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**Elevating the Game, Setting the Standard and Shaping the Future: A Strategic Plan for
Club Sport Marítimo Women's Football**

Marco António Cardoso Braz

Work project carried out under the supervision of:

Professor Pedro Brinca

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Abstract (100 words maximum)

This work presents a strategic plan to elevate CS Marítimo's women's football program to the next level. The aim of the work is to provide actionable recommendations to drive a positive change in the club's standing regarding the actual women's football picture. Key success drivers are analyzed to identify potential gaps or areas with room for improvement. Through a collaborative approach combining literature review, expert interviews, and benchmarking, the project hopes to offer a set of recommendations that can crucially contribute to the club's growth and success.

Keywords (minimum of four)

Women's Football, Portugal, Club Sport Marítimo, FIFA, UEFA, Gender Equality, Madeira Island, Sports Finance.

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1. Introduction

“In recent years, women’s football has enjoyed remarkable growth across different continents, notably in Europe and North America. The game has risen in both participation and interest, thus laying the foundation for the generation of higher commercial returns for the long-term benefit of the whole football movement.” (FIFA, 2021). This statement from FIFA’s 2021 publication, “The Football Landscape”, highlighted the significant growth that women’s football has experienced in the last few years. This rise in popularity and interest has fostered new and exciting prospects for clubs worldwide. To extract the best outcomes, clubs must be proactive in revising and updating their strategies, being always up to date regarding the evolving women’s football landscape. In this way both short and long-term success will certainly be achieved more frequently. This work dives into CS Marítimo’s women’s football program considering industry trends and assists the club in creating or improving a basis for a strategic plan to foster both short and long-term development of its women’s football project. A literature review, alongside with an internal and external analysis are performed, and then, a SWOT analysis is conducted with the intent to position the club and identify areas for improvement. Interviews with different club stakeholders are the main drivers. Questionnaires to fans are also realized to capture club fans thoughts and opinions. Based on all findings, the paper can get a deeper sense of the club’s position and can provide a set of recommendations for action.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Europe and Worldwide

Women’s football is probably the topic that has undergone the biggest turnover that this living generation has seen in the sports context. It had evolved from a marginalized sport to one of the hottest sports topics in the last few years. Just a decade ago, if a prediction of a 51 thousand-

capacity crowd for the 2024 UEFA Women's Champions League final had been made, it would have seemed improbable. However, the reality surpassed all the optimistic forecasts, with the 2022 final between Barcelona and Lyon drawing a record-breaking crowd of 91,648 spectators at Camp Nou (UEFA 2022a, 5). The 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup also set new attendance records. Firstly, an average of 30,911 spectators per match surpassed the average of 21,756 at the 2019 World Cup in France (Johnston, 2023). Secondly, the final hosted 75,784 spectators up from 57,900 in the 2019 World Cup final. Also, China produced the highest audience for a single match anywhere in the world with a global television audience of over 53 million viewers in their group stage match against England (FIFA, 2023c). This sudden increase in fans watching the games and going to the stadiums symbolizes the growing trend towards greater fan involvement, as well as greater belief in the growth of women's football. This rise in popularity is evident when looking at the increased participation of women in the sport. The broader media attention and higher commercial returns also explain the amplified success of the sport. In fact, the number of women playing organized football increased 24% between 2019 and 2023 (FIFA 2023a, 8), and the average revenue generated by the top 15 highest revenue-generating clubs in the 2022/2023 season stood at \$4.6 million, representing a 61% increase compared to the 2021/2022 season (Sports Business Journal, 2024). This growth was likely driven by the increased commercialization due to better sponsorship deals, increased television rights, and boost in tickets and merchandise sales. Also, investments in training facilities, stadiums, and coaching developments have been crucial for the professionalization of the game. Examples of the most successful women's football clubs in Europe are FC Barcelona, Olympique Lyon, Chelsea FC, and VFL Wolfsburg. The investments made permitted them to achieve success on both domestic and international stages. Larger fan bases have been attracted and exciting revenues have been generated. After recent achievements in UEFA Women's Champions League, FC Barcelona appeared as the leader of the Deloitte

ranking (Deloitte, 2023), emphasizing the club's success in commercialization and its leadership in the international women's football environment.

2.2 Portugal

In recent years, women's football in Portugal has become more popular. In 2023, Portugal achieved a historic milestone by qualifying for the first time to one edition of the World Cup. This achievement was a turning point in the trajectory of Portuguese women's football, which until then only had reached two European championships in 2017 and 2022. Very recently, Kika Nazareth moved from SL Benfica to FC Barcelona, being the biggest transfer ever registered in women's football in Portugal. The Spanish club paid half a million euros, for the 21-year-old Portuguese striker's pass (Rico, 2024). The current format of the Portuguese women's football league was established in the 2016/17 season. Nowadays, there are three divisions, and normally, only the first division champion competes in the playoffs for the chance to qualify for the UEFA Women's Champions League, and the bottom two placed in each division are usually relegated to make way for the top two placed in the lower division (FPF, 2024b). The Portuguese Football Federation has invested heavily in women's football in recent years. Sporting CP, SL Benfica and SC Braga are now the 3 most dominant clubs in the women's football spectrum in Portugal and have contributed massively to the development of the sport with their investments in their own programs. Currently Portugal occupies the 22nd place in the FIFA women's national team rankings (FIFA, 2024). In the Women's association club coefficients, the Portuguese association occupies the 6th place (UEFA, 2024a).

A study from Portugal Football Observatory (PFO) stated that on 31st December of 2023 the number of women playing federated football in Portugal was 11,468, almost the double compared to the 2019/2020 season. The study also revealed that the percentage of female players in the senior category decreased from 39% in 2012/2013 to 20% in 2022/2023, which

can be explained by the increased expansion and investment in women's youth football. In fact, the study showed that in 2012/2013 there was 81 senior football teams and 213 youth football teams. Ten years later, in the 2022/2023 season, there was 130 senior football teams (60% increase), and 1092 youth football teams (413% increase). This represents a generational renewal in Portuguese women's football, proving that the passion and desire that girls have for playing football is revealed earlier in their ages. In 2022/2023, 62% of Liga BPI players were between the ages of 18 and 24, and the average age decreased from 29 years to 23.3 years between 2016 and 2023. In 2015/2016 there were only five different nationalities among the players, with foreigners representing 3% of the total. In 2022/2023 the number of different nationalities ascended to 23, with foreigners representing 24% of the total. In the same period, the number of professional football players increased from 10% to 39%, proving that the overall professionalism, and competitiveness of women's football in Portugal have improved in the last years. Portugal women's National Team A, in 2012 occupied the 46th place in the FIFA rankings, and in 2023 reached the 19th place, its historical best (FPF, 2024a).

3. Internal Analysis

3.1 CS Marítimo – The Club

As the biggest club in Madeira Island, Club Sport Marítimo, based in Funchal, holds a special place in the hearts of the local fans. The club's nickname, "maior das ilhas" (the biggest of the Portuguese islands), reflects its prominence in the region. Its influence extends beyond football, making it a true reference club in the national context. The club was found in 1910, and since then, it has been building a rich and proud history, of which the fans feel part of it. The club's mission is based on the promotion of sports and physical activity, on the promotion of a sense of community and developing talented and ethical athletes. In fact, CS Marítimo is the only club in Portugal to have a school, which is called "Colégio do Marítimo". Is one of the few to

have a social solidarity fund and a television channel. Projects that join the club's various sports and the over two thousand athletes (CS Marítimo, 2024b). The club's values are based on sportsmanship, teamwork, dedication and respect. In addition to the club's sports goals, with special focus on football success, the club is mostly dedicated to providing opportunities for athletes of all ages and capabilities, and in contributing to the social and economic development of the region.

3.2 Women's Football Program

The CS Marítimo women's football program began in 2014 as a completely amateur program. The team initially consisted of local girls who gathered after school or work for recreational purposes. At that time training took place on a deteriorated 7-a-side football field, and players were responsible for their own uniforms. The club did not provide changing rooms, and the team competed in regional division, facing limited competition and playing few games per season (s.a. Interview 2, l. 106-110). The 2017/2018 season marked a significant turning point for the project. Despite remaining entirely amateur, Marítimo qualified for the access phase to the first division of women's football. This opportunity arose for the first time for the winners of each regional division in Portugal. In a historic achievement, Marítimo won the access phase, securing a place in the first division for the following season (s.a. Interview 2, l. 23-27). Since joining the first division in 2018/2019, Marítimo has made significant strides towards professionalism. The team has transitioned from an entirely amateur squad to a squad with 17 professional players out of 23. While the team initially consisted solely of regional players, it now has a diverse squad with 50% from Madeira and 50% from mainland Portugal or abroad (s.a. Interview 2, l. 40-45). Training conditions have also been improving. The team currently trains three times a week on natural grass and twice a week on synthetic grass, and shares facilities with club's youth teams (s.a. Interview 1, l. 105-115). Nowadays, the project counts with one Team Manager, one Communication Responsible, four Coaches, one Physiologist,

one Nutritionist, and one Psychologist. The sporting objectives have always been readjusted since the beginning of the project, considering the evolution of women's football in Portugal. For now, and in the short-medium term, wanting to compete in all existing competitions in women's football with the intent to win is not realistic for Marítimo, as it does not yet have the necessary funding to do so. However, being an entity that invests in the training of young female players, that helps to increase the number of women playing football and that contributes to the increase in interest around women's football, ends up being the focus of project (s.a. Interview 1, l. 39-52). In a landmark moment, CS Marítimo sold its striker Telma Encarnação to Sporting for €180,000 at the end of the last season (Andrade, 2024). This marked a significant milestone for the project, demonstrating its ability to develop talent and generate revenue. Although Marítimo did not provide data about the project, when interviewing the team manager, it was clear that women's football project is still in a phase that mainly involves costs for the club. While last season a player was sold for the first time, ticketing and sponsorships are still very low sources of revenue. In fact, the project's main source of revenue is the financial support from the Portuguese Football Federation (s.a. Interview 1, l. 125-126), and only due to this type of support has it been possible to professionalize the women's team.

4. External Analysis

4.1 PEST(EL) Analysis

To develop an effective strategic plan for CS Marítimo's women's football program, it is essential to conduct a thorough analysis of the external environment. A PESTEL analysis provides a comprehensive framework for assessing the Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Environmental, and Legal factors that may influence the program's business environment (Aguilar, 1967). To streamline the analysis, the focus will be on the core PEST

factors identified in Francis Aguilar's initial framework, as legal and environmental factors have low influence on the women's football business environment.

4.1.1 Political

Political factors that can influence the women's football business environment are those who could compromise the growth of investments coming from local and foreign agents. Women's football investors often prioritize countries with favorable political environment and strong commitment to gender equality (H&M Group, 2024). The two main political factors that are emphasized here are gender equality and political stability and security. Portugal's 7th place ranking in the 2024 Global Peace Index (GPI) demonstrates its stability and security, which can instill confidence in potential investors in women's football (Institute for Economics & Peace, 2024). This favorable political climate makes Portugal an attractive destination for businesses looking to support women's sports initiatives. Regarding gender equality, the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) reported that Portugal ranked 15th in the EU on the Gender Equality Index 2023, with a score of 67.4 points, representing 13.7 points increase since 2010 (EIGE, 2023). As women's sports become more recognized globally, CS Marítimo can benefit from actively promoting gender equality initiatives. This will contribute to a more inclusive environment, better reputation and will end up attracting more investment.

4.1.2 Economical

Economic factors that can influence the women's football business environment are those who could compromise the overall financial sustainability of the clubs. CS Marítimo is subject to the impacts of economic fluctuations, more specifically inflation, and so must try to realize the country's economic situation every month. By comparing the current inflation (Aug 2024) that is approximately 1.9% with the homologous month of the previous years (Aug 2023 and Aug 2022) which were approximately 3.72% and 8.94%, respectively, the decreasing trend can be

detected (Trading Economics, 2024). With this, CS Marítimo must negotiate its sponsorship contracts considering the significant decrease in inflation of the past two years, as also the possible shifts given to the hostile environments that we are currently living, especially in Israel and Gaza. As sponsorship contracts are a fundamental source of revenue, a meticulous negotiation can have a huge impact on the club's financial results.

4.1.3 Social

Social factors address the socio-cultural influences of sports consumers and the target demographics. According to this, the Marítimo women's team fan base and potential future fans should be analyzed. Women's football audiences are younger and more female. Women's football fans are 26% more female than the audience segment in men's football (57% female vs. 31% female interested in men's football). Also, the average age of women's football fans is 35, while a men's football fan on average is 39 (Baer, 2024). The aging of society in Portugal and Europe may be threatening the potentially younger women's football audience (Eurostat, 2023), however, the proportion of females in Portugal has been increasing and is currently about 53% (World Bank, 2024), which could further strengthen the idea of a larger female fan base. Regarding cultural and lifestyle trends, Portugal positions itself as a country with a strong sport culture, known to have the greatest athlete of all time, Cristiano Ronaldo, who encourages and motivates thousands of girls and boys to fight for their own dreams and goals in sport and in life.

4.1.4 Technological

Technology has revolutionized the world of sports. From the way athletes train to how fans engage in sporting events, technology has become an indispensable tool to access all variables in the sports business. CS Marítimo must pay close attention to the most recent tech trends and use technology to enhance its operations, therefore engaging effectively with fans. Every year

Portugal is going more digital. As of 2024, internet penetration in Portugal stood at 86.4%, with 8.84 million internet users (DataReportal, 2024). This calls for Marítimo to engage with a wider audience through digital channels as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok. With the introduction of VAR in the Liga BPI for the 2023/2024 season, Portugal became the first women's football league in the world to implement this technology (FPF, 2023). This significant development demonstrates the FPF's commitment to provide women's football in Portugal with a higher technological degree. CS Marítimo's ability to leverage technology will be crucial for its future success.

