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Enhancing Fan Engagement and Loyalty through Tourism Integration: A Strategic Plan for
Belenenses

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Abstract

This study explores strategies to enhance fan engagement and loyalty for CF “Os Belenenses” by focusing on Tourism Integration. The thesis analyzes the club's internal and external landscape based on existing literature, stakeholder interviews, and benchmarking with comparable clubs. The findings inform a set of targeted recommendations across three strategic areas, prioritized using an Impact/Effort Matrix to ensure actionable solutions. This research provides a comprehensive framework for Belenenses to strengthen its identity, expand its fan base, and thrive in an increasingly competitive football landscape.

Keywords

Sports Management, Fan Engagement, Fan Loyalty, Club Identity, Digitalization, Social Media, Sports Tourism, Tourism Integration, Fan Experience, Organizational Culture

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1. Introduction

In today's competitive sports industry, fostering fan engagement and loyalty has become crucial to a club's long-term success. Fans are not only essential sources of revenue but also serve as passionate brand advocates, embodying the club's values, history, and shared experiences (Bauer et al. 2005, as cited in Pauwels Delassus and Mogos Descotes 2019). Therefore, sports organizations are increasingly committed to cultivating strong and lasting bonds with their supporters. This is especially relevant for Clube de Futebol "Os Belenenses" (henceforth Belenenses), a historic Portuguese club with deep local roots and a rich legacy. Once celebrated as one of Portugal's "big four" (alongside Porto, Benfica, and Sporting) and one of the only five Portuguese football champions, Belenenses earned the title of "clube consagrado e popular" (established and popular club). However, recent years have seen turbulent changes, marked by relegations, a split from its SAD (Sociedade Anónima Desportiva), which managed its professional football branch, in 2018, and a subsequent re-entry into Portuguese football from the lowest tier. This, alongside the rise in popularity of the so-called "big three" led to a significant decline in the fan base, especially among younger fans, contributing to an aging audience and a reduction in average match attendance from 16,600 spectators in the 1986/87 season to 1,799 in the 2023/24 season (EFS, n.d.; Tiesler n.d.).

Hence, this paper outlines a project developed in collaboration with Belenenses to devise a strategic plan that the club can adopt to enhance fan engagement and loyalty, hoping to revitalize its once-booming supporter base. While tailored specifically for Belenenses, this scientific work offers insights and a potential model for other clubs facing similar challenges, providing a blueprint to strengthen and involve their fan base.

2. Methodology

This thesis employs a mixed-methods approach, combining both primary and secondary data collection to comprehensively address the research objectives and develop strategic recommendations for Belenenses.

The initial section of the thesis focuses on diagnosing the current status of Belenenses through a detailed analysis using frameworks such as SWOT and PESTEL. This will highlight the three key strategic areas to be addressed later and provide the foundations for deeper expansion. This analysis draws on secondary research about the club, complemented by direct observations conducted during visits to the stadium, as well as insights from semi-structured interviews conducted during this semester (2024) with four target groups: fans, locals, tourists, and two individuals from the club's organizational structure (a Board Member, elected through member voting, and the club's Head of Marketing). These interviews were designed to deepen the understanding of the club's current situation and identify key areas for strategic focus. For citation purposes in this thesis, interviewees are referred to as follows: Fan 1, Fan 2, and Fan 3 for fans; Local 1, Local 2, and Local 3 for locals; Tourist 1 through Tourist 5 for tourists; and Board Member and Marketing Head for club representatives. A general interview guide was developed for each target group and adapted as needed during the interviews. The interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed using Thematic Content Analysis to identify patterns and themes. The different interview guides used, and the thematic analysis are included in Appendix 1 and 2 respectively. The findings from these interviews informed the initial diagnostic section and were integrated into the subsequent individual chapters. In addition to the semi-structured interviews, less structured conversations were held with experts in the relevant areas during the semester. These included discussions with a professional in fan experience at the Federação Portuguesa de Futebol (FPF), Tiago Barra, and a representative from Turismo de Lisboa, Rubens Antunes. While informal, they provided valuable insights and context for the

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topics discussed in this thesis, adding depth to the strategic analysis. For consistency, they will be referenced as Barra and Antunes throughout this document.

Following the diagnostic analysis, the literature review examines relevant academic work on fan loyalty and engagement, including their predictors, impacts, and the strategic areas chosen for the club's strategic plan: Digitalization and Social Media, Club Identity, and Tourism Integration. The review explores the relationship between these three strategic areas and the main research question, providing a conceptual foundation for the subsequent analyses and recommendations. This secondary data was retrieved through keyword searches to identify scholarly articles, with an emphasis on selecting works authored by highly cited researchers to ensure the credibility and relevance of the sources used.

The subsequent chapter explores Tourism Integration in the club, combining analysis from the diagnostic, literature review, interviews, and benchmarking. It includes detailed analysis and strategic recommendations tailored to the specific focus area. The decision not to proceed with quantitative data collection was based on the anticipated challenges in obtaining valid responses from tourists familiar with Belenenses. These challenges would have limited the ability to gather insightful and impactful data. Instead, this area was addressed through benchmarking and an in-depth analysis of the interviews conducted with tourists.

The final section of the thesis synthesizes key takeaways of the proposed recommendations, highlighting their interconnections across Digitalization and Social Media, Club Identity, and Tourism Integration. To support implementation, an Impact/Effort Matrix was developed as a practical prioritization tool. A strategic roadmap for the next five years outlines a phased approach, guiding the club toward future developments, which includes a strategic plan by 2030. Together, these elements provide a cohesive strategy for Belenenses to enhance engagement and loyalty, fostering sustainable growth and competitiveness.

3. Diagnosis

Introduction to Belenenses

Among all sports, football stands out as the most popular, with billions of fans globally. Its appeal transcends all boundaries, overcoming conflicts and connecting people. As it couldn't be otherwise, the same has always happened with Portugal, where football has a particularly significant role and is rooted in the nation's history. During the dictatorship, the “three F's” – Fado, Futebol, and Fátima – helped reflect football's cultural importance (R. M. Kumar 2014). Today, it remains a major industry, contributing over 667M€ to the Portuguese GDP in the 2022-23 season, an 8% increase from the previous season (EY and Liga Portugal 2022).

Belenenses, founded in 1919, emerged in the historic region of Belém, becoming an important trademark of the region. Known as “Os Azuis do Restelo” (The Blues from Restelo), the club embraces the values and maritime spirit of Belém, reflected in its colors and traditions. Over its history, Belenenses has achieved various successes, being one of only five Portuguese champions and one of the clubs with the most seasons in Portuguese football's top tier.

It is recognized for having had an important role in the professionalization of Portuguese football as its stadium was the first in the country with artificial lighting, cement stands, and a grass field. Becoming the home of the Portuguese national team for several years (Leite 2016).

Despite its past, Belenenses has faced several challenges. The most notable occurred in 2018, when a member vote led to the club's separation from its SAD, the entity managing its professional football operations. This split resulted in a severe identity crisis, dividing the club into two entities: Belenenses and B-SAD. Consequently, Belenenses was relegated to the lowest tier of Lisbon's Football Association. Despite this setback, fans showed remarkable loyalty, abandoning B-SAD (which remained in the first division) to support Belenenses in the lower league (Gomes 2023). Following the deep restructuring that has been taking place in the last years, the number of members of the club registered consecutive increases, with over 10,000 by

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November of 2023 (Peters 2023). Being one of Portugal's most historical footballing institutions, Belenenses story encompasses many more key moments. For a more detailed exploration of Belenenses' storied past, please refer to Appendix 3.

PESTEL Analysis

Today's environment is more competitive than ever, making it necessary for clubs and organizations to have a clear foresight of the challenges and difficulties they may face. To better understand the external environment influencing Belenenses, we conducted a PESTEL analysis, to analyze the external factors that impact an organization's success (Fosher 2018). This analysis provides valuable insights to identify the optimal direction in a rapidly evolving environment, going through six topics (see Appendix 4). Below, we highlight the key conclusions.

Politically, aligning with national and local authorities supports the club's development (Power et al. 2020). Regarding the economic context, Lisbon's thriving tourism provides opportunities to grow its fan base and expand its revenues, despite challenges from possible upcoming economic downturns and consequent financial difficulties the club may face (Luz 2024). Socially, a deep and strong connection between the club and the fans is fundamental, with the city's growing international population offering an avenue for fan base growth. Regarding technology, clubs should implement digitalization processes, to respond to their fans' needs and stay updated (Giorgio, Ohri, and Marzin 2018). Environmentally, sustainability should be one of the clubs' main focuses, given its importance to the world and the fans (UEFA 2021). Legally, it is essential to adhere to sports regulations and labor laws while considering safeguarding intellectual property. The upcoming centralized broadcasting rights in the Portuguese Professional League may also lead to a more equitable revenue distribution, benefiting smaller clubs like Belenenses (Saúde, Almeida, and Batista 2024).

In conclusion, the PESTEL highlights opportunities and challenges for Belenenses, emphasizing the need for strategic alignment with external factors to ensure growth and competitiveness.

SWOT Analysis

To comprehensively assess the current state of Belenenses and support the formulation of our strategy, we will apply a SWOT analysis, a management tool that involves a basic analysis of internal and external factors in the company. For this framework to be as valuable and specific as possible, we will analyze the club's context with the end goal of increasing fan engagement and loyalty in mind. The complete SWOT matrix can be found in Appendix 5.

Strengths

Belenenses' history is intrinsically connected with the history of Portugal (**S2**), with its crest featuring the Cruz da Ordem de Cristo associated with the Portuguese Maritime discoveries (Pinto 2018). Interviews highlighted appreciation for the stadium's architecture and view (**S4**). The huge sporting complex has multiple commercial and sports spaces (**S5**), enhancing its multifunctionality. Matchday visits (Appendix 6) revealed a passionate and authentic atmosphere, impressing fans and tourists (**S10**). Lastly, partnerships enabled crucial investments (**S12**), such as the partnership with Lidl to requalify a part of the stadium (Lidl 2020) and the British School's support for a club bus (CF Os Belenenses n.d.-d).

