete data that also is more visually appealing to users. Seeing this is a forecasting section, for us, it would make sense to incorporate some indicators about how a player has performed in the past games and why he is   expected to perform well. For example:

<div align="center">

Pedro Neto | 5.6M
Total points: 34 Ownership: 3,5%
Last 4 games:
Points:18 Goals:2 Assists:2

</div>

- **Top XI:** The design is a lot better but we still question how interesting this could be for FPL players. Nonetheless, we understand it looks good and adds recognition for the top spot in the Wolves' FPL league.

Overall, we still believe that sections like **"Team News"** and **"Past Meetings"** that we recommended in our PDF are a must-add to this email, given these topics are not covered and help FPL players.

Hopefully, this helps!

Best Regards,
Guilherme & Sebastião

Appendix 5 – Liverpool's feature concerning the Score Predictor of games
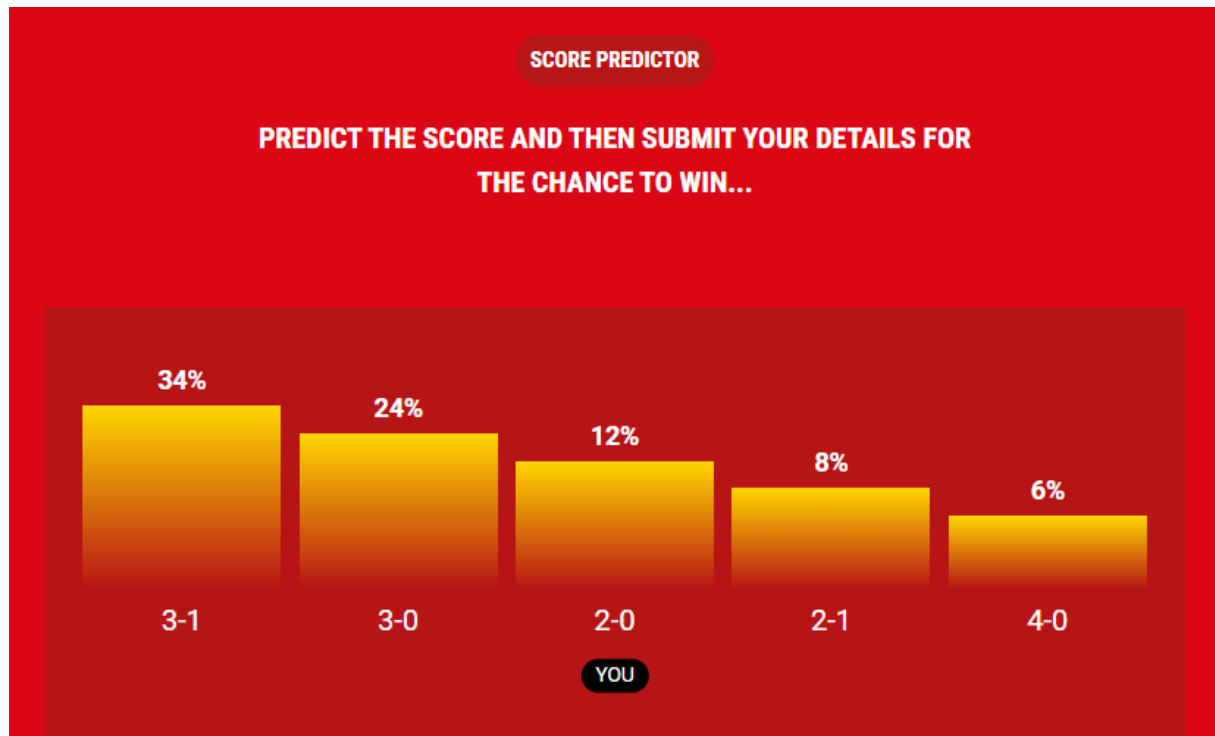
Appendix 6 – FPL Gameweek Email Preview Mock-up

Team News

Hwang Midfielder £6.0m	✅ Passed Fit after knee injury	Alexander-Arnold Defender £7.5m	🟥 Sent off in the midweek cup game against Lincoln
Semedo Defender £5.0m	❓ Last minute doubt	Van Dijk Defender £6.5m	❌ ACL injury suffered last weekend ruling him out for the season

Team News in depth ☞ **Line-Up Predictions** ☞ **Score Predictions** ☞

Past Meetings

2023 Wolverhampton	Saturday, 16 Sep, 12:30 **Full-time** RECAP	Liverpool
1		**3**
2022 Wolverhampton	Saturday, 16 Sep, 12:30 **Full-time** RECAP	Liverpool
3		**0**
2021 Wolverhampton	Saturday, 16 Sep, 12:30 **Full-time** RECAP	Liverpool
0		**1**

Top Scorers against opposition

Salah Midfielder £13.0m **7 goals**	Díaz Midfielder £8.0m **4 goals**
Jiménez Forward £7.0m **5 goals**	Podence Midfielder £5.5m **3 goals**

Wolves FPL Pick for GW6

MID   Hwang   £5.5m

Appendix 7 – Website post of Wolves' past FPL league initiative

The battle to become Wolves' Fantasy Premier League champion begins now with the club's first official mini league.

With the new Premier League season kicking off next weekend, the popular FPL returns online and on mobile.

To join the official Wolves league, simply **click here** and enter the code: **yzkt9b**

The league will see Wolves supporters from across the globe competing to be crowned the club's Fantasy Premier League champion 2019/20.

Prizes will be distributed to the best performers over the course of the season, while updates on the league will be provided in the official matchday programme and on **wolves.co.uk**.

Users have £100m to spend, can only select three players from one club and must have their team confirmed an hour before the season opener on Friday 9th August, 8pm.

To register for FPL, **click here**.

Appendix 8 – Benchmarks' Twitter(X) post

Appendix 9 – Mock-up of website article explaining FPL league creation initiative