4.2 Benchmarking Analysis

4.2.1 Team Cases – FC Barcelona and SL Benfica

FC Barcelona Femení, the women's football section of FC Barcelona, has established itself as the most dominant club in the most recent years. The team won the UEFA Women's Champions League three times out of the last four editions of the competition. This signified the first ever continental treble for a Spanish women's team in 2021, making Barça the first club to do it in both men's and women's football (FC Barcelona, 2021). In 2024 the team became the first and only Spanish women's team to complete a continental quadruple (FC Barcelona, 2024c). As a result of these recent achievements, the team currently occupies the top spot in the UEFA women's club coefficient ranking (UEFA, 2024b). This ranking reflects a club's performance in European competitions over a five-year period. FC Barcelona has adopted a groundbreaking policy of equal pay for its female and male players, setting a precedent for fair remuneration in professional sports. This aligns with the club's statement on promoting "equality and fairness in all areas of the Club" (FC Barcelona, 2023). The club has also organized joint tours for both teams, offering the women's team the same media exposure and fan engagement opportunities as their male counterparts (FC Barcelona, 2024a). In addition to these initiatives, Barcelona also works on educational workshops and social media campaigns to raise awareness about

gender equality and empower future generations of women on and off the field (FC Barcelona, 2024b). Barcelona provides both the men's and women's teams with access to high-quality training facilities, stadiums, and support staff, ensuring equal resources for success. The club invests in the future by integrating young female players into La Masia, Barcelona's youth academy, providing the resources needed for girls to train and compete at the highest level (Ruszkai, 2022). Therefore, FC Barcelona is a leading example of how success in sports can be coupled with a strong commitment to social change.

SL Benfica, as a Portuguese club, offers a more relatable benchmark for CS Marítimo. Benfica won the last four editions of Liga BPI, and their performance internationally was also very successful as the team reached for the first time in history the quarterfinals of the Women's UCL in its latest edition (Diário de Notícias, 2024). With this achievements Benfica rose to the Top 10 in the UEFA rankings, solidifying their place as a European contender (UEFA, 2024b). The club has been taking the fan engagement topic in Portugal to the next level. Initiatives like the commemorative stamp issuance with the Portuguese post office CTT to celebrate the historic 2023/2024 season (SL Benfica, 2024c), and the dedication of a section in the Museu Benfica – Cosme Damião, Benfica's Museum, to celebrate the accomplishments of the women's team, demonstrate the club's dedication to strengthen the connection between the women's team and their supporters (SL Benfica, 2024b). Strategic partnerships with international clubs like Gotham FC (SL Benfica, 2023), and the development of a B team (SL Benfica, 2024a) demonstrates Benfica's proactive approach in improving its own athlete development programs and strengthen its position as a leader in the development of talent on a global scale. This also contributes to a greater exposure of its athletes as greater investments in youth development leads several Benfica players feature in the national team (SL Benfica, 2024d). Therefore, Benfica has proven to be a well-managed financial operation that positioned the club among the top 15 revenue-generating teams in women's football in the last season

(Marques, 2024). This was the result of Benfica's successful performance in recent years, as well as strategic sponsorships and partnerships that the club has been able to establish.

4.2.2 League Case – Google Pixel Frauen-Bundesliga

The success of the German women's national team in reaching the European Championship final in 2022 (UEFA, 2022b), did the directors of women's football in Germany realize that women's football in the country had a lot to grow, and that this success should be used as a catalyst for further growth and investment in women's football in Germany, which has presented some indicators pointing to a growing acceptance within the German community (Hallmann 2022, 1). Holger Blask, Managing Director of Marketing for DFB in 2022, emphasized the need for continued investment and support from various stakeholders, especially the DFB and clubs, to ensure the long-term success of women's football in Germany. Siegfried Dietrich, Eintracht Frankfurt's Chief Representative recognized the importance of investing in women's football to remain competitive and relevant in the future, stating that men's and women's football under the same roof is the future (Two Circles, 2022). The recommendations have been considered and since then, DFB has been putting a lot of work in promoting German women's football through the country's women's leagues. The German Frauen-Bundesliga is currently undergoing a promising evolution. Following the announcement by the executive board of the German Football Association (DFB) in June 2024, the league will expand from its current 12-team format to 14 teams starting in the 2025-26 season (FC Bayern, 2024). This expansion aims to increase competitiveness and create a more dynamic environment for clubs, therefore providing more opportunities for clubs and players. To further enhance the league's visibility, the DFB has secured four major international broadcast partners (DAZN, Sky Mexico, Viaplay, W-Sport) for the Google Pixel Frauen-Bundesliga. Started in the 2023/2024 season, these partnerships ensured the broadcast of matches in key markets such as the USA, UK, Asia, Oceania, South America, and Europe in

general. This increased media exposure has been attracting new fans, generating additional revenues, and contributing to the long-term growth and sustainability of the Frauen-Bundesliga (DFB, 2023).

The benchmarking analysis held thus reveals that gender equality in football has become a topic fought heavily through community work and awareness campaigns. Partnerships with sponsors have been the biggest focus to increase the popularity of the sport, as well as to embrace greater revenues, which alongside with football associations investments, have allowed the professionalization of leagues by investing in high-quality infrastructure and work of youth academies, aiming to commercial success and long-term growth.

5. Methodology

The objective of this paper is to provide actionable recommendations for CS Marítimo to foster sustainable growth in their women's football program. Through qualitative interviews, quantitative research, and the previously performed analysis of the sport, key factors and strategies to address identified challenges will be explored.

5.1 Qualitative Approach

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the club's current standing and future aspirations, semi-structured interviews with key internal stakeholders involved in women's football at Marítimo were conducted to allow simultaneous micro and macro perspectives (Elliot 2008). The project manager was interviewed providing an overview of the program, highlighting its strengths, weaknesses, and the club's overall strategy and vision for women's football. Two players were also interviewed to get first-hand perspectives on the program's evolution from an inside perspective. The responsible for the social communication of women's team, and the club's head of marketing department were also interviewed and offered insights into current

practices. A semi-structured interview format was utilized with the interview guide focused on potential success factors previously researched. The questions were always tailored to the interviewee, and to ensure comparable results a similar structure was used for the questions. Additionally, an informal unrecorded conversation with a coach offered coaching-specific perspectives on the program's development and challenges. All interviews were conducted on September 30 in person at the CS Marítimo academy facilities and lasted around 30 minutes.

5.2 Quantitative Approach

It was decided to also use a quantitative approach. This approach is based on an objective research methodology that aims to quantify and perform a statistical analysis of numerical data collected (Malhotra 2020, 153). It was used a questionnaire survey as the basis of the social research carried out, as this is probably the most appropriate and available method for collecting data to describe a population too large to be observed directly (Babbie 2010, 229). To gather data on the involvement and knowledge of women's football among Marítimo fans, a questionnaire survey was designed and administered using Microsoft Forms, published online from October 1st to November 1st through social media. To ensure relevant responses, a screening mechanism was implemented. The questionnaire began with two qualifying questions: “Are you a resident of Madeira Island or have you ever visited it?” and “Do you consider yourself to be a person who likes and is interested in sports?”. Respondents who answered "no" to either of these questions were automatically redirected to the end of the questionnaire. This screening process helped to ensure that the data collected was from individuals who were likely to be interested in and supportive of women's football in Madeira.

5.2.1 Object of study

During this period, a total of 344 responses were collected, with 84% (290) of people living or having visited Madeira Island and 90% (259) of these being interested in sports. This leads the

total number of respondents to 259. Of the sample, 53% (136) are female and the rest are male. 51% of respondents are under 29 years old, and 38% are between 30 and 50 years old. 58% (150) of the respondents have higher education and 42% (107) a secondary education. 60% (153) are employees and 24% (61) are students.

5.2.2 Data Analysis

The graphs allowing the analysis of the responses are attached (s.a. 10.5 Questionnaire Results). When asked how interesting women's football is, on a scale of 0 to 5, the most common answer was 3 (33%), followed by 4 (20%) and 5 (16%). It was observed that 40% (103) watch games on television infrequently (2/5 on a scale of 1 to 5), and that only 12% (31) always watch games on television (5/5 on a scale of 1 to 5). 35% (91) never go to the stadium to watch a women's football match (1/5 on a scale of 1 to 5). Of the sample, 92% (239) were aware of the Portuguese National team's participation in the 2023 Women's Football World Cup, of which 69% (178) watched at least one of the games played by Portugal on television. In terms of respondents' opinion on the reasons why women's football does not have as strong a presence in Portugal as men's football, the most common answer was "Lack of competitiveness between teams in the same division due to large disparities in investment, players, and facilities" with 51% (132) of responses, followed by "Lack of Investment", with 47% (122) of the answers, and "Lack of general interest ", with 45% (117) of the answers. In terms of respondents' views on the best way to encourage more women to play football, 61% (157) think the best way is by "promoting women's football through education - schools and universities", and 43% (111) think it could be by "increasing the number of games broadcast by the media." In relation to the future of women's football in Portugal, 60% (154) believe that the sport will certainly grow in the coming years, 25% (64) believe that perhaps, and 15% (40) do not believe in growth. 57% (147) of the sample are fans of CS Marítimo. Of these supporters, 38% (56) follow two team's games per month and 70% (103) do not usually go to the stadium to support their team at all or only go

once a month. The factors that most influence female football fans to go to the stadium are “Availability” (67%), “Interest” (45%), and “Match schedule” (40%). On a satisfaction scale of 0 to 5 with Marítimo's performance and investment in women's football, the main answer was 3 (35%), followed by 4 (24%), and 2 (23%).

6. SWOT Analysis

SWOT analysis is a strategic planning framework used to evaluate an organization's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (Kotler, Philip, Berger, and Bickhoff 2016, 26–28). Developed in the 1960s, it helps businesses assess their internal capabilities and the external environment to develop effective strategies.

6.1 Strengths

Strong Local Talent Base and Player Development

As highlighted by the team manager, the fact that Marítimo is located on an Island with a strong street football culture is one of the main strengths of the program. The island's rich culture of street football provides young players with opportunities for early development and technical refinement. This, coupled with the region's passion for sports and the inspiring example of Cristiano Ronaldo, has fostered a culture where girls actively engage in and enjoy playing football from a young age, contributing to a strong pool of naturally talented female football players. Marítimo's commitment to player development is also another strength of the project. By focusing on training and providing a supportive environment, the club has nurtured talented players like Telma Encarnação. These players not only excel at the club level but have also represented Portugal at the national team level, contributing to the project's financial sustainability through transfers to larger clubs.

Successful Media Exposure

Media exposure has emerged as an essential component of commercial management in the realm of women's football. As highlighted by the official responsible for communication at Marítimo in the BPI League, the strategic efforts made towards greater community involvement of the team have led to an increase in media coverage, increasing its visibility and attracting new fans, thus considering it a current strength of the project. In fact, the women's football department at Marítimo has effectively leveraged social media platforms to connect with fans and promote the team. The dedicated Instagram account has witnessed significant growth, increasing its follower count from 1,000 to almost 6,000 in the last two years (s.a. Interview 4, l. 44-46). The team's success in social media can be attributed to its focus on creating engaging content and fostering active interaction with fans. Playful initiatives, match previews, and behind-the-scenes content have resonated with the audience. The club efforts in women's football communication have been recognized with three awards from Liga BPI for the last season.

Regional Powerhouse

As the dominant club on Madeira Island, Marítimo benefits from a strong local following and brand recognition. This established presence provides a solid foundation for the women's football team, possibly fostering a sense of loyalty and support among fans. The club's reputation can be crucial for attracting sponsors, contributing to the project's financial growth and sporting success. Moreover, being the leading club in Madeira allows Marítimo to play a significant role in promoting women's football within the region. The team's success can inspire young girls to participate in sports and pursue football careers, contributing to the development of the sport and its greater social exposure.

6.2 Weaknesses

Infrastructure Constraints

A weakness mentioned in the interviews conducted is the infrastructure for women's football in Marítimo. More in terms of training grounds, and other facilities such as gym and changing rooms. The fact that women must share facilities with other youth teams is a limiting point. Additionally, training twice a week on synthetic grass can have a negative impact on player performance and doesn't fit since natural grass was imposed this season as a mandatory competition condition by the FPF (Santos, 2024). Moreover, the logistical challenges associated with traveling to training locations, such as Machico, can be time-consuming and costly, affecting player morale and impacting the club's budget. Also, the fact that this training pitch is rented to another club can have a negative impact on the quality and consistency of training sessions, as the condition of the ground is not a responsibility solely of Marítimo.

Lack of Sponsorships

In 2023 women's football teams with an affiliated men's team and a written strategy had on average, eight sponsors (FIFA 2023d, 16). Currently, Marítimo has only four sponsors, these being a tertiary source of revenue, which limits the club's revenue potential and can hinder investment in the women's football program. Although the FPF invests a lot in the league to promote the sport, it is necessary for Marítimo to actively seek to expand its sponsorship portfolio, negotiating strategic sponsorships with businesses that fit into the team's currently reality, to generate additional revenue. By doing that, the club can take women's football project to a level of profitability that allows future investments in a sustainable way, fostering long-term growth.

No separate marketing department and non-personalized women merchandise

When interviewing the club's head of marketing, it was identified that women's football does not have a separate marketing department within the club. In fact, women's football marketing is managed by the general marketing team, which is portrayed as a weakness as it presents

limitations. Additionally, the absence of exclusive merchandise for the women's team is a missed opportunity to generate revenue and strengthen brand identity. Naturally, men's football has a much more relevant exposure and fan base than women's football, and therefore both are at different stages from a marketing perspective, so a strategic and exclusive negotiation of sponsorship agreements for women's football is crucial given the different current conditions between women's and men's football. A sport with more specific characteristics and audience such as women's football needs a specialized marketing department, in addition to personalized merchandising.

6.3 Opportunities

Strategic Partnerships

Strategic partnerships offer a variety of benefits that go beyond just financial gain (Forbes, 2023) and can be a game-changer for Marítimo's women's football program. A strategic partnership is a cooperative working agreement between two or multiple partners for the purpose of achieving common goals (Cravens & Piercy 2003). New avenues to foster sustainable growth can be identified through carefully selected partnerships. Setting clear goals, establishing roles and responsibilities, and continually measuring the impact of partnerships can unlock a greater wealth of resources, expand the team's reach, and promote its long-term success. Strategic partnerships offer Marítimo a powerful tool to accelerate the growth of its women's football program. By leveraging the experience, resources and reach of partner organizations, the team can build a solid foundation for success, on and off the field.

Expanding Social Media Presence

Marítimo's women's football team has effectively utilized social media platforms to engage with fans and increase visibility. However, there is potential to further expand its reach by leveraging additional platforms. As highlighted by the club's official responsible for

communication, currently the team only uses Facebook and Instagram with duplicated content for both, and a Twitter account for women's team in a near future is possible. Exploring new platforms as TikTok to engage with younger audiences, or YouTube to provide fans with in-depth content, can attract a wider audience from different demographics. Also, tailoring content to each platform can maximize engagement and reach. By strategically expanding its social media presence, Marítimo can further enhance its visibility, attract new fans, and contribute to the growth of women's football in Madeira.