Weaknesses

The club lacks targeted tourist promotion, with no active efforts to attract tourists (**W3**). Its brand and identity are fragmented, with inconsistent messaging and differing perceptions of its history and values (**W4**). This extends to branding, as sports sections operate independently. Digitalization has not been a priority (Marketing Head). Data collection is minimal, internal processes remain undigitized (**W6**), and social media is used to inform rather than engage (**W7**). Limited resources and investment capacity persist (**W8**). Despite financial improvements, budgets remain tight (CF Os Belenenses 2024), and corporate functions rely on six people (Marketing Head), with volunteers filling gaps (**W9**). Lastly, the club lacks a clear strategy, often relying on short-term fixes instead of long-term planning (**W13**).

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Opportunities

Belém, a major tourist hub (**O1**), attracts millions annually, offering Belenenses a vast potential audience (Museus e Monumentos de Portugal n.d.; Observatório Turismo de Lisboa n.d.). Lisbon's population is growing (**O3**) (Observatório de Lisboa 2022; Statista 2024a), rising from 2.73 million in 2004 to 3.02 million in 2024 (PopulationStat n.d.), creating opportunities to expand Belenenses' fan base. As a leading university hub, Lisbon provides access to a young, dynamic student community (**O4**) (CML n.d.; Financial Times n.d.). There is an 82,05% internet adoption rate in Portugal (Statista 2024c), being present in the lives of almost all Portuguese citizens between 16 and 54 years old (Statista 2024b). Digitalization enables new engagement strategies (**O6**) like loyalty programs (Spiryn, n.d.) and exclusive platforms to create additional sources of revenue and better monetize the fans (**O7**).

Threats

Being located in Lisbon also presents challenges, as Belenenses faces intense competition from other clubs (**T1**) (Belém TV 2024). In Portugal, several professional clubs are from the Lisbon area, showing the region's strong presence. Moreover, the "big three" dominate Portuguese football in several areas, being the clubs of 94,5% of the Portuguese population (Observador 2019). This creates a fan culture heavily geared towards them, leaving limited space for smaller clubs (**T2**). Rising operational costs, salary demands, and infrastructure investments further challenge member-owned clubs like Belenenses, which lack external investment and rely on revenue and member contributions (**T3**) (TFS 2023). The increasing trend of investor acquisitions in recent years also threatens clubs' identity (**T5**), sometimes leading to new fan-founded clubs like AFC Wimbledon (Dabbs 2024). Belenenses is an example, choosing to start over from the depths of Portuguese football rather than sticking with the SAD, which the fans felt didn't represent them or the club (Zerozero 2018).

TOWS Analysis

While the SWOT analysis provides a comprehensive overview of internal and external factors, it primarily serves as a diagnostic tool. To transition from analysis to strategic planning, we will employ a TOWS analysis, as this extends the SWOT by exploring the interrelationships between these factors to generate actionable strategies (Szeliga-Duchnowska and Goranczewski 2017; Weihrich 1982). Our approach will focus on the most relevant points from SWOT and generate logical connections between them, aligned with our objectives. Below are the key conclusions, with the complete matrix in Appendix 7.

From this analysis, it is evident that establishing long-term strategies for the club is necessary to safeguard its future, reducing the dependence on external factors and fulfilling the club's objectives. Moreover, digitalization emerges as a critical element across all quadrants, underscoring its importance for future growth, particularly in fan engagement and loyalty. Tourism is another recurring theme that represents an important opportunity for the club to increase its appeal and internationalize its brand. The analysis also highlights opportunities to strengthen ties with the local community and appeal to a younger audience. This can be achieved through the club's facilities, youth academy, school and university programs, and a more robust digital strategy. Enhanced communication of the club's community-driven values, member-owned structure, and unique history further differentiates Belenenses from other clubs. Additionally, partnerships play a significant role in the strategies derived from the TOWS, emphasizing how the club should capitalize on synergies with partners.

Based on this analysis, we infer that the enhancement of fan engagement and loyalty could be driven by Belenenses focusing on six strategic areas:

1. **Digital Transformation and Social Media Strategy:** Develop a comprehensive digital strategy designed to actively engage fans and enhance their loyalty.
2. **Strategic partnerships:** Establish and leverage partnerships to overcome operational

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limitations and create new opportunities for growth and innovation.

3. **Stadium Improvement and Utilization:** Improve the stadium utilization to serve as a multipurpose venue for tourism, community events, and matchday experiences.
4. **Tourism-Centric Approach:** Align the club's offerings with Lisbon's cultural and historical appeal to attract both local and international tourists.
5. **Cohesive Communication and Branding:** Craft a branding and communication strategy highlighting the club's legacy, identity, and community-driven culture.
6. **Community-Centered Initiatives:** Integrate the club into the daily lives of the local community, fostering a deeper connection and long-term support.

Current Fan Engagement and Loyalty Strategies

We believe it is crucial to understand what the club is already doing to improve fan engagement and loyalty. Using available information, we analyzed these initiatives to identify key practices and areas for improvement. This assessment provides a general overview, having key findings summarized below, with full details in Appendix 8.

Belenenses is actively working to enhance fan engagement and loyalty with a strong emphasis on leveraging partnerships to improve facilities, promote community-oriented initiatives, and attract a younger audience. Targeted initiatives, such as discounts for children in schools and projects with young adults in universities, exemplify this focus. Work was also done to improve matchdays with an increase in the amenities offered and the addition of a fan zone, even if interviewees say it is far from perfect. When it comes to digital, though efforts are being made to improve the level of digitization of the club, particularly regarding ticketing purchases, member fee payments, and the state of social networks, the club's structure recognizes it is still far from ideal, particularly in data collection, which limits direct and effective engagement with members and fans. Among the six key areas identified previously of huge importance for Belenenses to pursue, we see that two remain underexplored. Few initiatives have been dedicated

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to improving the branding and communication of the club's identity, besides some dedicated posts on X and initiatives on Instagram and Facebook that incorporate the club's values. Even less attention has been given to fostering tourism, with the museum (Appendix 9) being the sole initiative catering to this segment.

Themes for In-Depth Individual Exploration

As seen in the previous section, while the club has made commendable progress in several of the six key areas identified, opportunities remain to strengthen its digital capabilities, branding, and tourism strategies to further enhance fan loyalty and engagement. Moreover, these themes not only align with the club's existing strengths and opportunities but also address key weaknesses and threats as highlighted in the SWOT and TOWS analyses. The latter repeatedly emphasized strategies rooted in these three themes while PESTEL mentioned them as some of the factors affecting the organization.

Considering this, we believe these three interconnected topics: **Digitalization and Social Media, Club Identity,** and **Tourism Integration** stand out as critical to achieving the club's strategic objective of enhancing fan engagement and loyalty. After presenting our findings and engaging in discussions with the club, we reached a consensus to focus on these three interconnected areas. They will serve as the foundation for developing actionable strategies to achieve Belenenses' goals and position the club for long-term success.

4. Literature Review

Fan Engagement

More and more C-Level executives recognize that long-term, sustainable competitive advantage is tied to the firm's ability to retain, sustain, and nurture its customer base. Therefore, customer engagement (CE) must be considered when designing the company's strategy. Despite variations in definitions across the literature, van Doorn et al. (2010) describe CE as "a customer's behavioral manifestations that have a brand or firm focus, beyond purchase, resulting from motivational drivers". While Kumar et al. (2010) agree with this perspective, the authors also argue that it "would be incomplete without the inclusion of customer purchases from the firm", since purchasing arises when considering interactions between customers and firms. Customer engagement is widely associated with increased customer loyalty, satisfaction, and willingness to participate in collaborative processes such as innovation and service co-production (Prior 2023; van Doorn et al. 2010). Co-production or co-creation, where customers spontaneously engage in the core offering development (van Doorn et al. 2010), aligns closely with Service-Dominant Logic (SDL), highlighting consumers' active role in value creation. It conceptualizes them as resource integrators, applying operant resources (intangible elements like knowledge and skills) and operand resources (tangible elements such as merchandise or stadiums) to co-create value within service ecosystems (Hollebeek et al. 2019; Vargo & Lusch 2004 as cited in Yoshida et al. 2024). This perspective is particularly relevant for sports, as customers (typically referred to as fans) actively shape the matchday experience and event atmosphere (Hedlund 2014). Engaged customers contribute to the long-term reputation and recognition of the brand and help attract and retain customers (van Doorn et al. 2010). However, negative engagement behaviors such as public protests, negative word-of-mouth, or disrespectful messages on social media, can be detrimental to the success of a business (Huettermann, Uhrich, and Koenigstorfer 2022; V. Kumar et al. 2010; van Doorn et al. 2010).

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Even though sports consumption follows patterns typically seen in consumer markets (Fujak et al. 2018), it does have its particularities as evidenced extensively by McDonald et al. (2022). The emotional, social, and cultural dimensions of sports give rise to fan behaviors that extend beyond simple consumer interactions, leading researchers to investigate customer engagement within this distinct context – commonly referred to as fan engagement.

Fan engagement is a multifaceted concept that extends beyond the transactional elements of purchasing and attending games. Wann et al. (2001) define sports fans as “individuals who are interested in and follow a sport, team and/or athlete”. These individuals engage with their favorite teams through activities such as attending events, watching games on television, purchasing team merchandise, reading sports-related content, and discussing the sport with others (Bristow & Sebastian 2001; Funk & James 2001; Hunt et al. 1999, as cited in Yoshida et al. 2014). Beyond self-focused activities, engaged fans often participate in actions that benefit their favorite sports team (i.e., collaboration on sports events, supportive displays of fandom, and positive word-of-mouth) or even other fans (i.e., sharing knowledge about a team with other fans or cooperative communications in the stands) (Yoshida et al. 2014). Yoshida et al. (2024) simplify this by defining fan engagement as “a consumer’s voluntary contribution to the success and welfare of a sports team through value-adding behaviors, going beyond the mere consumption of sports products such as ticket purchase and television viewing given”. This conceptualization highlights fan engagement as an abstract construct encompassing diverse activities. Although it overlaps with constructs such as satisfaction, commitment, and loyalty, fan engagement remains distinct and must be analyzed independently (Huettermann, Uhrich, and Koenigstorfer 2022).