6.4 Threats

Insularity and Limited Competition

The location of CS Marítimo on Madeira Island presents complications related to the team's competitiveness. Marítimo is the only representative of Madeira in national professional women's football, which brings added responsibility, as well as challenges. The lack of professional teams in the region limits regular practice and preparatory games. This can be particularly evident during the pre-season, when the women's team may struggle to find suitable opponents for friendly games. As highlighted by the players interviewed, this lack of teams on the island makes Marítimo organize training games with men's youth teams from the club, which does not fit into the competitive reality that the women's team faces during the season. Due to this lack of competitiveness on the Island, the team always faces more difficulties in the first stages of competition, especially in the physical chapter, as the other teams are more prepared due to more regular preparation games in their pre-seasons with teams they will face in the championship.

Cultural Barriers to Women's Football

Although progress has been made, Portuguese society's attitudes towards women's football still present a barrier. Therefore, it is natural that this impacts the development of a women's football

project like Marítimo's. The future depends on how women's football will be embraced by society. The sport will grow if more resources are invested in greater involvement of society with women's football. Younger generations are more inclined to value diversity and battle for social causes (Giachino, Valenti, Bonadonna, & Bollani 2023, 55). Projections are based on greater cultural acceptance of the future generation, and therefore, culture plays a fundamental role in both the sporting and commercial growth of sport.

Financial Constraints

CS Marítimo, like many sports clubs, faces financial limitations that may impact its ability to invest in the women's football program. These constraints can hamper efforts to recruit talent, upgrade facilities, and implement effective marketing strategies. While several recommendations and suggestions can be made to elevate the women's football project, there is a need of additional funding required to implement new measures. Exploring opportunities to generate more revenue is crucial to overcome club financial constraints.

7. Recommendations

7.1 Pre-Season Training Camp and Tournament

As highlighted in the interviews with project stakeholders, the limited competition in Madeira and the lack of preparation during pre-season are factors limiting the project's success that need to be addressed effectively. To face these challenges, Marítimo must prioritize a summer pre-season training camp and tournament in mainland Portugal. To be realistically possible, strategic partnerships must be designed. To resolve the accommodation issue partnerships with hotels must be established, with an exchange of services being the focus of negotiation. The exposure of the hotel's brand on the women's team's uniforms and advertising content during the season on the team's social networks could be the exchange for the hotel's service in hosting the team for the pre-season training camp. In this way, Marítimo would minimize the costs of

this initiative which will bring many benefits, not only competitive ones derived from the better preparation and increased chemistry between players but also other opportunities such as leveraging the training camp to create engaging content for social media to foster greater brand exposure. In fact, team resilience activities help develop effective communication styles and enhance the collective mood, which transfers to training sessions and game performances (Szabadics, Morgan, Sarkar, McEwan, & McCormack 2024, 12). To organize a competitive and meaningful pre-season tournament, strategic partnerships with FPF and other interested clubs must be established. Working with FPF in organizing and broadcasting the tournament would attract a wider media attention. To increase competitiveness and exposure, considering inviting teams from close countries can be a smart move. In this way Marítimo would provide players valuable match experience and help the team prepare for the upcoming season. Also, establishing valuable connects by collaborating with other teams may create opportunities for future partnerships. Most of the efforts will be to negotiate partnerships, namely finding hotels that are willing to exchange services, as well as negotiating with the FPF and other partner clubs for the organization and broadcast of the pre-season tournament. The costs will mainly be air tickets and daily costs during the pre-season camp, as a partnership with a hotel would exempt Marítimo from most accommodation costs. Readjustments in financial support from the Regional Government of Madeira should be encouraged, as the club will be exposing the region in a tournament that can become more popular and international in the future if new clubs join this initiative similarly to those usually seen in men's football, particularly in USA pre-season tournaments. KPIs could be the club's interaction and social media followers increase at that time versus at the same time in previous years. It can also be the physical, satisfaction and disposition levels of players that subsequently influence their competitiveness and quality in the game, as well as the quality of content made for the club's media. Regarding the timeline, by the end of the first quarter of 2025, the partnership with teams and FPF must be confirmed.

By the end of the second quarter of 2025 the tournament should be fully elaborated and prepared, ready to start in the first week of August 2025 and lasting around seven to nine days.

By the end of the first half of 2025, the partnership between Marítimo and the hotel must be confirmed.

7.2 Establishment of separate marketing department and personalized female merch

Consumers attach additional and unique associations to the brands of women's professional sports team brands, which have not been identified previously in men's sports (Doyle, Kunkel, Kelly, Filo, & Cuskelly 2024, 738), therefore a dedicated marketing department can develop targeted campaigns to reach new audiences and increase brand awareness. Fan interaction is fundamental, as they are the main responsible in increasing society's involvement with women's football. Therefore, marketing specialization for the women's team is essential for the continued development of the project. Personalized female merchandise can create a more engaging environment among supporters. Since the audience is increasingly female, the creation of merchandise makes perfect sense as it will lead to greater identification of players and fans with their personalized kits. Items tailored to female tastes can create a distinct brand identity and help differentiate the team and attract dedicated fans. The impact would be the revenue and fan interaction from merchandise sales. The costs will mainly be the hiring of specialized personnel and production costs. To mitigate these, low-cost skilled labor is crucial, and so hiring interns with a background in marketing and fashion management is suggested to implement a cheap but efficient marketing and merch production strategy. KPIs could be the increase in social media followers, annual growth of merchandise sales, and increase in fan engagement with the team merch. Regarding timeline, the new marketing and merch team should be established within the 1st quarter of 2025. By the end of the 2nd quarter the new marketing strategy and the first merch line should be defined and ready to implement in the 2nd semester of 2025, to

coincide with the start of the new season. Continuous monitoring and adjustments to optimize results are encouraged.

7.3 More sponsorship deals

Through sponsorship, companies can increase brand awareness and increase sales of their products and services (Javalgi et al. 1994, 48), and so, the new marketing section dedicated to women's football should prioritize establishing new sponsorships. For many of the business partners involved, football has become a crucial means of opening and securing new markets (Wojtaszyn, Benedikter, & Sahaj 2024, 6). In fact, the women's football audience presents unique characteristics such as strong involvement with gender equality and gay community, and it can be seen as an opportunity for businesses that want to contribute to greater social inclusion. Regional brands, and brands that value the female audience must be approached, as well as CORAL, the regional beer company, which must be motivated to reallocate part of its sponsorship at the club to women's football. A selective search and refined negotiation with sponsors to obtain good agreements will impact positively the program with greater financial returns. Efforts will be the additional focus on sponsorship of women's football. Personnel hired for the new department must cooperate with existing personnel so that good practices are maintained as tasks in the new department will require considerable effort. A greater focus on sponsorships will imply costs in hiring and maintaining qualified personnel. Interns can be good and inexpensive resources to support staff working with new sponsorships. KPIs should be sponsorship revenues, as well as the number of active sponsors of the women's team, compared to previous years when there was no dedicated marketing department for women's football. Regarding timeline, the selective group of personnel who will work with the sponsors as well as the interns and student workers who will support them must be defined and hired by the end of the 1st quarter of 2025. Agreements with at least two new sponsors should be completed at the end of the 2nd quarter of 2025, to include them in the equipment for the new season.

7.4 Make the main stadium “Estádio dos Barreiros” available to host major matches

Special relocations of the women's team to the men's team's stadium, often accompanied by promotional activities, are strongly fueling spectator interest (Hadwiger, Schmidt, & Schreyer 2024, 12). Marítimo must make its main stadium available to host the major matches of the Liga BPI. If games against the best teams like Sporting CP and SL Benfica are played at the main stadium, it will attract more spectators and provide a better experience. In fact, spectators appear to be more motivated to watch games against clubs with a brand that is recognizable in men's football (Valenti, Scelles, & Morrow 2020, 518). This could be attractive for new sponsors, who benefit from increased attendance and brand exposure at the games. Although it may not generate a significant financial return, other long-term positive effects can be achieved such as a greater number of spectators interested in women's football, greater fan engagement, higher satisfaction within sponsorship portfolio, as well as higher media attention. Therefore, this initiative can be seen as an investment in the future commercial and social success of the project, as it aims to increase the project's commercial value and change the public's perception on women's football. Efforts will mainly be planning and organizing the matches and the sponsors activities, as well as the development of marketing and communication strategies to encompass a high degree of media coverage. The costs will be the usual ones for a men's football game, and through negotiation with FPF these could be shared, as this initiative will also be contributing for the development of women's football in Portugal. KPIs can be the average number of spectators, the number of mentions of these matches in the media, and the fan engagement with sponsors activities. Regarding timeline, the opening of the stadium for women's games should begin at the start of the new season, using the game against Benfica on February 9th, and the last game of the current season against Sporting on May 11th (Zerozero, 2024), as test runs.

8. Conclusion

In developing this work, the promotion of sporting and commercial success formed the basis for the recommendations proposed to achieve sustainable growth of women's football in Marítimo. Considering the club's reality, suggestions were made to fill some gaps identified in some areas of the project. Other recommendations, particularly in terms of improving infrastructure, could also have been proposed. Attracting new fans to build a sustainable base is fundamental to the success of the sport and consequently the club's project. Greater social adherence to the sport will lead to a greater presence of commercial partners which will contribute to both sporting and commercial success. As noted, sporting and commercial success in football are mutually dependent on each other. Sporting success is crucial in attracting fans and sponsors, and commercial success is essential to enable investments that ensure long-term sustainable growth. The proposed recommendations were mostly based on the results of interviews with the club's stakeholders as well as the questionnaire conducted. It must also be considered that relevant information about the women's football project may have been omitted by the club. The omission, for example, of project financial data presented certain limitations to the project work. Furthermore, the sample size of the questionnaire was also small, and the veracity of the responses collected is not guaranteed, and so, the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the analysis may be impacted. As women's football continues to evolve, ongoing adaptation and evaluation of the recommendations proposed are essential. It is very important that CS Marítimo remains flexible and responsive to new emerging trends and challenges. By doing that, will be contributing to the growth of the sport and to achieving long-term success.

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10. Appendix

10.1 Interview 1

1 **Marco:** My name is Marco Braz, and I'm doing a master's degree in finance at NOVA SBE.
2 This work project consists of a strategic plan for women's football at Club Sport Marítimo. How
3 long have you been working here at the club and what is your role here?

4 **Interviewpartner 1:** Good afternoon. My name is XXXX I started in 2016, then I left at the
5 end of 2019 for another club and returned to Marítimo again in 2021. I am currently team
6 manager of the women's football team. I've had other roles at the club, but at the moment this
7 is my role.

8 **Marco:** What functions the team manager performs here in the women's football team?

9 **Interviewpartner 1:** I usually say that the team manager's job is to do or prepare everything so
10 that the coach only worries about the game. It's everything related to logistics, from scheduling
11 games, travel arrangements, hotel bookings. Everything for the well-being of the players, from
12 arranging apartments, taking care of issues such as water, electricity, gas, Internet. These
13 functions are all inherent to the team manager. It seems to be, as I said initially, the removal of
14 everything else that could get in the way so that the coach has the players in full condition just
15 to play. Don't worry about anything else.

16 **Marco:** So, started here in 2016, had a period of 3 years here and then interrupted for 2 years
17 before returning again to Marítimo?

18 **Interviewpartner 1:** Right. I spent a year and a half away, in another reality, which was in the
19 second league, at Oliveirense.

20 **Marco:** I want to ask you about the development of this project. How do you describe the
21 evolution of the women's football team from 2016 to the present day?

22 **Interviewpartner 1:** So, I wasn't connected to women's football from the beginning. I only
23 came to women's football now in February 2024, before I had always been in men's football.
24 Therefore, women's football is only a reality from February this year.

25 **Marco:** Right. Moving on to a more general question here, in your opinion in relation to
26 women's football as an industry, where do you see this industry in a time frame of 5 to 10 years
27 in the future?

28 **Interviewpartner 1:** Year after year we have seen an increasing investment in women's
29 football. The Portuguese Football Federation has also invested a lot in professionalization, and
30 women's football is increasingly touching some values that it didn't touch before. We just need
31 to look year by year at the transfers of players that are taking place, and the amounts that are
32 already involved in these same transfers, which cannot be compared to values from 2 or 3 years
33 ago. These are already relatively high values and, therefore, the tendency will certainly be to
34 grow from the values of hiring, the amounts paid for television broadcasts. Everything that
35 financially involves women's football will certainly also grow, resulting from investment here
36 from FIFA, UEFA, the Portuguese Football Federation and so on.

37 **Marco:** Now more specifically here for the Club Sport Marítimo, where do you think the
38 women's football team will find itself in 5 years to 10 years? What ambitions do you have for?

39 **Interviewpartner 1:** We always want to give space to the club's formation and more and more
40 players who come from the base are the ones who must have space in the main team. The club
41 have to be a team that develops athletes because the club also do not have the financial capacity
42 to look for or sign players for a very high price and, therefore, it will definitely be a bet on
43 training, and that is to bet on training, make the players appear and who knows , we have more

44 examples, like we had with Telma Encarnação to then make these players profitable, both at a
45 sporting level and then also financially. We cannot think at this moment about fighting with
46 teams like Benfica, Sporting, Porto itself who started this year, but who will certainly be in the
47 BPI league in 3 years. We cannot aspire, or it will be very difficult to aspire, to win titles against
48 these teams, because their investment is not even comparable to ours. They manage to capture
49 many more players than we can. As I was saying, what we're doing is empowering our base
50 players and trying to make them take the leap and make the most of them, sportingly and
51 financially, so that the club, which is a training club, can have a certain financial fit with the
52 players.

53 **Marco:** In your opinion, what do you think are the factors that are most relevant in the
54 sustainable and efficient development of a women's football project? In other words, what
55 factors take a team from its formation to the top? Which aspects do you consider to be most
56 important?

57 **Interviewpartner 1:** The investment provided would be the biggest factor of all, without a
58 doubt. Clubs that aim to win titles must have strong investments, because by having greater
59 financial capacity, we can immediately attract players with more quality and who give us these
60 guarantees after playing. But what else can I say?

61 **Marco:** So here you talk about the investment in attracting players. Another type of investment,
62 for example, would be in infrastructure. In your opinion, what is the relevance of investing in
63 infrastructure, and in all types of resources that players have to develop their football? How
64 essential do you think it is?

65 **Interviewpartner 1:** Investment in infrastructure is fundamental. This is all interconnected.
66 So, of course, teams with greater purchasing power to sign players later also have greater
67 financial power to build their academies or improve their academies. At the moment we have

68 in Portugal, Benfica, Sporting and Braga, which have infrastructures that are world class and
69 all the players aspire to one day be able to be there and enjoy those conditions, and it is a bit
70 inherent to have the financial power to hire and of course, it is also linked to the financial power
71 to have the best academies, as it also provides the players with conditions for their development,
72 which other smaller clubs cannot. This is the reality.

73 **Marco:** OK. You spoke here of Sporting Clube de Braga, Sporting Clube de Portugal and
74 Benfica as the 3 leaders. Transposing it to the reality of Marítimo, which is a little different, in
75 your opinion, what are the areas in which Clube Sport Marítimo is well positioned? And what
76 other areas do you think can improve?

77 **Interviewpartner 1:** Here in Marítimo, we have the advantage of being on an island where
78 there is a lot of possibility for street football. We often say that Madeiran players have
79 something different from others, because they still play a lot of street football and grew up
80 playing it. This is an advantage, both at the male and female level. Our players, in this case,
81 whether on the streets of their homes or in the multipurpose facilities at schools, play a lot of
82 football and develop technically very quickly and very well. It should be noted that Madeira is
83 an island that is marked on the world map for having the biggest world reference in sporting
84 terms, which is Cristiano Ronaldo. And one of the advantages, there you have it, is this culture
85 of Madeiran girls getting involved and really enjoying playing football from a very early age in
86 life. In terms of the club's weaknesses, perhaps one is missing, as we talked about a moment
87 ago, an academy with more fields that provides better and more conditions to continue this
88 development and this evolution that they begin to achieve on the street. I really believe that the
89 club's strength here derives a lot from the fact that it is inserted in an environment in which
90 players, from a very young age, show a great desire to play football, therefore starting with the
91 so-called street football, and who later end up enjoying the sport and they realize that Marítimo
92 here in Madeira is the most relevant club for women to be able to play football. One weakness,

93 and here, I believe it is almost a similar reality for most women's football clubs in Portugal with
94 the exception of the 3 big ones mentioned above, it is the lack of investment and resources that
95 are necessary to develop a quality academy. Although Marítimo is equipped with good
96 infrastructure, it is mainly aimed to the youth teams, and perhaps one of the weaknesses of the
97 Club Sport Marítimo is not providing an exclusive infrastructure for women's football. Be it an
98 exclusive place to develop gym work and field work.

99 **Marco:** Ok, here, making a comparison with men's football. The professional men's football
100 team is centralized at Barreiros, the home stadium, where it trains, plays and has all its
101 resources, right?

102 **Interviewpartner 1:** Yes, exactly.

103 **Marco:** Ok, and the Marítimo women's football team is here at the academy in Santo António,
104 where it shares the infrastructure with youth teams?

105 **Interviewpartner 1:** Yes, it is shared with youth football teams and also with teams from other
106 sports. In this case handball and futsal. The gym is shared with these same teams and in this
107 case, the natural grass and synthetic grass are also shared with all the other teams in Marítimo.
108 The men's B team, the A team itself, also comes here occasionally, and, therefore, we always
109 have to share these spaces with all the other teams.

110 **Marco:** Currently, which infrastructure does the women's football team use?

111 **Interviewpartner 1:** We use the natural grass pitch down here; we use the synthetic one and
112 we also have the Machico natural grass pitch once a week. In other words, the players usually
113 train on 3 different floors during the week. Regarding league games, the team always hosts
114 championship games here on the natural grass field of the Marítimo academy. It's called
115 Imaculada Conceição.

116 **Marco:** OK. Moving on to a more commercial aspect. In your opinion, what factors do you
117 consider to be most relevant for a women's football team?

118 **Interviewpartner 1:** In terms of revenue, our biggest revenue, in this case is support from the
119 Portuguese Football Federation. There is very, very high support and we have to comply with
120 several requirements during the season to receive this same support, from the number of
121 Portuguese players in the initial 11, we must always have 3 women on the game sheet, whether
122 nurses, delegates, physios. We must always have at least 3 women on the game sheet to be
123 entitled to these Federation subsidies. So, in terms of merchandising or shirt sales, we don't
124 have a very high impact, like the men's team does. Therefore, we don't receive much value from
125 this part. The support is more from the Federation. The biggest support here for the club is the
126 support that the Portuguese Football Federation provides at the moment.

127 **Marco:** And in terms of sponsors? Are they currently the same sponsors as the men's team?
128 Whether the same sponsorships are displayed on the equipment or whether there are exclusive
129 sponsorships for the women's team?

130 **Interviewpartner 1:** No, they are different. Currently the women's team has as sponsors the
131 Hospital Particular da Madeira and Casa Santo António. I think it's just these 2 at the moment.
132 The men's football team has more sponsors if I'm not mistaken, namely a very important one,
133 CORAL, which is the Madeira beer company.

134 **Marco:** And do these sponsorships have an impact on the women's team's revenue?

135 **Interviewpartner 1:** No, they are not very impactful. Sponsors are not the main source of
136 income, nor even the secondary one I would say, but I would have to confirm. The support from
137 the Portuguese Football Federation is much more relevant.

138 **Marco:** OK. What is your opinion about the FPF's initiatives and support? How essential is
139 this support from the Federation?

140 **Interviewpartner 1:** In relation to the FPF's initiatives, that's it, the issue of mandatory natural
141 grass for all clubs in the BPI League started this year, for example. Last year it was still possible
142 to play on synthetic surfaces, but this year it is mandatory to play on grass. And the Federation
143 gave this support to the clubs, which were very high amounts to help the clubs that did not have
144 these mandatory conditions to have them at this time and, therefore, it is also very important
145 for the development of the players, for the competitiveness of the games , they are all on the
146 pitch and the synthetic one is left behind, even due to injuries and all these variants. It was
147 important for us to move onto the natural grass. The support that the Federation provides, as I
148 said previously, is fundamental. There is very high support and increasingly from the
149 Federation. I can give an example that this year, in order to receive last year's values, we had to
150 meet the criteria of having 16 professional players in the squad. If we did not comply with these
151 16 professional players, we would not receive the value we received in relation to last season's
152 classification, which is a high value and is important for us and for any of the teams. Overall,
153 the Portuguese Football Federation does a very important job, particularly in the
154 professionalization of the game and also in its initiatives to develop women's football in
155 Portugal.

156 **Marco:** In your opinion, do you think that these types of projects for women's clubs with less
157 financial power would be possible to develop without the support that the Portuguese Football
158 Federation has demonstrated in recent years?

159 **Interviewpartner 1:** At this moment if we want to maintain competitiveness, because there is
160 that competitiveness of the teams that fight for titles, but then there is also the competitiveness
161 of those that fight at the bottom. In order not to have a huge discrepancy between the teams,
162 this support is essential, because otherwise there will be teams that will spend a season there in
163 the BPI League literally just hanging out without being able to compete with the others or

164 discuss the result with the others. These values that the Federation makes available are
165 fundamental for competitiveness throughout the year in the competition.

166 **Marco:** OK. In your opinion, do you consider there are factors that are exclusive to women's
167 football today? How do you position the situation in Marítimo?

168 **Interviewpartner 1:** Well, that's how it is... women's football didn't appear like this many years
169 ago and people still look at women's football with some suspicion, clearly giving preference to
170 men's football. But, according to our games, we are seeing more and more interest, whether
171 from families who have daughters and whose daughters are already asking their parents to come
172 and watch the games, something that sometimes doesn't happen in men's football, as it is an
173 environment, there it is, more masculine. Even the families of our players. And it may be that
174 in 4/5 years we will already notice a greater support for women's football, which there is not
175 yet. At least here in Madeira, our game attendances are not very, very high. We have as a
176 reference last year, the best game which was attended by around 1200 people at the Marítimo
177 home stadium, but the average never exceeds 300 people, and therefore there is still a lot of
178 room to grow, it needs to be publicized, and people also start to become interested in women's
179 football.

180 **Marco:** OK. In relation to greater professionalization of the team to attract more people's
181 interest. What is your opinion on this?

182 **Interviewpartner 1:** That's how it is, at this moment, as I said a moment ago, we were obliged
183 to have 16 professional athletes to receive subsidies from the Federation. In relation to last
184 season's classification, in addition to these 16, we did one more. At the moment we have 17
185 professional athletes and 5 amateurs. The tendency is for this to go in the same way as men's
186 football, for there to be a total professionalization of athletes. For this, we obviously have the

187 support of the Portuguese Football Federation and that is what we are heading towards, towards
188 the total professionalization of the teams and greater exposure to society.

189 **Marco:** Taking your experience with men's football that you mentioned a moment ago, and
190 about sponsorships. You mentioned that in women's football, in terms of revenue, these are less
191 than secondary sources and are not very relevant. How does this compare to men's football? It's
192 a little different, right?

193 **Interviewpartner 1:** In men's football, here in the Marítimo context it is a little different
194 because we have the support of the regional government and this support at this moment is
195 fundamental. To the second league. When we talk about the first league, television rights trump
196 any sponsorship. What you get from television rights is much higher than any of the other
197 sponsorships. In reality, from clubs in the Marítimo context. If we go to the big ones, I'm also
198 convinced. I mean, the television revenues of the big clubs are greater than any other
199 sponsorship, so you won't get away from that much and television rights are the clubs' biggest
200 revenue at the moment in Portugal. Basically, in terms of men's football, we talk about
201 television rights and support from the Madeiran government as the main sources of revenue and
202 for women's football in Marítimo, we talk about support from the Portuguese Football
203 Federation and also from the regional government.

204 **Marco:** And is this support from the Regional Government proportional to both teams?

205 **Interviewpartner 1:** No. They should not compare, as for women's football, this support from
206 the Madeira government is more from a travel and accommodation perspective.

207 **Marco:** How is the relationship between the Marítimo women's football team and its sponsors?
208 Does Marítimo look for new sponsorships season after season, so it can have more revenue to
209 work with the project here?

210 **Interviewpartner 1:** In terms of sponsorship of the women's team, I give the example of Casa
211 de Santo Antônio, which is one of the sponsors. In exchange for sponsorship, they fixed the
212 changing rooms for this season. That's it. The private Hospital in Madeira also gives us a ceiling
213 for exams, etc. So that we don't have any costs and within that, these are not amounts to fund a
214 sports season

215 **Marco:** And new sponsorships? Are negotiations underway with new sponsors to also be able
216 to work on aspects other than the medical part and the infrastructure part?

217 **Interviewpartner 1:** I want to believe so, but it would be better to question marketing as they
218 are more on the subject than me. But it's probably so, I don't know.

219 **Marco:** Ok, but still about sponsorships, do you think they could develop a more important role
220 in terms of revenue here for the women's team project?

221 **Interviewpartner 1:** Yes, but it is not easy in Madeira to get these same sponsorships. The
222 truth is this. Clubs on the continent can have a wide advantage in recruitment, including
223 sponsorships compared to us. It is more complicated for us here on the island to be able to have
224 a large company to provide us with this support.

225 **Marco:** What about Liga BPI's television revenues? Are the values significant for clubs?

226 **Interviewpartner 1:** It doesn't compare to the values of men's football, but they give a value
227 that women's football teams lack, that's for sure. I can't say exactly the values, but we have these
228 values all tabulated here.

229 **Marco:** Does Liga BPI broadcast all Club Sport Marítimo games?

230 **Interviewpartner 1:** No.

231 **Marco:** So how does it work?

232 **Interviewpartner 1:** That's how it is, it's not contractual, it varies. They try to balance
233 broadcasts every season, for example, broadcast 8 games from team X, 8 games from team Y,
234 and so on. It's always like this. They don't try, they don't prioritize one team over the others.
235 They try to be equal to every club. I can't say how many games this year will be aired, but we
236 have already received a sum from these same TV broadcasts. We also receive a subsidy from
237 the Federation. They give us a schedule, and if we don't mess with the schedules and always
238 agree with those schedules, which are beneficial for them, to fit into Channel 11's schedule, we
239 receive compensation for that. Basically, the Portuguese Football Federation also acts as an
240 intermediary in terms of arrangements for television broadcasting. In fact, it's all through them,
241 as Channel 11 is theirs.

242 **Marco:** Good. Thank you very much for your time.

243 **Interviewpartner 1:** Thank you.

10.2 Interview 2

1 **Marco:** My name is Marco Braz, and I'm doing a master's degree in finance at NOVA SBE.
2 This work project consists of a strategic plan for women's football at Club Sport Marítimo. How
3 long have you been working here at the club and what is your role here?

4 **Interviewpartner 2:** Hello, I'm XXX and I'm a defender.

5 **Interviewpartner 3:** Hello, I'm XXX and I'm a striker/winger.

6 **Interviewpartner 2:** I'm here, I think this is the second season in a row. I was also abroad and
7 before that I was here since the beginning of women's football in Marítimo.

8 **Interviewpartner 3:** I was also away for a year, but otherwise I've always played here at
9 Marítimo.

10 **Marco:** So, you've been here for many years. Since the beginning of the project here, how has
11 the development been until today? In other words, how did the project start and what was the
12 importance of becoming a professional project?

13 **Interviewpartner 3:** This changed a lot to this day, and I think everyone here, not just players,
14 recognizes that. We started in 2015 I think, on a synthetic field and played against the female
15 teams here in the region that existed, which were very few.

16 **Marco:** Which was the first year that Marítimo played in a more national context?

17 **Interviewpartner 2:** 2019.

18 **Marco:** Were the two of you here at that time?

19 **Interviewpartner 2:** Yes

20 **Marco:** What was it like when you moved from the regional context to the national context?
21 What do you think has changed the most over the years in terms of people, structure? How have
22 things developed?

23 **Interviewpartner 2:** At the time there was no first, second or third division. We had several
24 individual district competitions, and each team that won the competition in each district would
25 then compete in the final phase. And whoever won this final phase would go straight up to the
26 first division, which is what happened to us in 2019, when we competed in this final phase for
27 the first time and we were champions, going on to play in the 1st division.

28 **Marco:** How was the reality of competing with the winners of each district and then moving
29 on to the First League? How was the first-year adapting?

30 **Interviewpartner 2:** The trips. It was something that we felt. Traveling every 15 days, we
31 weren't used to traveling outside the island to compete. The conditions were different, more
32 precarious, it has nothing to do with now, which are much better compared to those back then.
33 We didn't have such a vast coaching staff; we didn't have professional players. It was only after
34 the first year competing in the 1st league that we began to professionalize the squad, and we
35 had no players from either Continental Portugal or abroad to reinforce our team. It was a team,
36 if I'm not mistaken, 100% of players from Madeira.

37 **Marco:** In a space of 5 years you went from a 100% Madeiran team, with no professional
38 players, to the current reality. How many Madeiran players and how many professional players
39 does the team have this year?

40 **Interviewpartner 3:** This year we have few Madeirans, we have around 50%, that is, 10/11
41 Madeirans and 10/11 from abroad.