Several factors influence fan engagement, with team identification – the psychological connection an individual feels with a team (Wann et al. 2001) – playing a critical role. Additionally, behaviors such as BIRGing (Basking in Reflected Glory), where individuals

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associate themselves with a successful entity to boost self-esteem, further enhance fan engagement (Yoshida et al. 2014). Teams can also promote fan engagement by providing extra-role opportunities such as enabling consumer-to-consumer interactions, involving fans in marketing programs, encouraging co-creation of products, and supporting fan contribution to service innovations. These activities foster a sense of community and ownership, increasing the likelihood of repeat purchases and long-term loyalty (Yoshida et al. 2014).

McDonald et al. (2022) propose five interlocking strategies for organizations to strengthen fan engagement: encouraging a supportive culture, building engagement platforms, enhancing legitimacy, offering engaging content, and providing diverse pathways for fans to connect with the team. They also note that fans driven by different motivations may engage in varying ways, emphasizing the need for tailored engagement approaches.

Engaged fans play a vital role in a club's success. They generate consistent revenue through media and merchandise consumption, regardless of on-field performance (Yoshida et al. 2024), while also having a positive influence on other fans (Huettermann, Uhrich, and Koenigstorfer 2022). Enhanced fan engagement leads to greater customer loyalty (Yoshida et al. 2024), increased revenues and cost savings (Huettermann, Uhrich, and Koenigstorfer 2022), and heightened sponsorship effectiveness. Research demonstrates that highly engaged fans exhibit greater awareness of sponsors (Biscaia et al. 2014) and are more likely to develop positive attitudes toward them (Pradhan, Malhotra, and Moharana 2020). This increased sponsor visibility and favorability strengthens a team's ability to negotiate better partnership deals, highlighting fan engagement as a crucial asset for sports organizations and partners.

Measuring Fan Engagement

Yoshida et al. (2014) argue that practitioners should begin “to monitor and benchmark the level of engagement among their target fan base”. This is useful to assess the impact of operational changes on fans' engagement level, and ultimately the business profitability.

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As fan engagement encompasses a wide array of behaviors and attitudes, measuring it presents a challenge. McDonald et al. (2022) suggest the CE scale developed by Hollebeek et al. (2014) serves as a reliable tool for measuring engagement in sports contexts. It captures the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral elements of fan interactions with their team. More recently, Yoshida et al. (2024) identified some limitations in existing frameworks for measuring fan engagement behavior. Many fail to incorporate recent advancements in customer engagement theory (Hollebeek, Srivastava, and Chen 2019; Pansari & Kumar 2017 as cited in Yoshida et al. 2024), particularly those related to service-dominant logic (SDL) – such as value co-creation, resource integration, and the application of intangible resources such as knowledge and skills in customer interactions (Vargo and Lusch, 2004) – has been largely overlooked. Yoshida et al. (2024) addressed this gap by developing a multidimensional scale for measuring fan engagement that builds on SDL principles and fans' unique behavioral responses. Their framework proposes six dimensions: fan resource integration, fan learning, fan knowledge feedback, ritualistic fan behavior, management cooperation, and flow experience. The results demonstrate a strong correlation between fan engagement behavior and team brand engagement, validating the use of their multidimensional scale as an effective tool for assessing fan engagement behavior in sports.

Fan Loyalty

In the Berkshire Encyclopedia of World Sport, fan loyalty is defined as “a form of sports spectatorship characterized by a strong sense of attachment to and affiliation with a particular sport or team” (James 2016). Unlike fair-weather fans, whose support may depend heavily on team success, loyal fans remain present regardless of performance (Merten et al. 2023; Yun, Rosenberger, and Sweeney 2020). This form of loyalty is described as a persistent and resistant to change attitude that guides behavior (Santana and Tocora 2022) and that develops over time through fans' engagement with their teams (Özgen and Argan 2017; Santana and Tocora 2022). Several scholars emphasize the importance of loyal fans for the development and longevity of

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sports clubs (Bauer, Stokburger-Sauer, and Exler 2008; Özgen and Argan 2017; Santana and Tocora 2022; Yoshida, Heere, and Gordon 2015) as their commitment drives the purchase and repurchase of season tickets and merchandise, directly contributing to the clubs' financial stability and growth (Raizada, Tripathi, and Bagchi 2020; Santana and Tocora 2022). In this sense, fan loyalty plays a critical role in the sustainability and success of sports clubs, much like customer loyalty is essential for the continuity of businesses in other industries (Özgen and Argan 2017). However, unlike in other sectors, sports cannot guarantee consistent performance, yet fans often remain loyal and continue to attend matches even when disappointed by their team's results. This distinction underscores the unique nature of fan loyalty in sports, as it is less reliant on predictable outcomes and more deeply rooted in emotional and psychological connections (Özgen and Argan 2017). This resilience of fan loyalty highlights its importance as a stabilizing factor for sports organizations, distinguishing it from traditional customer loyalty. In literature, loyalty is often distinguished into two key dimensions: attitudinal and behavioral loyalty (Merten et al. 2023; Rosenberger Iii et al. 2019). Attitudinal loyalty refers to a fan's psychological commitment and emotional attachment to a team (Bauer, Stokburger-Sauer, and Exler 2008). Prior research identifies three core components of attitudinal loyalty: resistance, inner attachment, and persistence (e.g., Gladden & Funk 2001; Mahony, and Madrigal, & Howard 2000, as cited in Bauer, Stokburger-Sauer, and Exler 2008; Merten et al. 2023). Fans “show a high level of psychological commitment if they feel a deep inner attachment to their favorite team and if their commitment is persistent over time and resistant to criticism” (Bauer, Stokburger-Sauer, and Exler 2008). Behavioral loyalty, in contrast, focuses on interactions with the brand (Merten et al. 2023) and is demonstrated through repeated engagement with a product or service over time (Yun, Rosenberger, and Sweeney 2020). Examples of behaviors include attending matches, watching a club's games on television, engaging with club-related media, purchasing merchandise, displaying its logo and colors, and persuading others to support the

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club (Bauer, Stokburger-Sauer, and Exler 2008; Merten et al. 2023). Behavioral loyalty also encompasses the concept of positive word-of-mouth – informal communication where consumers share their evaluations of goods or services, often recommending them to others (Bauer, Stokburger-Sauer, and Exler 2008).

Attitudinal loyalty is more commonly used in sports management literature compared to behavioral loyalty, as it largely reflects fans' future participation intentions (Özgen and Argan 2017). Attitudinal loyalty is considered an antecedent to behavioral loyalty, suggesting that fans with strong attitudinal loyalty are more likely to purchase team merchandise and attend matches (Yun, Rosenberger, and Sweeney 2020). In this regard, sports managers should prioritize fostering attitudinal loyalty as a foundation for encouraging the behavioral loyalty they aim to achieve (Özgen and Argan 2017).

Numerous studies have highlighted the relationship between team identification and loyalty, showing that a strong sense of identification with a team positively influences various loyalty indicators, such as increased consumption, higher match attendance, and greater viewership of games on television (Merten et al. 2023; Özgen and Argan 2017; Raizada, Tripathi, and Bagchi 2020). While definitions of team identification vary across the literature, they consistently center on the "psychological connection that fans establish with their teams" (Özgen and Argan 2017). Merten et al. (2023) identify a positive correlation between team identification and loyalty, showing that fans who form strong emotional bonds with their favorite teams are more likely to exhibit higher levels of loyalty. The authors emphasize that this finding has significant implications for sports team management, as it suggests that fostering strong identification among fans can enhance loyalty. Increased loyalty, in turn, leads to greater engagement, more consistent support for the team, and potentially higher revenue generation. These underscore the importance of developing targeted strategies to cultivate and reinforce fans' emotional connections with their teams. By prioritizing fan identification, sports organizations can build a

more engaged and supportive fan base, reducing reliance on short-term sporting success and sustaining growth (Merten et al. 2023).

Measuring Fan Loyalty

Consumer engagement within the sports context has been shown to have a positive impact on media consumption, merchandise purchases, and customer loyalty (Yoshida et al. 2024). In their most recent conceptualization of fan engagement, Yoshida et al. (2024) provide empirical support for prior research suggesting that fan engagement behavior fully mediates the relationship between brand identification and brand loyalty. This indicates that when consumers strongly identify with their favorite teams and perceive the teams' fan engagement initiatives positively, their engagement behaviors increase. In turn, these lead to loyalty outcomes such as higher stadium attendance and greater media consumption.

Team identification and positive affect – the pleasurable emotional state reflecting feelings such as happiness, joy, and contentment experienced during sporting events (Mazodier & Merunka 2012; Wakefield et al. 1996 as cited in Yoshida et al. 2014) – have been identified as significant cognitive and affective predictors of fan loyalty (Yoshida et al. 2014). However, in their study on professional soccer, Yoshida et al. (2014) found that the influence of positive affect on fan engagement and loyalty intentions was weak or nonsignificant. Instead, team identification emerged as a stronger predictor, significantly influencing fan engagement behaviors and loyalty. Research on loyalty has traditionally focused on two main dimensions: behavioral and attitudinal. Although the first conceptualization of loyalty combining behavioral and attitudinal components was developed in 1969, subsequent research offered empirical validation for this framework (Mahony, Madrigal, and Howard, 2000). This framework has been widely adapted and applied in various studies (e.g., Bauer, Stokburger-Sauer, and Exler 2008; Merten et al. 2023; Yun, Rosenberger, and Sweeney 2020; Özgen and Argan 2017).

Digitalization and Social Media

The growing integration of technology and the widespread use of mobile devices allow users to enjoy numerous benefits. This connectivity facilitates constant access to information, entertainment, and social interaction anytime, anywhere (Leung and Zhang 2016). The impact of these advancements extends beyond traditional fandom, shaping how fans interact with teams and players and improving their experience and engagement (FIFA 2021). In today's digital landscape, sports teams can enhance their capabilities by leveraging informative initiatives through the Internet, social media platforms, and emerging technologies such as advanced mobile applications and customer journey mapping tools. According to Yoshida et al. (2024), sports teams should implement these informative fan engagement initiatives, such as delivering news via mobile platforms, fostering social media conversations about star players and team achievements, and utilizing online customer reviews and surveys, as these efforts strengthen three core dimensions of fan engagement behavior (i.e., fan learning, fan resource integration, and fan knowledge feedback) which are primarily information-driven (Hollebeek, Srivastava, and Chen 2019). Weimar, Holthoff, and Biscaia (2022) corroborate this idea, placing particular emphasis on posting about the upcoming games, the players, and key personnel of the club, as product-related attributes of a club lead to more fan engagement in online platforms.

Social media plays a critical role in facilitating transactions and interactions between fans within the sports context (Ahn et al., 2014; Carlson and O'Cass, 2012; Filo et al., 2015, as cited in Santos et al. 2019). Moreover, it serves as an important entertainment tool, helping fans engage more with the team, expand their knowledge and connection to it (Chan and Li, 2010, as cited in Santos et al. 2019), and enabling a level of reciprocal communication that was previously unattainable (Pegoraro 2010). As a result, social media is becoming an essential tool for stakeholders in the sports industry, offering a focal point to communicate with sports consumers and reinforce their brand (Mahan III 2011). From a club perspective, social media is a valuable

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tool as it supports personalized communication with fans, enhancing identification with the team (Meng, Stavros, and Westberg 2015) and consequently fan loyalty (Mahan III 2011). Moreover, in their study involving 60 brands, Schivinski and Dabrowski (2016) discovered that user-generated content on social media, a form of Customer Brand Engagement (CBE) as defined by Šerić and Praničević (2018), positively impacts both brand equity and brand attitude. Consequently, enhancing CBE can deepen consumers' cognitive understanding of a product's attributes and brand benefits (Brodie et al. 2011), fostering a stronger connection to the brand (Ningtias et al. 2024).

According to Vale and Fernandes (2018), there are several key motivations driving fan engagement behaviors on Social Networking Services (SNS): Information as a driver of Consumption (i.e., fans consuming updates and content); Empowerment as a driver of Contribution (i.e., sharing opinions and interacting); Brand love as a driver of Creation (i.e., creating original content related to their team); Integration and Social Interaction (fan-to-fan) as secondary motivations, but still important. Given the importance of Empowerment, Integration, and Social Interaction motivations, they suggest that sports clubs ensure that their SNS pages actively promote fan-to-fan interaction, placing fans at the forefront and giving them a sense of ownership and participation to boost engagement. This is further corroborated by Yoshida et al. (2024) who recommend that sports teams facilitate fan-to-fan social interactions addressing the other three dimensions of fan engagement behavior (i.e., ritualistic fan behavior, flow experience, and management cooperation) which are experience-driven (Hollebeek, Srivastava, and Chen 2019). Given the significance of Brand Love in driving the highest level of fan engagement, Creation, sports marketers should foster the creation of content from their fan base (Vale and Fernandes 2018) as well as engage customers through co-creation and potentially improve customer value and organizational performance (Pandita and Vapiwala 2024). They also found that fan engagement substantially depends on the initiatives taken by

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sports organizations to encourage active fan participation and involvement, stating this as the core of fan engagement. Since Remuneration has been identified as an important driver of fan engagement and loyalty (Vale and Fernandes 2018; Pandita and Vapiwala 2024), sports clubs should consider offering incentives such as discounts or special offers tied to the fans' contributions and content creation (Vale and Fernandes 2018). For this, digital tools can be a facilitator by easing the implementation of loyalty programs (Pandita and Vapiwala 2024).

All of this is extra important, considering that engaging fans through online channels also contributes to positive offline behaviors (Santos et al. 2019). According to Carlson and O' Cass (2012, as cited in Santos et al. 2019), this increased online interaction can promote fan loyalty and lead to more frequent purchases, further emphasizing the value of a well-developed social media strategy for sports teams.

But digitalization doesn't constrain only to the online environment, in the physical environments, sports teams should also actively look to integrate digital solutions like scoreboards, digital signage, and other new technologies as tools tailored to real-time on-field performance, enhancing fans' flow experiences (Yoshida et al. 2024).

Club Identity

One of the primary reasons for football's widespread importance and popularity is the unique identity associated with each club, which fosters a profound sense of belonging among fans and enables personal identification with the club (Gómez-Bantel 2016). Club identity (or brand identity) can be described as the collection of characteristics that the club's management seeks to convey to its diverse stakeholders (Pauwels Delassus and Mogos Descotes 2019). In this work, club identity may also be referred to as "brand image" defined as the brand associations held in the minds of sports consumers (Gladden and Funk, 2001). These characteristics are multifaceted, encompassing tangible elements such as "the shirt, emblem, name, colors, stadium, star players, investors, results of the game, merchandising products", alongside intangible ones like the club's

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“history, values, region, the atmosphere inside the stadium and the style of play” (Pauwels Delassus and Mogos Descotes 2019). Other researchers divide these characteristics into product-related, such as “coach, success, star players,” and non-product-related, such as “logo and colors, club history and tradition, modern stadium, fans” (Yun, Rosenberger, and Sweeney 2020).

This identity not only differentiates the club from others but also allows football clubs to transmit their own identity to the supporters, playing a crucial role for supporters in focusing fan emotions and deepening their connection to the club (Gómez-Bantel 2016). Aksoy (2023) asserts that every element within a club contributes to sustaining fan loyalty and commitment.

However, Gómez-Bantel (2016) emphasizes that a football club’s most significant identity characteristic is its role as a “cultural representative of a community”. Clubs that derive their unique identity from a historical connection with a specific region, community, or city and fully embrace it, create a powerful sense of belonging among supporters, allowing supporters to feel part of a broader community. Nonetheless, while regional affiliation remains a defining characteristic for many smaller clubs, it becomes less pronounced in higher leagues, where media exposure and commercial interests overshadow identity.

The importance of brand identity in differentiating a company, improving its reputation, and cultivating a loyal customer base is widely recognized (Blumrodt and Huang-Horowitz 2017). In the sports industry particularly, substantial attention has been given by scholars and practitioners to the management of sports brands, with brand identity regarded as one of the most valuable assets (Kunkel and Biscaia 2020). According to Blumrodt and Huang-Horowitz (2017), beyond building a distinctive message about its identity and communicating it effectively, the identity conveyed by a club must align closely with that perceived by its stakeholders. A notable example underscoring the importance of this alignment is the controversy surrounding Bayern Munich’s sponsorship deal with Qatar, which revealed a disconnection between the club’s projected identity and fan perceptions. This misalignment has had implications not only for fan

loyalty but also for the perceived legitimacy of commercial ventures within football (Herold, Harrison, and Bukstein 2023).

Clubs must ensure that the image they intend to convey aligns with how fans perceive it, as shifts in identity can often be met with resistance. When changes that alter a club's identity occur, fans may react negatively, particularly if they feel excluded from the decision-making process. Therefore, it is crucial to keep fans informed and foster a sense of inclusion by clearly communicating the reasons and benefits behind this. This approach can help mitigate resistance and reduce potential negative emotional reactions, reinforcing a stronger, unified relationship between the club and supporters (Pauwels Delassus and Mogos Descotes 2019).

Tourism Integration

Sports tourism has become more significant due to globalization and the rapid dissemination of information. As Zarotis (2019) refers, sports tourism has developed into a key sector within the industry, as the accessibility of international travel and the awareness of global sporting events increase. By integrating sports tourism with local traditions and attractions, destinations can offer improved experiences to tourists. This topic aims to understand how tourism development can benefit diverse stakeholders, contributing to the development of clubs and tourist destinations. The concept of sports tourism is widely discussed in the existing literature, offering various definitions. Gibson (1998) defines it as “leisure-based travel that takes individuals temporarily outside of their home communities to participate in physical activities, to watch physical activities, or to venerate attractions associated with physical activities”. Weed and Bull (2004) frame it as the interaction between activity, people, and place, more than just combining sport and tourism. Other authors, like Standeven et al. (1999) focus both on active and passive participation with Gammon and Robinson (2003) distinguishing between hard and soft sports tourism. The first involves participation and the second is about accidental participation. Pawlikowska-Piechotka (n.d.) offers a distinction between other forms, such as mass tourism,

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nostalgia tourism, and active tourism, for professionals, amateurs, and adventurers. They all agree on the importance of sporting events in sports tourism.

Hinch and Higham (2001) developed a three-dimensional framework to study sports tourism, addressing its activity, spatial, and temporal aspects. Sports are the core activity, with the location and the duration of events having equal importance, helping regions to make the most of their tourism potential by providing a comprehensive view.

Sports tourism has evolved into a strategic tool for economic development, relying on natural resources and local traditions. As Radicchi (2013) refers, it is important to balance economic growth through sports tourism with environmental responsibility and social cohesion. Schwark (2007) argues that collaboration between sectors can create synergies, contributing to sustainable growth. While mega-events often attract more attention but impose heavy burdens, small-scale ones can deliver more sustainable benefits if aligned with local resources and needs (Gibson et al. 2012). Gordon and Ramshaw (2023) note that sports heritage sites can benefit local economies, particularly in areas where clubs are deeply rooted in the local culture.

Radicchi (2013) points out the potential of integrating local arts and crafts to preserve the cultural heritage and develop local economies. Higham and Hinch (2006) emphasize the need for collaboration in sports and tourism resources among multiple stakeholders to maximize benefits, while Kiani, Nazari, and Shahbazzpour (2019) point out the importance of a cohesive strategy that aligns the goals of tourism, sports, and local communities.