42 **Interviewpartner 2:** The ones outside are all professionals. Marítimo currently has a squad of
43 22 or 23 players, the majority of whom are professionals, something that was not the case

44 previously. When we started the national project, we didn't have anyone professional, but with
45 each passing year, we always had a greater number of professionals.

46 **Marco:** When you moved up to the first division, did you still have any type of work on the
47 side? Are you currently able to only live from CS Marítimo women's football?

48 **Interviewpartner 2:** In the beginning we still worked separately or studied, currently we live
49 exclusively from football.

50 **Marco:** So, do you think that a turning point here for the women's football project was the
51 professionalization?

52 **Interviewpartner 2:** Of course, yes! Currently we train in the morning, which means we have
53 more availability to be at our best, the rest hours are better, in the end this is our job. We don't
54 need to have other types of worries.

55 **Marco:** About women's football in general. In 5 to 10 years, how do you see the world of
56 women's football?

57 **Interviewpartner 2:** So, since the beginning that we came here, and speaking of the reality of
58 Marítimo, the associative mass has increasingly joined our games. We even have a relatively
59 cool home, all the games, whether with the first place, or with the classifieds from other
60 realities. When we play in some foreign stadiums, we don't have as many fans. But of course,
61 over the years, even at other clubs when we travel to play, we feel and witness an evolution. In
62 this sense, I think that more and more people care a lot more about women's football. The fact
63 that games are shown on television on open channels also increases attendance. The players
64 with the achievements of the national team, and who are becoming increasingly known with
65 transfers to big clubs, like the case of Kika going to Barcelona, which is just the champion of
66 the Champions League and that kind of thing, I think it makes so that women's football is seen
67 differently and that Portugal, when I say Portugal, I mean the population in general, sees

68 women's football with more recognition. All of this has become clear and has evolved over the
69 last 5 years. In 5 to 10 years the prognosis is that it will continue to evolve and attract many
70 more people. Not the same as men, because I think that was too big a step, although I think we
71 can get there with a greater margin of time, but that it is increasingly recognized. This is, of
72 course, if we can continue to do things both at national team level and at club level in Portugal,
73 namely in the Champions League, and in the spectacles provided in the cup finals. I think all of
74 these are favorable points for fans and the public in general to enjoy watching women's football.

75 **Marco:** Taking the Portuguese team here, did you feel that after Portugal's participation in the
76 2023 World Cup there was greater exposure of your work, whether via social media or even in
77 the stadium, even through word of mouth? If you noticed here in Portugal and the region, thus
78 further recognition of women's football? Do you feel like anything has changed?

79 **Interviewpartner 2:** Very substantially. I think it was another reason for people to see the team
80 playing differently. I think that was everything they had done so far, culminating in their
81 presence at the World Cup and a really good performance in the first World Cup in which they
82 almost managed to get through the group stage. I think it was the culmination of all the work
83 they had already done combining with their presence at previous Europeans. Here in Portugal,
84 we played the games early in the morning and there was a lot of support. Of course, being
85 broadcast on an open channel provided a lot of this.

86 **Marco:** Now more specific to the maritime context. You, as athletes, I would like to know your
87 opinion about the things you think are good, and what things you would change?

88 **Interviewpartner 3:** Changing constantly the fields that we train isn't very good, to be honest.

89 **Interviewpartner 2:** Yes, it's not good. For example, if the training is in Machico at 10am, we
90 normally leave from here at 9:30am. In other words, we have to be here at 9. If we have gym
91 work we have to be here even earlier, around 8:15. We always leave here 30 minutes in advance,

92 because the trip to Machico still takes approximately 25 minutes. The worst thing is the trip,
93 which is annoying. We always go on a club bus. But I think what's even worse is the fact that
94 we still train on synthetics here in Santo António once a week.

95 **Marco:** The Portuguese Federation now requires all teams to have natural grass. Is it a negative
96 point for those of you who only compete on natural grass to train once a week on synthetic
97 grass?

98 **Interviewpartner 2:** Yes, very negative indeed. It would be great to never train on synthetic
99 grass and it would be perfect to have our own natural grass, so we don't need to travel to other
100 places and thus waste time and lose the energy required for the training itself.

101 **Interviewpartner 3:** The locker room was also great if we had an exclusive one for us, as we
102 currently share it with other teams here in Marítimo.

103 **Marco:** But in the early years, when it wasn't so professional yet. Did you only train here on
104 synthetics or did you use other synthetics? What was it like?

105 **Interviewpartner 2:** We trained on a small field that wasn't even synthetic. We called it
106 Maracanã because it is old and has sand. We didn't have a changing room, and the equipment
107 isn't like it is nowadays where everyone has their own basket and when training is over everyone
108 puts their things there before taking a shower. We had to come equipped and then take our
109 equipment home and wash it. But, I mean, now... or in the last 5/6 years, this work that
110 Marítimo have had to provide better resources for us has been crucial, and therefore, the factor
111 that we would change most nowadays would be to have a more appropriate infrastructure for
112 us. Namely a natural grass field just for us and a changing room just for us as well.

113 **Interviewpartner 3:** And we would also like to always have a person from the media with us,
114 as she does an incredible job promoting our reality.

115 **Marco:** Ok. What do you think is most important to develop a sustainable project when it comes
116 to women's football?

117 **Interviewpartner 2:** The investment without a doubt. If there is more investment, there are
118 better conditions and consequently better players. There will also be more fans and always more
119 spectacle.

120 **Marco:** Do you think people don't come to see games as often because they don't feel interested
121 in women's football in general, or do you think it has to do with the professionalism of each
122 team in question?

123 **Interviewpartner 2:** The truth is that it also has to do with the quality of the games in general,
124 because if we look at Benfica and Sporting, which are the 2 teams that came first and second in
125 the league, in addition to being all professionals, they are professionals who really have more
126 quality and that's how things are. I think if there was more investment to look for better players
127 than the ones we already have, would still be a more positive point.

128 **Marco:** How do you think you can bring more people here to watch your games? Do you think
129 social media work is also important?

130 **Interviewpartner 3:** Yes, we think that social media can be worked on more in general
131 nowadays, in order to bring more fans to the stadium.

132 **Interviewpartner 2:** Also, the person who works with social networks, given the time she has,
133 and the amount of work she has, she really does a lot. We thought it would be better to have
134 one person working exclusively on the communications side of the women's team.

135 **Marco:** Nowadays, do you still feel any type of prejudice towards women's football?

136 **Interviewpartner 2:** There is still a lot of thinking that women's football is not good to watch,
137 that it is very slow compared to men's football, which nowadays is becoming less and less slow

138 even in comparative terms. Of course, we don't have the same game speed as men and we never
139 will because we are women, and they are men, but we increasingly have more useful playing
140 time, we have more quality in terms of play, although an intensity, let's say a little lower than
141 men's, but women's games have increasingly been more balanced, more competitive and better
142 to watch.

143 **Marco:** When you started playing for the district access to the first league, in terms of spectators
144 at the games, how was the environment?

145 **Interviewpartner 3:** The people that came to the games were more family and friends
146 basically.

147 **Marco:** Nowadays, do you feel that there are more people interested?

148 **Interviewpartner 2:** If the game doesn't coincide with team A's schedule, we even have a good
149 house. So, we usually have a good number of fans watching our games.

150 **Marco:** When you play against the big 3, do you feel a difference? Are there any more
151 noticeable changes?

152 **Interviewpartner 3:** Yes, of course. The number of fans changes a lot.

153 **Interviewpartner 2:** Usually fans of Benfica or Sporting come, especially from these two
154 teams, they almost always come. The number of people coming from Marítimo is greater
155 because the fact that Sporting and Benfica have very good and very competitive squads attracts
156 more fans. The players are better, which makes the fans come more because it's closer to what
157 they like and are used to seeing, which is men's football.

158 **Marco:** In your opinion, is the fact that Benfica, Sporting and Braga have foreign and more
159 capable players a factor that people value to choose to watch the game at the stadium?

160 **Interviewpartner 2:** It's not just about foreigners. Even with the Portuguese ones. This
161 happened a lot here last year with Kika Nazareth, with Jéssica Silva, also with Andreia Norton,
162 now at Benfica, Lúcia Alves. The flashiest players, so to speak, in the national team, this still
163 happens a lot. People are interested in these types of players.

164 **Marco:** How would you position Marítimo compared to teams in the same division? In your
165 opinion, and with your experience in living different realities here in Portugal, how does
166 Marítimo compare overall in terms of resources provided?

167 **Interviewpartner 2:** Damaiense, for example, until last season played on a synthetic field. This
168 year, with the new FPF rule that forces all teams to play on natural grass, Damaiense then
169 changed stadiums. But Torreense, for example, last year already played on grass. It's not that
170 they receive us poorly, but, for example, the locker room conditions are less good than ours.
171 On this first weekend of the league that we went there, we had 2 changing rooms with a corridor
172 in the middle, where to go take a shower we had to go through the corridor, which is not
173 practical because our coaches and other elements were also passing through there, because it
174 was the access corridor to the pitch. This kind of thing is not practical. I think the structure that
175 Marítimo provides to visitors is much more comfortable than most mid-table clubs, which is
176 our reality, so to speak. Benfica, Benfica is super different. Benfica plays on campus, and they
177 really have excellent facilities. The dressing room is very good, where there are individual
178 cabins for each player, they welcome us well, they always give us biscuits, fruit, they always
179 give us that kind of thing, although the other teams also give us something, but Benfica always
180 give us this. Benfica, Braga also welcome us very well and Sporting also welcome us very well.
181 And in terms of locker room conditions, we really see significant improvements from these 3,
182 especially the locker room conditions from these 3 for the other teams.

183 **Marco:** If you had to position Marítimo in these terms in relation to all teams?

184 **Interviewpartner 3:** We'd say we're kind of in between. There are teams that have much worse
185 resources than Marítimo and others that have much better ones, but Marítimo are in the middle.

186 **Marco:** Have you been playing here on the Imaculada Conceição natural grass field, at the
187 Marítimo academy?

188 **Interviewpartner 2:** Since the beginning of this year, 2024. Before that, we played in
189 Barreiros, which is the stadium of Marítimo's main men's football team, as VAR was not yet
190 installed here in Imaculada Conceição. This was from the start of the 2023/2024 season until
191 we moved here in January 2024. Before that, we played in a synthetic here at the academy.

192 **Marco:** And how about the experience in Barreiros? Good?

193 **Interviewpartner 3:** Excellent. We want to play there again. For us, we want to always play
194 there.

195 **Marco:** In your opinion, do you think that the fact that you play here in Santo António also
196 prevents people from coming here to watch the game? Is it in the center of Funchal in Barreiros
197 more appealing?

198 **Interviewpartner 2:** Much more! People have the opportunity to enter the stadium, watch a
199 football match for free and even support their team, and it's a really cool stadium.

200 **Marco:** So, entry is free to your games?

201 **Interviewpartner 2:** Yes, entry has always been free. Neither against big teams nor against
202 small teams. Our tickets were always free.

203 **Marco:** And do you think that if Marítimo started charging an amount, not very high, it would
204 stop people from coming to the stadium to watch the games? Or do you think that people who
205 come to games are really because they like it and don't mind paying ticket?

206 **Interviewpartner 2:** There are a lot of people who come because they like it, but I think and
207 feel that if entry were charged it would be a point that would bring us fewer fans, that's clear!
208 Even if members got in for free, as it makes perfect sense, because they pay dues, I think the
209 rest of the general public, who comes to games because they like it or because they know player
210 A, B or C, would come less often or even not come at all if the entry would be charged. We feel
211 that we still don't have a fan base that is as committed to the team as we would like it to be.

212 **Marco:** Now comparing your experience at the Barreiros stadium, with, for example, your
213 experience at the Benfica campus. In your opinion, do you think that the conditions you had
214 when you played in Barreiros were even a little better than those you have when you play
215 against Benfica there?

216 **Interviewpartner 3:** Yes.

217 **Interviewpartner 2:** Yes, without a doubt.

218 **Marco:** In other words, do you think that Marítimo has the possibilities and conditions to be
219 the team in Portugal that could take a position by providing the best pitch in the entire women's
220 championship?

221 **Interviewpartner 2:** Probably yes. Of course, with the use of the field also by the men's team
222 and due to the weather conditions, the field could show some wear, but overall, in terms of
223 infrastructure quality it would be the best in the championship, yes.

224 **Marco:** Since 2019 when Marítimo became a first league team, did you only start playing on
225 grass in 2023?

226 **Interviewpartner 2:** Yes. The club followed the League's suggestion because from this year
227 onwards, as mentioned before, it would be mandatory to play on natural grass. So the club

228 adopted natural grass last year. Half a season in Barreiros, and half a season here in Imaculada
229 Conceição.

230 **Marco:** Here focusing more on a social point. Do you feel a big difference in the recognition
231 that people show here on the Island between you and a male player from Marítimo?

232 **Interviewpartner 2:** I think the difference between the recognition of the best-known female
233 player or a male player is still huge. The support that people have for the masculine means that
234 more people are more aware of the masculine than the feminine. It's a lot, there's a lot out there,
235 but of course social media and working on social media, that is, players being active on social
236 media, I think it's also an advantage for increased recognition.

237 **Marco:** In your opinion, has Marítimo demonstrated initiatives to increase your exposure?

238 **Interviewpartner 3:** We normally go to schools at all times. Marítimo is invited to go to
239 schools to advertise, talk about some topics, namely, to talk about gender equality and we even
240 went together to talk about gender equality. Other times we will talk about the use of illicit
241 substances. We talk about topics and give our perspective as athletes and normally Marítimo in
242 this are careful to take players from the A team, but also take from the women's A team.

243 **Marco:** Finally, I wanted to ask about your pre-season. How is it usually? Do you usually do
244 some tour/internship in the summer? Do you think it is important to be competitive from the
245 beginning of the season?

246 **Interviewpartner 3:** We don't do pre-season internships. As we don't compete with teams that
247 we will face in the championship, we always experience difficulties at the beginning of the
248 season.

249 **Interviewpartner 2:** That's it. It starts to be a little more difficult at the beginning, because we
250 are not yet at the right pace and competitive levels. We ended up competing a lot only here in

251 the region. We here can't play with teams from the first, second or third because they don't exist.
252 When we play training games, it has to be with guys at lower ages, that's obvious, but even
253 playing with lower ages, it's not our reality. Whether weaker teams or stronger teams. I think
254 that first doing an internship was already a step. Doing an internship for at least a week, with
255 the entire squad complete, would be advantageous both at a competitive level and at a group
256 level, which is what pre-season is for. It's for us. This year, for example, we have a completely
257 different group. There were very few players who stayed from last season. We welcomed a lot
258 of new people, and we felt some difficulty adapting. Now we are, we are all aligned, we have
259 already had our adaptation period, which was until now, September, maybe the other teams
260 have already done it, they already did it in August, they already started the season with
261 everything aligned. The fact that we have no competition, and our games are not the reality we
262 are going to face in comparison to all the teams in the League that are able to compete with
263 each other is a disadvantage that we have. It's the fact of insularity. There you have it, living on
264 an island comes with these consequences.