Fan engagement plays a pivotal role in the success of sports tourism by creating meaningful experiences and fostering loyalty. McDonald et al. (2022a) argue that engaging fans involves creating experiences that satisfy fans' psychological needs for belonging, identity, and social connection. This includes both transactional behaviors, such as attending games and purchasing merchandise, and non-transactional ones, like participating in fan rituals and promoting the club. Newson, Buhrmester, and Whitehouse (2016) explore lifelong loyalty by examining the roles of

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identity fusion and self-shaping group events. Certain group events, such as key victories and defeats, can shape personal identity and the relationship between identities. Additionally, as highlighted by Gao et al. (2024), the quality of tourist-to-tourist interaction (TTI) contributes to fostering loyalty by fulfilling psychological needs for sociability and connection, turning individual moments into collective memories.

The role of local fan interaction is especially relevant in sports tourism contexts. Cordina, Gannon, and Croall (2019) highlight that interactions between sports tourists and local fans improve the authenticity and memorability of the experience. Local fans offer tourists an insight into the traditions and customs, making them feel a part of the club. Authentic matchday experiences, with participation from local fans, develop a sense of inclusion and emotional connection, which is crucial for driving engagement.

Finally, stadiums should be multifunctional venues to attract a diverse audience and generate additional revenue. Proctor and Bordoloi (2023) suggest that offering varied options in and around stadiums can attract people beyond sports fans, increasing interest in the clubs' activities and history. Clubs, especially smaller ones, have sought to diversify their offerings building on their history and sometimes underutilized infrastructures. By making their stadiums more fashionable and attractive, emphasizing hospitality and engagement with various stakeholders, such as key sponsors and companies, clubs can market these venues as prime locations for meetings, concerts, and other events (Radicchi 2013).

5. Tourism integration

Sports tourism is becoming increasingly important in the global tourism landscape. Clubs can benefit by integrating tourism into their functioning, creating unique and memorable experiences, and connecting visitors to clubs (Gibson 1998). Sports tourism focuses on the practice or visualization of sporting events and can be mixed with culture and historical sites, taking advantage of the history of clubs and institutions (Gammon and Robinson 2003). According to Ramshaw and Gammon (2005), heritage intends to celebrate the achievements of those who have come before. Stadiums, museums, and halls of fame are central to sports heritage and tourism, giving opportunities for fans and tourists to connect with sports' cultural and historical dimensions (Pichierri 2023).

Ramshaw and Gammon (2016) challenge that sports heritage is solely about nostalgia. While nostalgia typically refers to an emotional connection with significant past events, moments, or players, heritage builds on those memories to create a collective narrative. Moving towards heritage implies turning those memories into a collective narrative, that can be shared broadly, celebrated, and preserved. Sports events play a critical role in promoting local and national heritage. However, the presence of tourists and locals must be conciliated to maintain local traditions and culture. This represents both an opportunity to market heritage to visitors, and a challenge to keep the locals as part of the clubs (Tobar and Ramshaw 2022). To attract tourists from abroad, it is paramount for clubs to ensure authentic and sincere experiences are maintained, retaining strong relationships with their fan base (Cordina et al. 2019).

Sports tourism interest points are focal points for this intersection of history and tourism. They provide fans and tourists with opportunities to explore the clubs' legacy, contributing to a deeper appreciation for the cultural importance of sport, which may turn one-time fans into lifelong supporters (Higham and Hinch 2009). As Cordina et al. (2019) mentioned, the interactions between local fans and tourists are important since they will want to return if they

feel like a part of the atmosphere. This may create value by providing the creative experience many tourists look for, contributing to increased authenticity and making them want to return. Heritage sites may satisfy the desire to connect with a club's history and cultural significance, reinforcing fans' sense of belonging and identity. Integrating sports tourism into a club's operations can significantly enhance its economic impact. As highlighted by Proctor and Bordoloi (2023), professional sports clubs have diversified their value propositions by branching into hospitality, tourism, and leisure, which showcased the importance of museums and tours to attract tourists to know more about the clubs. Tailored and effective promotions can help them become more important than before. Furthermore, the importance of supplemental tourism activities, such as the ones mentioned above, to complement primary sports attractions is emphasized, which can enhance the overall tourist experience and encourage longer stays.

Yim et al. (2022) emphasize the perceived image of sports museums as the strongest predictor of visit or revisit intention. Clubs can leverage this insight by enhancing their museum experiences to attract more visitors. For distant fans, virtual museum tours offer an opportunity to connect with the club's legacy while overcoming geographical barriers. Making these venues more accessible can help increase foot traffic and revenue streams.

By combining the passion for sports with its cultural and historical side, sports tourism offers opportunities for clubs and destinations. It is more than just attending matches; it connects visitors with the moments that define a club's identity and history. Many clubs have used this type of tourism, such as Real Madrid and Barcelona, turning their history and achievements into major tourist attractions. The clubs attract them by offering various experiences, such as museum and stadium tours, and exclusive matchday packages. For them, this represents an opportunity to connect with the history and success of clubs (Tobar and Ramshaw 2022).

As with many smaller and medium-sized clubs, this approach is especially relevant in offering

an opportunity to grow sustainably (WFS and SGPS Consulting 2023). In a more concrete approach to sports tourism, football tourism aligns well with Belenenses' reality, as football remains its most significant sport. Several clubs are trying to attract more and more fans, developing diverse events and cultural attractions, which aim to motivate them to engage with the clubs' legacy and foster emotional connections.

This section will explore how Belenenses can harness its location, history, and legacy to enhance engagement and loyalty. By integrating sports tourism into its strategy, the club can enhance its economic and cultural scenes, increasing its international significance. We intend to delineate a comprehensive and tailored approach with concrete recommendations for the club. The methods used for the chapter were interviews with tourists and the two members of Belenenses' structure we interviewed, who provided their diverse perspectives on key areas, and the search for other clubs' best practices, suggesting developments for the club.

Belenenses' context

Belenenses, founded in 1919, occupies a distinctive position in Portuguese football (Amaral 2016). Even though it does not have the rich legacy of others, it has an important history and rich legacy and is still recognized as one of Portugal's biggest clubs, despite all the setbacks that occurred in the past few years, as the split with the SAD shows (Thomas 2019). Several moments that define the club's history offer opportunities to attract visitors to know more about it, creating emotional connections with them (Board Member).

Lisbon has experienced significant growth in tourism in recent years. In 2023, the Metropolitan Area of Lisbon welcomed over 8.8 million tourists, generating more than €1.9 billion in revenue (Luz 2024). Belém has some of the city's most important and visited museums and landmarks, such as Mosteiro dos Jerónimos and Torre de Belém (**O3**). Its attractions were visited by more than 70% of the tourists traveling to the city, representing a strategic opportunity for the club to connect with fans and tourists (Observatório Turismo de Lisboa 2023). Belém's popularity

positions it as a prime location for leveraging tourism and opportunities to integrate sporting and cultural activities. This influx of tourists provides a valuable opportunity to offer unique experiences that connect the club's history with Belém's cultural significance, promoting it as part of the city's diverse tourism landscape. Therefore, we intend to research how the club could benefit from a deeper integration of tourism into its functioning, strengthening the bond between sports and the city's cultural heritage (WFS and SGPS Consulting 2023).

Analysis

Belenenses has a deep and rich history and can only benefit from exploring it more profoundly. Interviews revealed that most people knew little about the club, mainly due to the lack of information. The club suffers from aggressive competition regarding awareness with the two bigger clubs in Lisbon (**T1**) since they have a stronger presence than Belenenses, nationally and internationally. Some of its unique characteristics differentiate it from most clubs, but the absence of effective strategies limits its ability to leverage tourism (Head of Marketing). While implementing these strategies could increase international presence and fan engagement, any development must preserve the club's authenticity and respect its surrounding community. The museum and Estádio do Restelo are two significant yet underutilized assets. Despite being in great condition, the museum lacks activity and promotion (**W2**). Despite being free for game attendees, its limited signage makes many visitors miss it, as observed during the interviews. Tourists expressed a desire for more engaging "(...) history storytelling about the club" (Tourist 2). Additionally, the virtual museum tour (Realizasom n.d.) remains largely unknown, highlighting the failure to capitalize on this. This reflects broader challenges in making the club's history accessible to local fans and tourists.

The stadium's scenic location, with stunning views over Lisbon's landscape, has significant potential to become a distinctive landmark in Belém's tourism scene (**S4**). A tourist mentioned, "The view over the river with the bridge and the statue of Jesus was quite spectacular!" (Tourist

5). However, outdated facilities such as restrooms and seating affect the visitors' experience (**W10**). These limitations underscore the need for significant upgrades (Head of Marketing) to improve the visitor experience (Barra). While location remains a strong asset, these shortcomings affect the club's ability to attract visitors and larger audiences.

Groundhopping, a growing trend among football enthusiasts, presents another great opportunity for Belenenses. Fans travel specifically to visit iconic stadiums, get to know the clubs, and experience authentic atmospheres. The club can highlight its unique heritage and offer authentic experiences. Despite lacking targeted promotional efforts, Belenenses already attracts some groundhoppers, as it was possible to understand from in-sight observations. During our interviews, we got to know two practitioners of this activity who also noted the lack of promotion by the club. Tourist 3 emphasized that "attracting this niche of football enthusiasts could be really interesting". The lack of promotion on platforms like Futbology and limited social media activity reduce the club's ability to connect with this audience.

One of the Belenenses' key strengths is the community atmosphere at its matches. Despite low attendance, partly due to the club's presence in the third division, this atmosphere presents a welcoming environment. "What I liked about Belenenses was the community feel. It was a club atmosphere where everyone knew each other, and they gathered at the bar afterward" (Tourist 3). Pre-game social spaces and bars enhance the experience, offering tourists the opportunity to connect with the club's culture. Maintaining and promoting this atmosphere could strengthen Belenenses' identity as an authentic, community-centered club. This is a key point for tourists since their experiences and the likelihood of repeating them are greatly influenced by the quality of their interactions with locals and other tourists.

Awareness and promotion remain critical problems for Belenenses, with its limited visibility preventing it from better engaging with tourists (**W3**). One of the reasons for this is the dominance of Benfica and Sporting, which limits the public's awareness of Belenenses and its

history. As one tourist remarked, "So, I felt like you don't have that much information about the small clubs or that are like in the area of Lisbon." (Tourist 2). Additionally, its insufficient digital presence is a critical barrier, reducing the club's ability to capitalize on Lisbon's tourism scene. The lack of a comprehensive website offering ticket sales and merchandise further restricts its reach, as noted by Tourist 6.

Tourists identified the club shop's limited product selection as a weakness, affecting the club's ability to connect with them. As mentioned by Tourist 3, "we looked at the shirts and for any special offers from last season, but there wasn't much available". The lack of diverse merchandise affects the club's potential to connect with international visitors and create lasting impressions. By addressing these gaps, the club could leverage its assets to increase engagement and transform occasional visitors into lifelong supporters.

The club has established some partnerships that contribute to its sustainability, such as collaborations with Lidl and The British School of Lisbon. These have provided essential resources and infrastructure, highlighting its importance for the club's functioning. However, despite its strong local collaborations, the limited international presence limits the ability to attract broader support and resources, which could further support the club's expansion.

Benchmarking

Benchmarking provides valuable insights by analyzing successful strategies from comparable clubs. In this sense, it makes sense to look for clubs with similarities in size, number of fans, and other factors that make implementing ideas and processes in identical structures easier. Several clubs have successfully implemented strategies integrating their sporting identity with community and tourism engagement. Among those comparable to Belenenses in size and context are UD Las Palmas, CR Vasco da Gama, AFC Wimbledon, and Heart of Midlothian FC (Hearts). Each one demonstrates practices that align football with broader cultural goals. UD Las Palmas has an incredibly profound relationship with the community and tourism in Las

Palmas. Representing one entire island and community, the club benefits from unique support and recognition, serving as an ambassador for the Canary Islands. Turismo Gran Canaria supports it, since their collaboration allows the club “to build a strategy aimed at tourists, promoting both UD Las Palmas and Grand Canaria” (Hampel 2024). The club has successfully connected its football brand to the region’s cultural and economic identity, turning challenges like geographic isolation into growth opportunities. As Carlota Aparici, the Director of International Expansion at UD Las Palmas, mentioned, the goal is to represent the city and the island in the best possible way (Hampel 2024). The results are visible in increased matchday attendance by tourists, rising merchandise sales, and a growing social media following.

One of their key strategies is converting visiting fans into lifelong supporters, representing both the club and the region, specifically in markets such as the United Kingdom, United States of America, and Germany, leading to the creation of international fan clubs. This may result from a deep identification between the fans and the club, by tailoring the matchday experience, with the introduction of some unique products like their branded beer, Pío Pío.

Strategies that involve partnerships with other clubs, such as Norwich City FC, leverage the club’s image in alternative geographies, increasing its range. By partnering with the latter, the clubs build on their similarities to develop a common identity that increases their presence in other countries and allows them to expand their reach and sources of revenue. The partnership established between the club and Turismo de Gran Canaria was nominated for the Sponsorship Partnership of the Year – International category at the 2024 Sports Business Awards (Sports Business Awards 2024), ranging from sleeve badge sponsorship to matchday experiences (Norwich City n.d.), returning more than 460% on investment for Turismo de Gran Canaria. These types of partnerships may be crucial for Belenenses since the club can increase its international presence by partnering with institutions like Turismo de Lisboa or clubs that share a common identity. By doing so, Belenenses can internationalize its brand.

Clube de Regatas Vasco da Gama, usually known as Vasco da Gama, shares a common identity with Belenenses. Both clubs are intrinsically tied to the Portuguese maritime discoveries, which played a pivotal role in shaping world history. Vasco da Gama relates to one of the most famous Portuguese explorers, while Belenenses draws its identity from Belém, the neighborhood recognized as the departure point for the Portuguese discoveries. This shows a deep connection to Portugal's history, alongside the foundation of Vasco da Gama by Portuguese immigrants (Porto Editora n.d.). Adding to this, the clubs' crests further reflect this connection, since both feature the Cross of Christ, reinforcing the maritime legacy of both clubs. Over the years, their connection has been strengthened through some moments, such as friendly matches.

Vasco da Gama developed an amazing digital collection that highlights some of the club's historical moments (CR Vasco da Gama n.d.). This way, the club allows the fans to know more about some of its most important moments and get closer to its roots, making them more engaged with its history. This initiative aimed at enhancing fan engagement through knowledge about the club's history can set a good example to others.

AFC Wimbledon was founded in 2002 after Wimbledon FC was relocated to Milton Keynes and renamed MK Dons. This led to an intense battle for the club's heritage and was highly polemical since the fans didn't support this (Salt 2011). The club emerged as a response from supporters, showing their power to preserve a club even through difficult times. Both AFC Wimbledon and Belenenses share some points of their history since they both only survived because of the resistance of their fans and supporters.

The club's connection to the local community is one of its key pillars since it has existed throughout the club's history, reflecting its importance to its survival (Dons Trust and AFC PLC 2024). This approach allowed the club to survive in the first few years and conceded the foundations for its sustainable growth. It allowed AFC Wimbledon to gather resources effectively, increasing the attraction of volunteers, partnerships, and more fans to the club,

emphasizing the importance of a strong local presence.

Another important aspect of the English club is the development of its brand and the promotion of its history (Dons Trust and AFC PLC 2024). The club has leveraged its history to improve its visibility and awareness, attracting a global audience. The stadium tours offered, with a visit to the museum, are a way of getting the visitors closer to the club's rich history. This highlights how historical and cultural assets can engage visitors and reinforce significance and identity. Additionally, AFC Wimbledon's strategic goal of increasing its international presence and expanding its fan base aligns with the objective of brand development. By entering new and different markets, the club aims to expand its reach beyond the local community, building on its rich history and narrative. By doing this, the club can engage with new international fans attracted by its storied background. This emphasis on international growth and heritage may allow the club to increase even more awareness of its history. It might provide an excellent example of a strategy to be implemented by clubs with similar narratives.

A good example of a strong connection to the community and surrounding heritage is Hearts FC. The stadium hosts diverse events, from conferences to weddings, making it a versatile venue. It also features a restaurant, a hotel, and diverse lounges, showing its versatility and diversity of revenue streams. Additionally, the club offers a feature that could be applied to clubs with a rich historical background like Belenenses. The Heritage Trails are guided tours designed to get the visitors closer to the club and its history, taking them through significant points of interest and historical landmarks of the club (Hearts FC n.d.).

Recommendations

Tourists provided valuable perspectives and insights on diverse topics, which allowed us to confirm our beliefs and theories regarding Belenenses' relationship with tourists. As mentioned before, the club does not have the strategies needed in practice to attract tourists, which has become a liability in an increasingly globalized world. With a rich history and an incredible

location, the club has immense untapped potential.

Belenenses must start incorporating tourism into its functioning since it represents a big opportunity for the club to engage with tourists and turn them into lifelong fans. To this end, we will provide some recommendations that the club can follow to develop a sustained strategy.

1. Partner with Turismo de Lisboa

Since the club's current promotional outreach is limited, by collaborating with Turismo de Lisboa, as Benfica and Sporting already do, Belenenses could be able to be featured in Lisboa Card's Guide (Turismo de Lisboa 2024). This strategic partnership would boost Belenenses' visibility among tourists (Antunes). By following the example of UD Las Palmas' partnership with Turismo de Gran Canaria, the club could look at the collaboration with Lisbon's authority as a way of increasing its presence with tourists and diversifying its audience. To formalize this collaboration, Belenenses would need to become an associate of Turismo de Lisboa, which would only require a modest monthly fee. Including the club in the guide would require discounts on club-related experiences, such as merchandise purchases or stadium or museum tours. Additionally, promotional materials and exclusive offers could be showcased in Turismo de Lisboa's local boutiques, like the one in Belém, increasing the club's exposure, and visibility among tourists (O1), and driving additional revenue (Board Member).

2. Create a flagship store in Belém

As suggested by Antunes, creating a flagship store in Belém could benefit the club, since it would make people more aware of the club. In such a high-density foot traffic area, an initiative like this would increase the chances of attracting more people to visit the club given that being closer to tourists is fundamental in these situations. The club could not only sell club merchandise and match tickets but also offer exclusive products tied to the Belém neighborhood and its iconic landmarks. Adding to that, a small exhibit on the club's history would provide a more immersive experience for the visitors.

3. Revitalize the stadium and the museum

As mentioned, stadium and museum tours do not happen at all at the club. Starting by doing this would be easy for the club since they have the facilities needed. This would allow for the possibility of having more people interested in visiting and increasing the club's revenue (O2). Despite that, there would be the need to improve the stadium's conditions, making it more appealing for those who visit it (Barra). Adding to that, there would be the need for a guide capable of communicating with the visitors. The stadium and the museum are amazing infrastructures the club can and should take advantage of, as is done by Hearts FC and Vasco da Gama. Other important points like Campo do Pau do Fio (current Jardim Vasco da Gama), Campo das Salésias, and the bench where Belenenses was created should also be addressed, given their historical importance and significance to the club. If well developed, these tours can increase engagement with Belenenses and its history, which could be leveraged by the region of Belém. Belenenses could also partner with tourist guides in Belém for them to include the stadium in their itineraries and recommend the club to tourists, making them aware of the club. With better utilization and promotion, virtual museum tours can be a perfect first contact to make tourists want to come to visit Belenenses and learn more about its history.

4. Improve the use of the club's complex

The club's complex is already utilized for diverse events, such as concerts and birthday parties. These actions should be maintained and improved as they provide an important source of revenue for the club. Following the complex's requalification, a new viewpoint was built. However, the club is not giving it the proper utilization as it is closed most of the time. The club could increase its use, and a café would help turn it into a vibrant destination, appealing to a broader audience. The club could significantly increase foot traffic to its complex by offering a comfortable space and connecting tourists with the club. This would concede a steady source of revenue and could host other events, such as sunsets. As mentioned above, investments

would be needed to make the overall complex more appealing but would contribute to the club's development. These actions would both strengthen the club's financial position and enhance its relevance within Lisbon's cultural and tourism landscape.