265 **Marco:** Thank you very much for your time.

266 **Interviewpartner 3:** Thank you.

267 **Interviewpartner 2:** Thank you.

10.3 Interview 3

1 **Marco:** My name is Marco Braz, and I'm doing a master's degree in finance at NOVA SBE.
2 This work project consists of a strategic plan for women's football at Club Sport Marítimo. How
3 long have you been working here at the club and what is your role here?

4 **Interviewpartner 4:** My name is XXX and I am the head of the marketing department at CS
5 Marítimo.

6 **Marco:** Currently, how many sponsors does the women's football team have and how does the
7 process of acquiring sponsorships work?

8 **Interviewpartner 4:** The women's football team has approximately 3 sponsors on the uniforms,
9 and then the type of sponsorship can extend to the various means that we have, OK, therefore.
10 We often have a, that is, we have sponsors who are normally associated with the equipment and
11 then we have companies that buy advertising. It is associated with the first line of advertising.
12 That has visibility on TV. OK, so they are 2 different categories.

13 **Marco:** Right. What is the primary source of revenue for women's football in Marítimo?

14 **Interviewpartner 4:** These are somewhat financial questions, but I would say that this year,
15 Marítimo had an extraordinary income, which was the sale of athletes, and then you have the
16 support of the Federation. Yes, these are the main supports. In fact, I think all of women's
17 football relies heavily on these points to boost the sport. Now regarding sponsorships on our
18 side. We have around 4 companies that invest in sponsorship and we are talking about, perhaps,
19 I would say that it should be around 1/6 of the costs of the women's football project.

20 **Marco:** And within the revenue budget, what is the proportion of sponsorships? In other words,
21 what is the weight of sponsors in the club's total revenue for women's football project?

22

23 **Interviewpartner 4:** I don't know exactly how to tell you, since I don't have this type of
24 information with me, however, in addition to sponsorships we have state support here from the
25 regional government. And we have support coming from the Federation for the sport and there
26 are still extraordinary revenues from athlete sales.

27 **Marco:** Is there currently an ambition to work with more sponsors than the current ones?

28 **Interviewpartner 4:** Yes, we have been growing, I even think that, considering my experience,
29 I would say that the Marítimo is not even bad in terms of funding from sponsors for women's
30 football. I think there are even good investments. I mean, women's football is a recent sport,
31 and companies are not yet prepared, for example, just to give a clear example here. For example,
32 our biggest sponsor, the Madeira beer company, currently does not sponsor women's football
33 at all, therefore. But it sponsors handball, for example, and is interested in sponsoring futsal.
34 Sponsors the first team, sponsors youth football. Therefore. Companies also need to be more
35 open, and it is not for lack of I think it is part of the natural cycle of evolution of the modality
36 that still does not have recognition, often visibility, on the part of companies. Even the
37 companies closest to the female sector could be an opportunity here, many times, they still don't
38 have budgets, and we see this through the large teams, for example, there could be more brands
39 associated with the female public approaching these teams, but that's not what happens. The
40 brands that try or are within the women's sector are still brands that want to support the sport,
41 not often seeking what is seen in the men's sector, which is notoriety, brand recognition, you
42 know, for the visibility that nowadays day there is, in terms of TV, above all, I think this is it,
43 but these are brands that we want to support for local support, for being a local company, for
44 being a regional team. This means that there is not yet that national dimension, as seen
45 associated with men's football. Obviously, it is part of the growth cycle and we hope that in the
46 coming years brands will be more open to this investment. But just as you see it growing in

47 sponsorships, you also see it in player sales. Therefore, 10 years ago it was unthinkable to sell
48 a female athlete and today we are starting to find it. So, I think it's part of natural evolution.

49 **Marco:** In 5 years' time, in your opinion, do you see Marítimo working with other types of
50 companies than those currently? In other words, if in 5 years Marítimo will try to work with
51 more sponsors with the specific focus of gathering a greater source of revenue to be able to
52 improve various aspects within the women's football project that need more financial
53 investment?

54 **Interviewpartner 4:** Yes, that's how it is. In men's football itself, sponsorships have already
55 had more weight. It was once a section with much more weight than it has today. Therefore,
56 clubs also had to reinvent themselves and seek to be disruptive, looking for new business
57 opportunities and, that is why nowadays, I mean in the past, sponsorships were one of the
58 biggest items, but nowadays we see other items to get closer to it and even overcome, for
59 example, ticketing, which is a section that is not talked about much, but has grown a lot. There
60 is now talk on the contrary, of creating policies to reduce ticket prices. It's the opposite. In other
61 words, clubs wanting to increase revenue and are asking to reduce ticket prices. Therefore, for
62 example, women's football in Marítimo has no value in ticketing because the games are free,
63 but one of the steps could also involve this, starting to value ticketing on game day. I think that
64 sponsorships are closely associated with people coming to the stadiums, which is also a problem
65 we still have. This is part of the natural growth and perhaps in the next 5 years I have no doubt
66 that yes, if we talk about 5 years, and if Marítimo continues with this positioning that it has had
67 until now, the sponsorship potential will grow. It doesn't mean that it no longer exists and that
68 we no longer have sponsorship, but I think it will clearly grow, and the ticketing section will
69 probably also grow, which is something that doesn't exist nowadays. We probably have to
70 associate another type of revenue here that is also interesting, then later on we realize that it is,
71 for example, merchandising, which is something that is never talked about, it is closely

72 associated with the club overall, it is not? And television rights, which nowadays are also
73 associated with the Federation, therefore, it is a great advantage, all games are televised and are
74 associated with the support that the Federation gives, and which nowadays, no, there is no
75 appreciation that it should have, right? In the future, it probably will.

76 **Marco:** Focusing here in merchandising. I wanted to understand whether the individualization
77 of merchandising for the Marítimo women's football team is a policy that can be established
78 within 5 years?

79 **Interviewpartner 4:** Yes, not in its entirety, but I mean, there are ranges in which specific
80 products can be created associated with this audience, which we have already tried to do. The
81 clubs already do this, but obviously, if it starts to have another expression and another demand,
82 I think we increasingly see this through the example of the Federation, which ends up having
83 specific training uniforms for the female public and, therefore, probably in the future, If there
84 is a growth in interest, we will certainly be able to specify this also in this modality. I think so,
85 I think so.

86 **Marco:** And in your opinion, in 5 to 10 years, where do you see women's football in Portugal?

87 **Interviewpartner 4:** Women's football around the world is growing very quickly, and far
88 above what was expected, I think. It is also largely due to investment, which has been made by
89 national and international federations. For the support you have given. I think growth will
90 continue to be what it has been in recent years. European competitions are also important, so
91 that teams start to have another type of projection in terms of brand. Now, I think there are still
92 some problems associated with club facilities here. The infrastructures and the structures that
93 accompany it, and therefore, we cannot talk about large numbers of sponsorships, large numbers
94 of sales in merchandising, and everything in the stadium, where after much of the structure, is
95 not professional or the spaces themselves They still don't have the quality worthy of the teams.

96 So I think it's an evolutionary cycle, and probably in 5 years we will be talking about
97 stabilization in this aspect and perhaps then when all these areas, the structure, the facilities, the
98 infrastructure, the teams themselves going more often to the international competitions, I think
99 that then we can start thinking about other types of revenue sources and that more people come
100 to the stadium, and that makes this an entertainment product, which is the main focus.
101 Nowadays, it still is, despite there being a great effort to bring it closer to the men's game, there
102 are still important steps needed to capture the attention of the entire public. Public attention will
103 automatically attract more sponsors. It will attract box office potential. It will attract potential
104 merchandising sales, which interest ends up appearing in all areas.

105 **Marco:** The exposure of men's football ends up being more natural. The exposure of women's
106 football, in turn, and as it is still in an evolutionary phase, must be more encouraged, and,
107 therefore, I wanted to ask you if you believe it is possible within 3 to 5 years, to have an
108 exclusive section in the Marketing department specialized in women's football solely and
109 exclusively?

110 **Interviewpartner 4:** I mean, I would even say that in fewer years, and if the evolution
111 continues as it has been in recent years, there will be much more defined strategies from clubs
112 and marketing departments for these areas. To mean. Marketing, when it thinks about strategy,
113 always thinks about the global, it doesn't think directly about one modality. Certainly, because
114 it is a female audience and if interest grows, if the visibility dimension is different, more and
115 more pronounced strategies will appear and with much more importance in terms of policies
116 for these areas. There is talk, for example, in the membership categories, for example, making
117 the revenue associated with the members, what weight it should also have or not and associating
118 the budgets for women's football and its revenues. Until we can truly understand what weight
119 this sport can have within one of the clubs, I think it will be a little difficult for us to be able to
120 give another dimension to the teams.

121 **Marco:** Nice. Thank you for your time.

122 **Interviewpartner 4:** OK, thanks.

10.4 Interview 4

1 **Marco:** My name is Marco Braz, and I'm doing a master's degree in finance at NOVA SBE.
2 This work project consists of a strategic plan for women's football at Club Sport Marítimo. How
3 long have you been working here at the club and what is your role here?

4 **Interviewpartner 5:** My name is XXX, I am the official responsible for communication for
5 CS Marítimo in the BPI League, that is, in this women's league, but I also do all the
6 communication for all the teams in the club. I am more directly related to the women's football
7 project. It was a project I took on last year. It was really good, we won 3 communications
8 awards from the league last year, but I also do all the social media for all the teams and clubs
9 in Marítimo.

10 **Marco:** And how long have you been working here at the club?

11 **Interviewpartner 5:** About 2 and a half years ago, since mid-2022, maybe.

12 **Marco:** So, in your opinion and more in terms of marketing and communication, what are the
13 ambitions that you see here in Marítimo as an organization?

14 **Interviewpartner 5:** I think that above all, we have to be able to place Marítimo, not only that,
15 Marítimo has to sell an experience, Marítimo has to sell emotions because nowadays it is no
16 longer enough to sell a ticket to a game because the football, as we know, varies a lot and
17 depends on emotions and results, and we have to be able to do much more than that.

18 **Marco:** What about women's football in Portugal? What is CS Marítimo's ambition?

19 **Interviewpartner 5:** In the case of women's football, without a doubt, the league does tireless
20 work, the BPI League. It's something that is growing and we here try to keep up with this growth
21 through the tireless work of sponsors, people who are willing to help and support us and who
22 really have, have been following this growth with us. We try to focus on Madeiran players, for

23 example, to bring another type of emotions and I think that the marketing of the women's team
24 at the moment is largely based on selling experience and transmitting the progression of this
25 sport.

26 **Marco:** In your opinion, how relevant is the marketing and social communication work of
27 women's football here in Madeira and Portugal in promoting gender equality in sport?

28 **Interviewpartner 5:** First, I think that communication in women's football has a very important
29 role internally. I think I am an asset to the environment and group. I'm someone who goes to
30 their locker room. It was something that didn't happen. I have to manage what I'm going to pass
31 out and I think that through my dynamics that I do a lot and different games, different and
32 appealing content, games, dances, I think they have a fundamental importance at the group and
33 structure level and unity. We are the only island team at the moment in the BPI League in the
34 women's first division and we feel a bit of this responsibility, because it is a place that we really
35 want to occupy and that we think is essential to occupy because we have a lot of women's youth
36 football players too and we think that it's an area that we really cannot abandon and we really
37 want to see grow and that, having been here for 2 years, I can see a brutal growth in terms of
38 their ambitions in terms of determination. You can see that they are athletes who really want to
39 establish themselves and who genuinely want to promote this sport. They really want to achieve
40 gender equality.

41 **Marco:** In the 2 years that you've been here, have you noticed any increase in the exposure of
42 the players themselves and the club on social media? Do you feel there has been an evolution
43 in fan interaction with women's football?

44 **Interviewpartner 5:** Yes, without a doubt. When I arrived here, the women's football team's
45 Instagram had 1000 or so followers, and at the moment we have almost 6000. So, in 2 years we
46 went from 1000 or so to 6000. I think we're ready, despite everything, we live on an island and

47 we have this responsibility of being the only island team. We feel a lot of affection from the
48 people who are nearby. Of course, there are always more players' families, players' friends,
49 colleagues, base players, because we also have a lot of youth football in women's football, who
50 follow us closely, but we also feel a great affection from people on the continent.

51 **Marco:** What factors do you think are most crucial to increasing media exposure for women's
52 football players?

53 **Interviewpartner 5:** For me the most important factor is to demonstrate the reality of the
54 players' daily lives. For example, I think that social media and content also depend a lot on
55 timing and that's why we have to be real, because people want to see reality. No one at work
56 lives 100% from income and effort. Players are people just like us and I think that, for example,
57 at the younger levels, girls identify 100% with this, because they look up, see where they want
58 to go and notice that they are real people who play and dance. Lately, almost every week we
59 have requests from Canal 11 for someone to speak in interviews, and I think that the more real
60 and transparent the players are, the more easily the public will feel sympathetic and will become
61 more supportive of women's football.

62 **Marco:** Do you provide any social media training for players? Are athletes encouraged to
63 expose their work, their status as a female player?

64 **Interviewpartner 5:** No, the club does not have initiatives like that

65 **Marco:** What is your opinion about this media work of female football players with the intent
66 to reach the same level of exposure as men's football? Do you think social media is a crucial
67 way to increase the popularity of women's football, not only in the region, but in Portugal?

68 **Interviewpartner 5:** We visit schools and always take players from the male and female A
69 teams. Obviously, we feel that a player has much more impact than a player. Last year, one of
70 my game promotion strategies was to take 4 players to the center of Funchal every 15 days with

71 a huge poster of the game. We were playing in the stadium, mainly with flash and with leaflets,
72 and they were the ones who were handing them out to people on the street. It was very funny,
73 and we even put 3000 people in the stadium for a game. We even went to Funchal to play games
74 in the middle of the street as a form of promotion, getting people to take penalties against the
75 goals and this is the reality of people on the street, they don't know them. But then they get to
76 know them and enjoy talking to them and really show interest. I believe that through these
77 actions we had really won over a portion of the public.

78 **Marco:** And what other initiatives do you have in mind for the near future?

79 **Interviewpartner 5:** We have an idea to start making a podcast. It was something I loved. We
80 just haven't done it yet because I can't do it, because we needed more people. We currently have
81 only 3 people working on the club's marketing and 2 people working with social
82 communication.