5. Revitalize historical content series

Cadernos Azuis is an initiative of the club's museum to glorify and remember some special and historical moments. Unfortunately, they only had some editions and were abandoned after that. Even though resources are limited, this initiative does not demand much from the club, since it was already done before, and can potentiate the knowledge shared about their history. This way, by pointing out these examples of historical moments and key aspects of the club's history, Belenenses can develop a sense of curiosity and admiration among visitors, making them want to know more about the club. Reviving this initiative could allow tourists to connect with Belenenses and immerse themselves in Lisbon's football heritage. Offering multilingual editions of such content could significantly improve its appeal to foreign visitors.

Another way to engage tourists could involve creating a newsletter about the club, featuring insights into its daily activities and historical achievements. This could leverage existing pieces of information published on the club's website, although the site needs to be updated since the last publication was several years ago. Additionally, developing a digital archive, like the one created by Vasco da Gama, would allow tourists to access several materials related to the history of Belenenses, deepening their connection with the club.

6. Improved matchday experiences

Matchday experiences are fundamental for sports tourists, given the fact that their main contact with the clubs happens through this. Despite being shadowed by Lisbon's biggest clubs, Belenenses has a unique appeal and still attracts some tourists interested in their history. Their presence is visible during the games but is still reduced. This way, the club should try to increase their promotion to attract more tourists to the stadium and make their presence at the stadium

something more usual. This could be done through the means already suggested in the paper, such as an increased social media presence and a closer relationship with Turismo de Lisboa. The club could benefit greatly from groundhopping, by taking advantage of its incredible location and iconic football venue. Despite still being a niche market, it is perceived as a growing tendency among tourists. There are few clubs with such a significant history as Belenenses, and several of these fans are attracted by these pieces of history, making it a key point for the club. This would certainly bring more people to the stadium and increase fans' engagement with the club, benefiting from the authenticity of the experience. An increased presence in Futbology, an app where these fans register the games and stadiums they have been to, could help the club increase its presence among them.

The available area for food and beverage before the games around the stadium is highly appreciated since it gives a little taste of Portuguese culture. However, improved entertainment, meet-and-greets with players, and pre-game shows could improve the experience, as well as improvements in the infrastructure.

7. Collaborate with similar clubs

Belenenses is deeply connected to the region of Belém and its fans, with a rich history and remarkable moments. However, the club lacks connections with international partners and clubs, which could help attract more people to know its history and visit the club. This way, Belenenses could internationalize its brand by partnering with international clubs.

Following the example of UD Las Palmas, which, together with Norwich City FC and Turismo de Gran Canaria, established a partnership to develop their image in the United Kingdom, Belenenses could find partners that would allow the club to increase its international awareness. Through initiatives like merchandise sales in partners' stores, sponsorships, and digital content, they could increase their presence in territories where they wouldn't otherwise be present.

Additionally, Belenenses could implement partnerships with clubs that share the same values

and history. AFC Wimbledon is the perfect example since they have a similar history and ownership model, being two clubs with strong ties to their communities. Their resilience and fans' support are other common points, showcasing the existing similarities. This partnership aligns with one of AFC Wimbledon's objectives to internationalize its brand and create joint branding opportunities. By doing this, both clubs would be able to attract international fans and leverage their unique histories, showing the power of fans and their unity. This could be attained through various means, such as shared exhibitions and social media content, merchandise in each other's stores, and friendlies. Such a collaboration would be mutually beneficial and could increase the dimensions and visibility of both clubs, with Belenenses having the opportunity to enter the English market, one of the world's most significant when it comes to football.

Regarding CR Vasco da Gama, Belenenses could explore similar partnership opportunities. Both clubs share cultural and historical connections, given their connections to the Belém area and the Portuguese Discoveries. This could allow them to enter the Brazilian market, expanding their global presence in a market close to the Portuguese given the proximity between the two countries. Initiatives such as digital content creation, cross-promotions in their markets, and sharing common points about their history could improve their international appeal.

By implementing these recommendations, Belenenses can take advantage of Lisbon's buzzing tourism scene, integrating it into its functioning. This can revitalize Belenenses' profile and internationalize its brand, leveraging the club's unique history and authenticity.

6. Conclusion

This thesis provides strategic recommendations across three key areas – Digitalization and Social Media, Club Identity, and Tourism Integration – to enhance fan engagement and loyalty at Belenenses. Each section offers targeted strategies aligned with the club’s current situation. In what matters to Digitalization and Social Media, the recommendations focus on modernizing the club’s digital approach by producing innovative content, increasing focus on platforms like TikTok, YouTube, and the club’s website, fostering fan participation and contribution, and leveraging digital tools to strengthen loyalty, sense of community, and outreach. Regarding Club Identity, the emphasis lies on leveraging Belenenses’ unique attributes – history, authenticity, and resilience – while fostering innovation and community involvement to close the gap between the club’s leadership vision and supporter perceptions. For Tourism Integration, the recommendations include opening a flagship store in Belém, revitalizing the club’s museum and stadium, improving the use of the complex, and forming strategic partnerships with tourism entities and similar football institutions to capitalize on Lisbon’s vibrant tourism industry. This aims to amplify the club’s visibility among tourists, engaging a diverse audience.

While these recommendations are specific to the respective areas, their interconnection allows synergistic implementation, maximizing the club’s impact on engagement and loyalty. For example, creating dynamic video content for digital platforms can simultaneously highlight the club’s historical and cultural attributes, appeal to both fans and tourists and reinforce the club’s identity. Similarly, improving matchday experiences can be done through innovative digital initiatives, resonating with supporters and enhancing the appeal for sports tourists.

Though examples are provided, the exact implementation details of each strategic initiative will require testing and refinement. Effective strategies also require continuous evaluation. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that the club implement regular assessments to track and analyze fan engagement and loyalty metrics. Analytical tools that monitor ticket sales,

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merchandise purchases, and social media interactions can help identify which strategies have the most meaningful impact on fan behaviors. Additionally, follow-up surveys – particularly relevant given fans' willingness to participate in such initiatives – can capture changes in fan perceptions, engagement, and loyalty over time, fostering deeper involvement and a sense of ownership (Yoshida et al. 2024). This aligns with the club's fan-owned governance structure and supports adaptation to evolving trends and opportunities (Pandita and Vapiwala 2024).

To aid the club in prioritizing these recommendations, we have organized them into an Impact/Effort Matrix (see Appendix 10), categorizing them based on their potential impact on engagement and loyalty and the resources required for implementation. This can guide Belenenses through strategies that balance feasibility and effectiveness. By prioritizing quick wins alongside long-term investments, the club can build a sustainable roadmap for the future. Ultimately, this thesis offers a comprehensive and adaptable framework to help Belenenses deepen engagement and loyalty across its fan base while strengthening its position as a cherished institution in Portuguese football, in what can be the start of a new paradigm in the club. Clubs in a similar situation can capitalize on these recommendations, tailoring them to their reality.

Future developments

Moving forward, Belenenses should not only focus on implementing the recommendations outlined in this paper but also conduct further research to expand on the presented themes and develop new ones. As highlighted in the diagnosis, six themes were identified as potentially critical for enhancing fan engagement and loyalty. Of these, three – Strategic Partnerships, Stadium Improvement and Utilization, and Community-Centered Initiatives – were not extensively explored in this study. While these are interconnected with those addressed in our work, additional research is necessary to assess their full potential and strategic impact.

For the three key themes analyzed in this thesis, Belenenses should deepen its research efforts to identify specific initiatives, estimate investment costs, and assess pricing strategies and

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willingness to pay where applicable. Additionally, given the club's limited staffing, identifying strategies to secure the necessary manpower for implementing these initiatives is crucial. To manage costs, the club can continue leveraging its fan base, engaging volunteers, and forming partnerships with universities (**WO7**). However, the professionalization and enhancement of the club's organizational structure should be prioritized to ensure consistent results.

Within each key theme, there is room for further research and innovation. For Digitalization and Social Media, it was not possible to build significant recommendations in leveraging digital tools for stadium environments and developing engaging digital sponsorship content. The potential use of augmented and virtual reality for fan engagement warrants exploration. Concerning Club Identity, further research and strategic negotiation will be essential for Belenenses to identify and establish the most effective partnerships for implementing the proposed recommendations. Additionally, while examples of initiatives to encourage fan participation are provided, further exploration and planning are required to ensure these events effectively convey the club's identity and values. In Tourism Integration, Belenenses should study the most effective ways to attract tourists and promote the club. A comprehensive study of the club's history and heritage could make its story more appealing and accessible to a wider audience.

Lastly, the development of this paper made us realize the lack of strategic planning at Belenenses (**W13**) and how this highly affects its operation, being the source of many of its problems and inefficiencies. Therefore, we believe a paradigm change at Belenenses is necessary and recommend the development of a strategic plan for the whole club. We believe this will be key for the club to work more efficiently towards a desired common goal and a powerful tool to acquire funding and support. To aggregate this information and guide these future developments, we have created a roadmap for Belenenses, detailed in Appendix 11.

Research limitations

The main limitation found when doing this research was the exclusion of tourists from a possible survey. While they represent a potentially significant audience for Belenenses, their perspectives were not captured in this way. This omission was primarily due to the practical challenge of obtaining a sufficient sample of tourists familiar with Belenenses within the short timeframe available. Including tourists in future quantitative research could provide valuable insights, uncovering opportunities to enhance Belenenses' appeal to this target and better integrate the club into Lisbon's tourism circuit.

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8. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Interview scripts | Source: Own elaboration

Appendix 1.1 – Introduction to the Interviews

Good morning/good afternoon/good evening,

My name is _____, and I am a student at Nova SBE. I am currently working on a thesis project related to Sports Management. My research, along with my colleagues, focuses on understanding how Belenenses can revitalize its fan culture and more effectively engage both its supporters and the local community, particularly in the context of current challenges regarding fan engagement and loyalty.

For this purpose, I would like to conduct an interview with you, lasting approximately 30 to 45 minutes, using a semi-structured format. This means I will ask a few open-ended questions about your perceptions, experiences, and suggestions for Belenenses. There are no right or wrong answers – what matters to us is your honest opinion.