83 **Marco:** Do you consider that the club's media is successfully exposing the image of women's
84 football? Is the sale of exclusive merchandising for the women's team a current reality?

85 **Interviewpartner 5:** It is not at all, a current reality. Also, because the club doesn't help much
86 with this because the women's material is exactly the same as the men's material, while maybe
87 if you go to Braga, the travel kit there is personalized for the women's team and we here have
88 exactly the same kits for male and female. In Braga, you see specific colors for women, for
89 example, maybe there will be a pink color for women with a different design suitable for
90 women. Not us here, we have everything exactly the same. For example, the polo shirts that the
91 women's team wears are men's.

92 **Marco:** In your opinion, in a space of 5 to 10 years, how do you see women's football as an
93 industry, both in terms of communication, marketing and brand exposure? Do you think will
94 achieve the natural exposure that men's football presents?

95 **Interviewpartner 5:** I think that in terms of communication, women's football thanks to the
96 work of the League that has rules on mandatory publications, which give a prize per month for
97 the best communication. I think that has caused enormous growth. And the growth, for example,
98 of women's football social networks from last year to this year is brutal. Last year we won 3
99 awards because we stood out very easily because we did a lot and others didn't do much.
100 Currently the competition is much greater, and I think this is very positive for the exposure of
101 the sport and it has been a commendable job. In 5 years' time, I would like female players to be
102 more socially recognized, and I believe we are making great strides towards this.

103 **Marco:** One last question, which social networks are women's football in Maritime present on?

104 **Interviewpartner 5:** Instagram and Facebook. We also have the YouTube channel, which is
105 from Marítimo TV and we have Twitter, which was essentially only for men's football, but
106 which we are now trying to include in women's football as well.

107 **Marco:** Thank you for your time

108 **Interviewpartner 5:** Thank you.

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10.5 Questionnaire Results

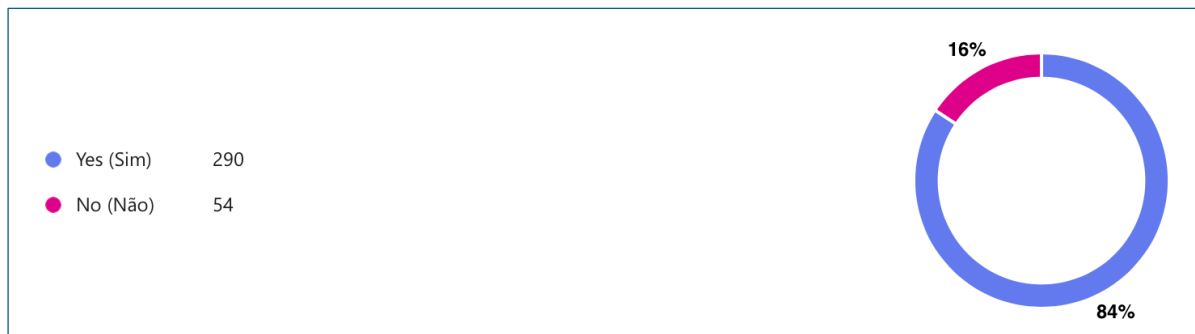


Figure 1: Are you a resident of Madeira Island or have you ever visited it?

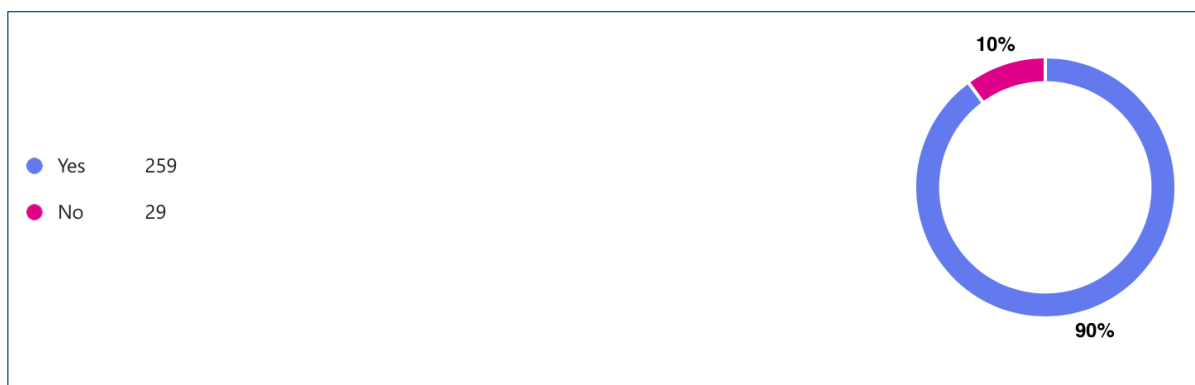


Figure 2: Do you consider yourself a person who likes and is interested in sports?

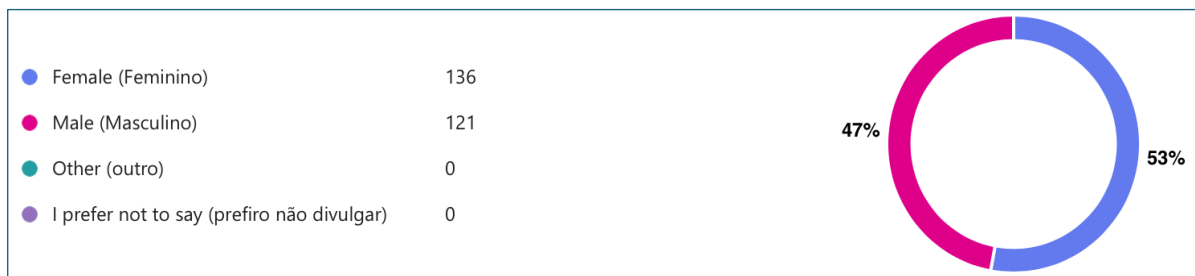


Figure 3: Gender

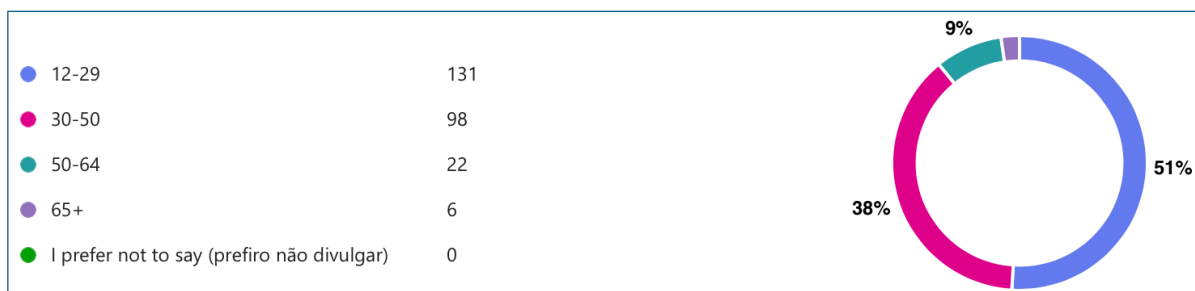


Figure 4: Age

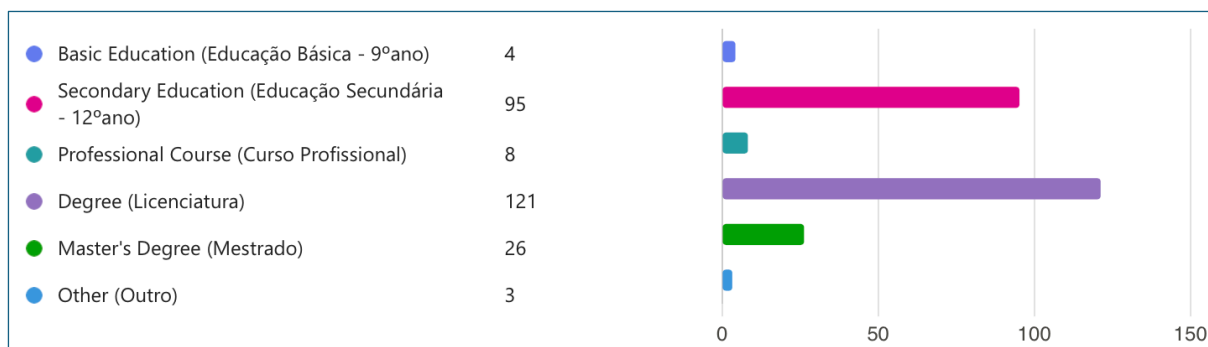


Figure 5: Academic Qualifications

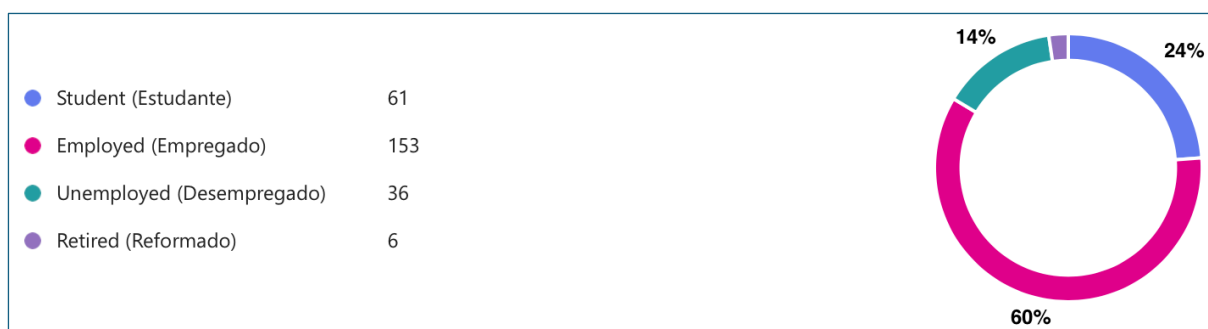


Figure 6: Activity

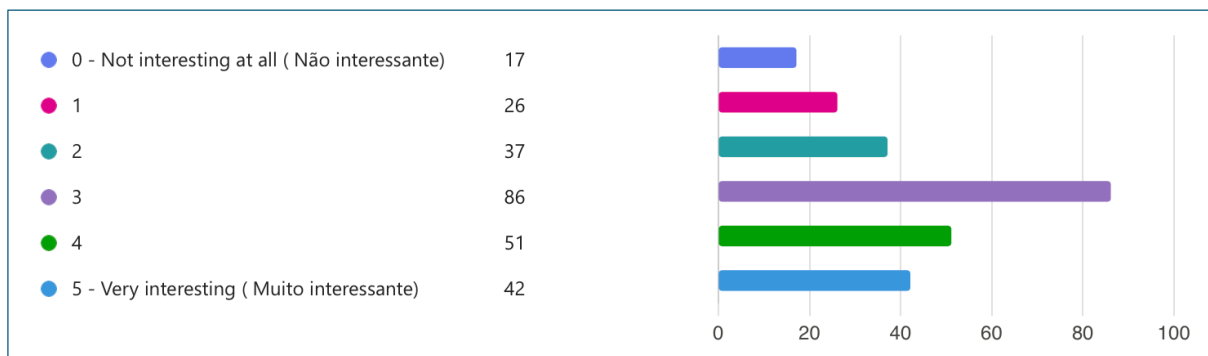


Figure 7: From 0 to 5 how interesting do you consider women's football to be?

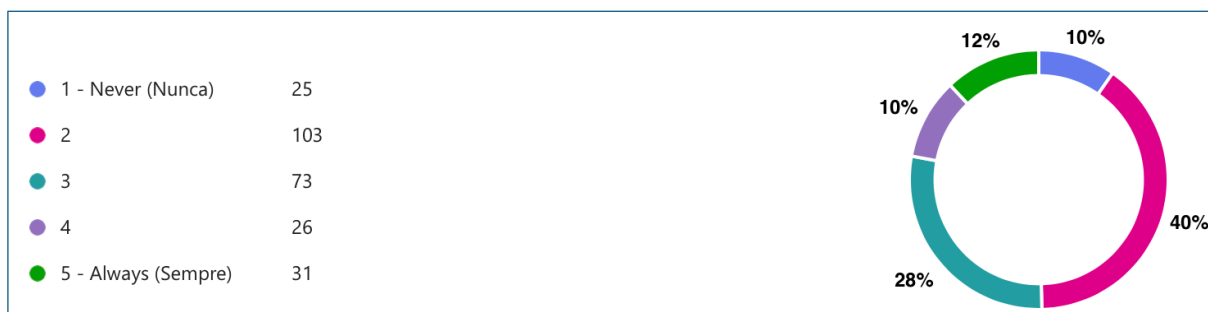


Figure 8: How often do you watch a women's football match on television?

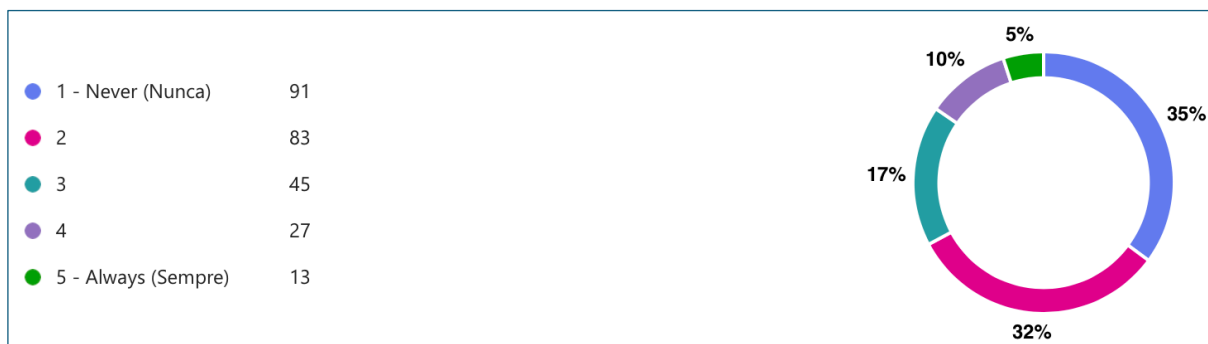


Figure 9: How often do you go to the stadium to watch a women's football match?

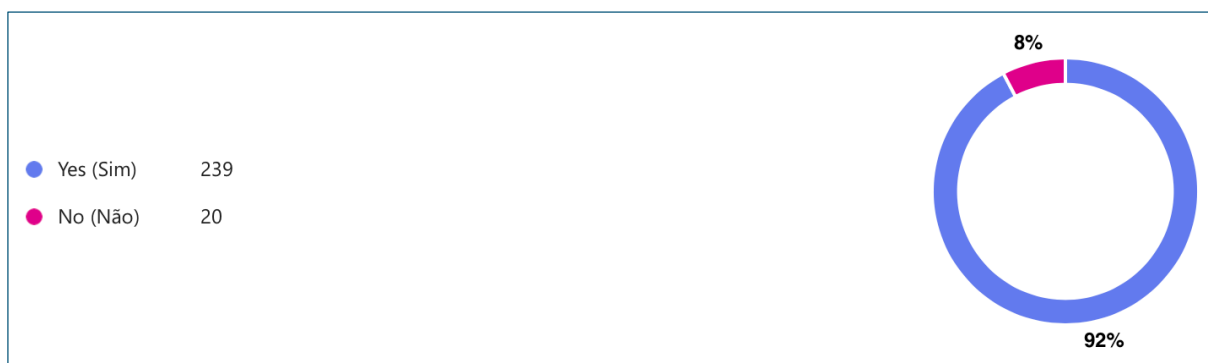


Figure 10: Did you know that in the summer of 2023 the Portuguese Women's National Football Team qualified for the first time for an edition of the World Cup?

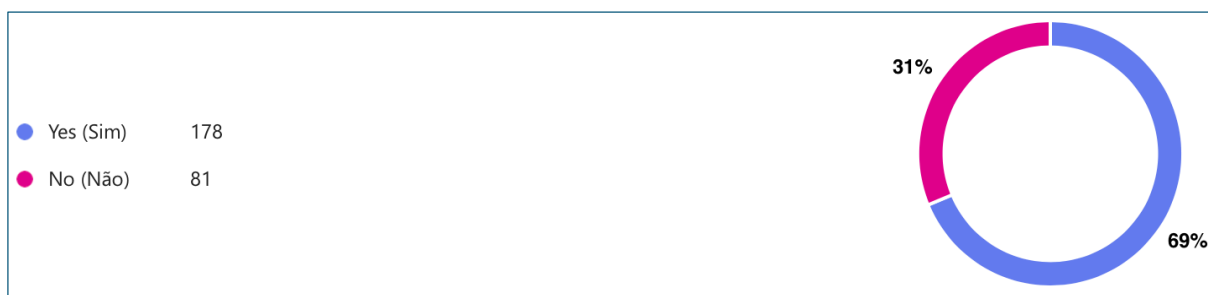


Figure 11: Did you watch any of the Portuguese national team's matches in the women's world cup on television?

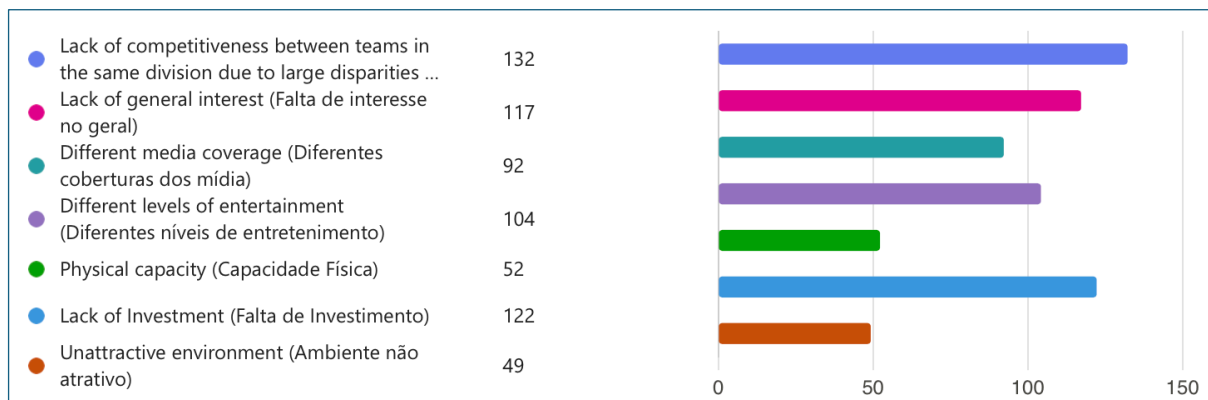


Figure 12: What are the reasons, in your opinion, why women’s football does not have as strong presence in Portugal as men’s football?

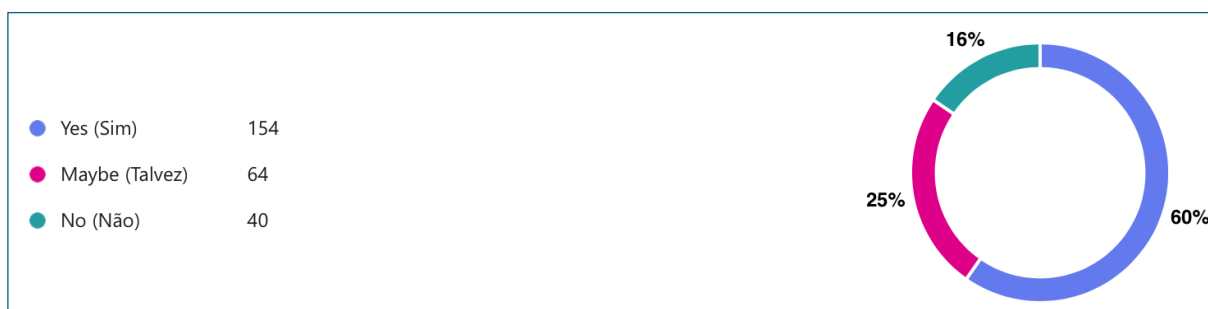


Figure 13: Do you believe in the growth of women’s football in the coming years?

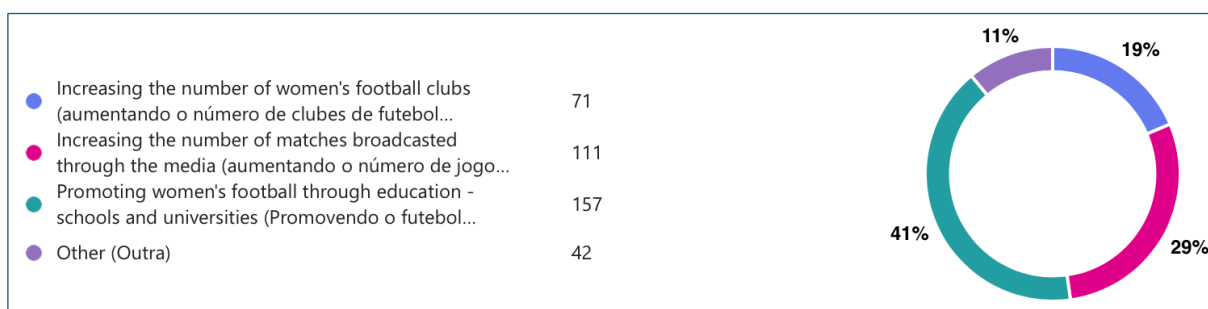


Figure 14: What is, in your opinion, the best way to encourage more women to play football?

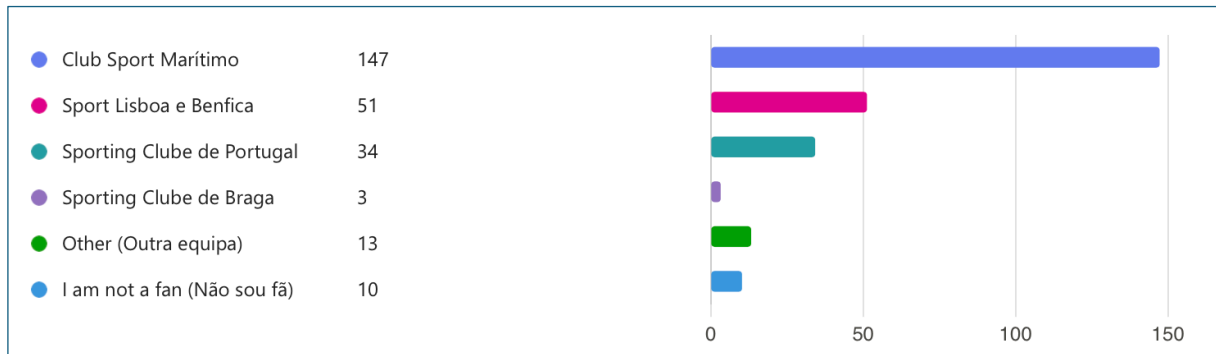


Figure 15: If you are a women's football fan, which of these teams do you support?

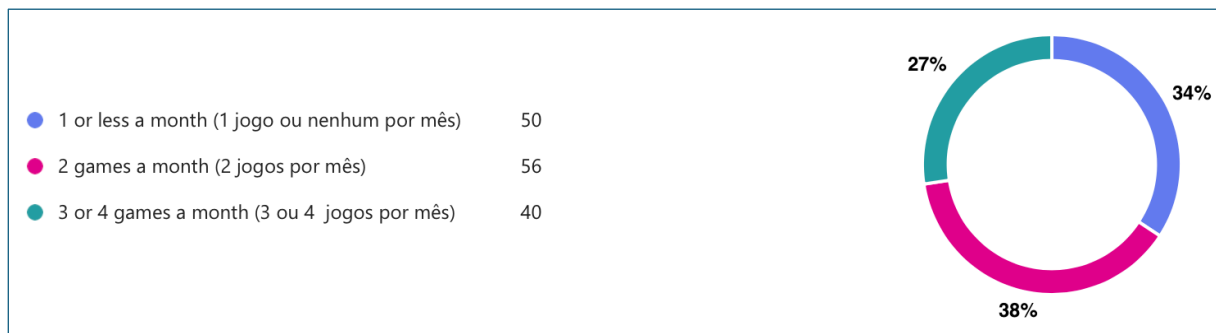


Figure 16: How many games of the Club Sport Marítimo women's football team do you follow per month?

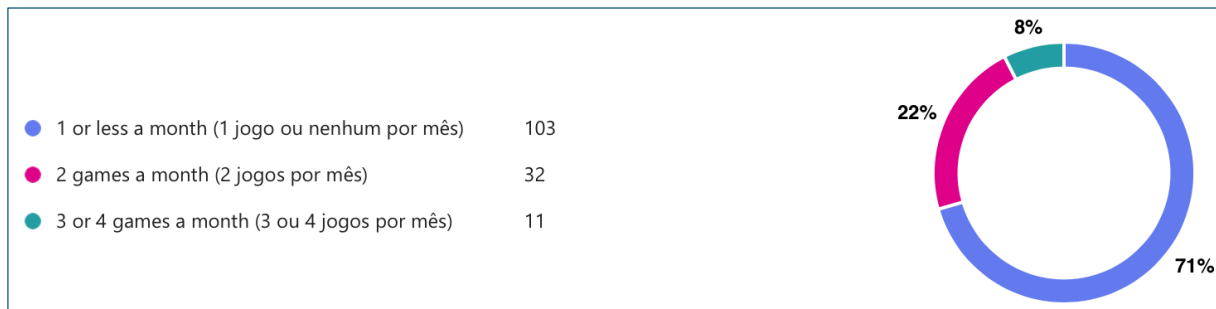


Figure 17: How often do you go to the stadium to support the team?

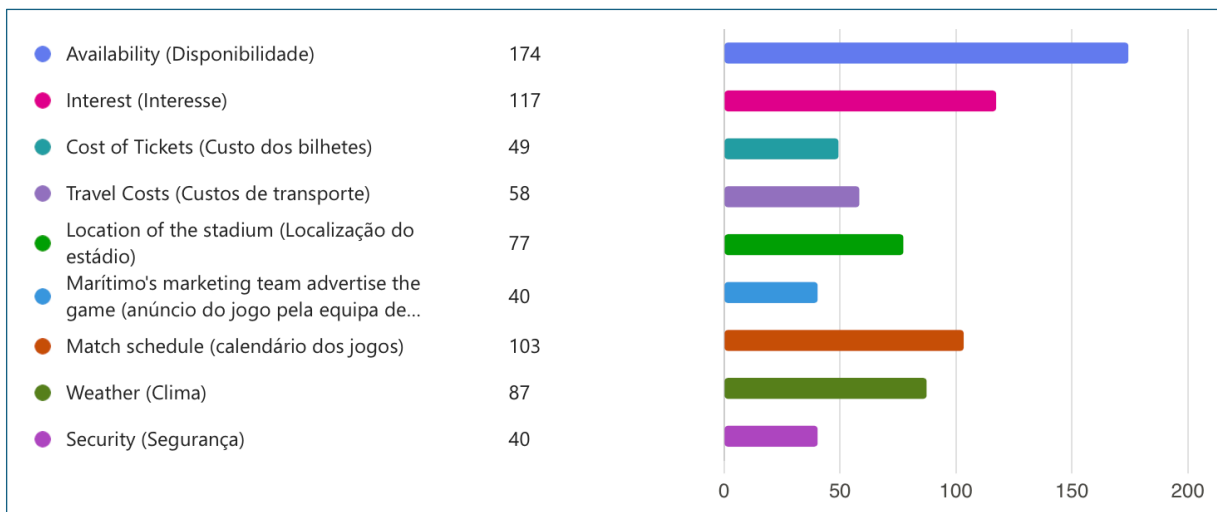


Figure 18: What are the factors that influence you going to the stadium?

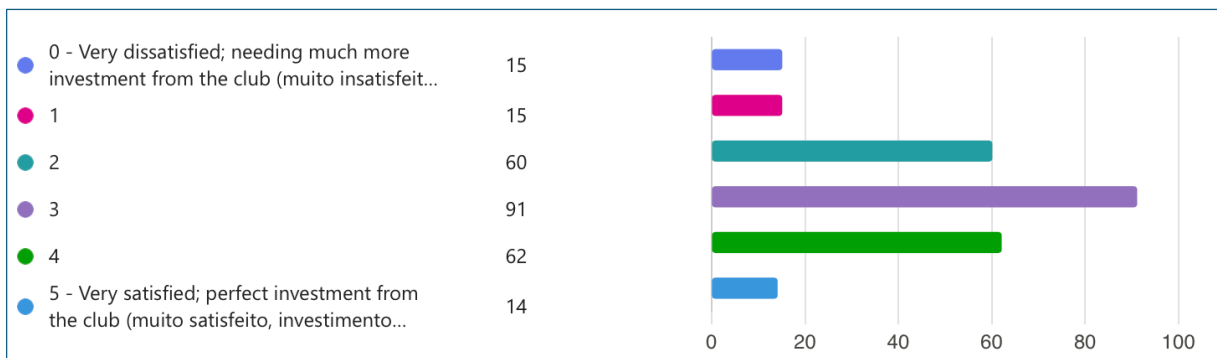


Figure 19: From 0 to 5, how satisfied are you with Club Sport Marítimo performance in women's football?