To facilitate the analysis of the data later, I would like to record this conversation with your permission. I assure you that your responses will remain entirely anonymous and confidential, and your identity will not be associated with the results.

Thank you very much for your time and availability—shall we begin?

Note: All the interviews, except for the ones with tourists, were conducted in Portuguese and later translated to English, for purposes of consistency throughout our analysis.

Appendix 1.2 – Fans' script

- Club Identification
 - What makes you support Belenenses? How did you become a fan?
 - Are you a member? If so, why?
 - How would you describe your connection with the club? Any remarkable moment or

symbol?

- Fan Culture
 - How would you describe the culture of Belenenses fans today? What differentiates it from other clubs?
 - Have you noticed any changes in the way fans interact with the club or each other in recent years?
- Community and Local Involvement
 - How do you see the relationship between the club and the community of Belém/Restelo? When you are in the area do you feel that you are in Belenenses' "territory"? Or is the club quite disconnected from the city?
 - Do you think there is anything else the club could do to connect with the local community?
- Fan Engagement
 - How do you get involved with the club? (Examples: going to games, social events, online, etc.)
 - How do you feel the club relates to the fans? Do you think the club can do something to make the fans feel more involved with Belenenses?
 - Do you think that the members/fans could be more involved in the decisions made by the club? Do you feel ownership over Belenenses?
 - Do you usually talk about Belenenses with someone? If so, in what context?
 - Do you (try to) follow Belenenses' current situation and (try to) learn more about the club? Do you feel that it is easy to be in contact with the club? If not, how do you think you could have more contact?
- Stadium Experience
 - How often do you watch the games at the stadium?

- If little/none: What are the factors that discourage you from attending more games?
- Do you think that ticket prices are fair for the experience that is offered?
- When you go to the stadium, how would you describe that experience?
- What are the aspects of the current stadium experience that you value the most?
- How would you describe the atmosphere in the stadium? What could be done to make it more exciting/appealing?
- What changes would you like to see in the stadium to improve your experience?
- Ideas and Suggestions
 - Do you have complaints, bad experiences, or aspects that you think can be improved at Belenenses? (develop if what they say is relevant)
 - Do you have ideas or suggestions that you would like to see implemented?
- Extra part for a fan who lives far away and cannot come to the stadium:
 - Do you feel that the distance affects your relationship with the club?
 - How do you maintain the connection with the club when you can't attend the games in person?
 - Does the club's digital content keep you connected and engaged as a distant fan?
 - How do you think the club could get closer to the most distant fans?

Appendix 1.3 – Locals' script

- Club Perception
 - What do you know about Belenenses? Is there any connection?
 - How would you describe the club?
 - Do you believe that the club represents well the identity and values of Belém and Restelo? Why?
 - How do you think Belenenses could better represent local residents and their culture?

- Do you consider that the club's presence is positive for the area? If so, in what way?
If not, why?
- Community Engagement and Local Actions
 - Do you feel that the club is actively involved with the local community? What are the events or initiatives you know about?
 - Do you think the club should organize more events outside of match days? If so, what kind of events would be most interesting to you?
 - How could Belenenses strengthen its links with schools and other community groups?
 - What changes or initiatives could increase the club's positive impact on the community?
- Club's Impact in the Belém/Restelo Area
 - Do you think that the presence of Belenenses contributes to the local economy? To what extent?
 - Do you feel that the club is part of the local ecosystem? Can you identify benefits from partnerships with other businesses and initiatives? Do you suggest any?
 - Do you look at the Belenenses venue as a multi-sport hub in the region? Have you ever practiced or thought about practicing sports in it?
 - What do you think can lead more locals to practice sports in Belenenses?
- Gamedays
 - Have you ever watched a Belenenses game? If not, what's stopping you from going to the stadium?
 - What are the main factors that affect your decision to go to the stadium? (e.g. ticket prices, match times, accessibility)
 - If you've watched games, what did you like the most and what would make you come

back more often?

- Can you tell when it's match day? Do you feel a different hustle/bustle in the area?
- Do you consider that match days are beneficial or disruptive for the area? Why do you have this perception?
- What would make going to a Belenenses game more appealing to you and your family?
- Communication and Marketing
 - Do you feel well informed about the club's events and initiatives? By what means do you usually find out about Belenenses' news?
 - If you follow social networks, what do you think of the way Belenenses presents itself on them?
 - Does the club communicate regularly with the local community? If not, what kind of communication would you like to receive?
 - What kind of promotions or campaigns targeting residents (e.g., ticket discounts, exclusive events) would make you consider going to the stadium more often?
- Suggestions for Improvement and Future Involvement
 - What new initiatives would you like to see implemented by the club to create a stronger connection with the community?
 - Would you consider becoming more involved in the club (e.g., volunteering, member, or participating in public consultation events)?

Appendix 1.4 – Tourists' script

- Awareness and Inclusion in Tourist Routes
 - Do you follow football? Are you aware of the Portuguese Football landscape?
 - Are you aware of Estádio do Restelo and the Belenenses Football Club?

- If so, how did you learn about the club/stadium (e.g., travel guides, friends, social media)?
- If not, what would make you more interested?
 - (If they have been there already) How would you describe your experience visiting or passing by Estádio do Restelo? Was there anything that stood out?
- Do you see Estádio do Restelo as a potential tourist attraction in Belém? Why?
- Did you include the stadium as part of your itinerary while planning your visit to Belém? If not, what would have made you consider it? (e.g., guided tours, historical significance, panoramic views)
- Have you participated in any other sporting events while traveling? How would a football match fit into your travel plans?
- When visiting Lisbon, would you consider visiting a football match?
- How likely are you to purchase club merchandise or attend events related to local football clubs?
- Experience and Tourism Value
 - What additional elements (e.g., visitor center, historical tours, souvenir shops) would make Estádio do Restelo and Belenenses more appealing to tourists?
 - In your opinion, what would make a visit to the stadium more unique and memorable?
- Integration into the Belém Tourist Scene
 - Do you believe a visit to the stadium complements other attractions in Belém, such as the Jerónimos Monastery or the Belém Tower?
 - Would you consider recommending it to other tourists visiting Lisbon? If yes, why? If not, what would need to change for you to recommend it?
 - What do you think could be done to turn Estádio do Restelo into a must-see stop on

a tour of Belém?

- Communication and Promotion
 - During your visit to Belém, did you come across any information about Belenenses or Estádio do Restelo in brochures, tourism websites, or other communication channels?
 - What type of information or promotion would be most effective in attracting tourists to visit the stadium? (e.g., tour packages, campaigns at visitor centers, partnerships with travel agencies, stronger online presence)
 - What kind of content would you like to see covered? (Would you be interested in a guided tour of the stadium that includes the history of Belenenses and the surrounding area?)
 - What would make you more likely to follow Belenenses on social media or keep up with its matches after your visit?
- Suggestions and Improvements
 - What improvements do you think could be made to make Estádio do Restelo a more attractive tourist destination?

Appendix 1.5 – Club’s representatives’ script

- Club’s Vision and Strategy
 - What is the current board's vision for Belenenses?
 - What are the priority themes?
 - How is Belenenses organized in terms of areas/divisions/units?
 - How would you define the identity of Belenenses?
 - What are your outstanding and differentiating points?
 - What is Belenenses' marketing strategy? Do you have an idea of the annual

budget for these initiatives?

- Are there any clubs or organizations that Belenenses uses as a reference to apply good practices in fan engagement?
- Insight into Fan Culture
 - The literature around fan engagement states that one of the crucial points for the concept is the identification of fans with the club. How do you see this identification today? What do you think of Belenenses' fan culture?
 - Do you think that this culture has changed in recent years? If so, in what way?
 - What do you think that differentiates Belenenses fans from other clubs in Portugal?
- Relationship between the Club and the Fans
 - How do you assess the level of fan involvement with the club at the moment?
 - Are there any significant challenges that the club faces in terms of fan engagement?
 - Is it a challenge for you to retain the fans? And to be able to conquer new ones?
 - What is the club's current strategy to increase fan engagement? How does the club gather feedback on these strategies to understand their success?
 - Is there a loyalty program aimed at strengthening the relationship with current fans and attracting new supporters?
- Stadium Experience
 - What are the biggest challenges that Belenenses faces to increase the presence of the public in the stadium?
 - What initiatives are currently in place to attract more fans to the stadium?
 - How does the club balance the need to generate ticket revenue with creating an accessible and attractive experience for fans?

- Community and Local Involvement
 - How do you see the relationship between the club and the community of Belém/Restelo?
 - What actions have been developed to involve the local community of Belém and Restelo?
 - What are, in your opinion, the main challenges that the club faces when trying to mobilize the local community?
- Tourism
 - Are tourists a target audience for the club?
 - Is there an active strategy to attract them? If so, how is it being implemented?
- Digital Strategy and Innovation
 - What is the role of digital channels in the strategy of engagement with fans and the community?
 - Is there any plan to explore new technologies or platforms that can bring the club closer to fans, especially younger ones?
- Collaboration and Partnerships
 - We know that Belenenses' resources are limited, and as such, they have capitalized on some partnerships. How do you think partnerships with other local entities or companies can be used to reinforce Belenenses' value proposition for fans?
 - Do you have any ideas for partnerships/partners in mind who you would like to collaborate with?
 - In your view, how can the club collaborate more with fans in building a more vibrant and engaging culture?

Appendix 2 – Thematic analysis | Source: Own elaboration

Thematic analysis was used to identify recurring themes and ideas from the interviews, allowing us to analyze them in a structured way. This method guaranteed that our primary research qualitative data was systematically reviewed, categorized, and interpreted to support the development of our study.

The approach provided a comprehensive understanding of the perspectives of various stakeholders, including fans, locals, tourists, and the club's management structure, enabling us to acquire a general understanding of the club context and reality, while underscoring issues and factors influencing fan engagement and loyalty at Belenenses.

Appendix 2.1 – Interviews with fans

	Quote	Emotional Connection and Identity	Interpretation	Quote	Beleneuses Fan Culture	Interpretation
Fan 1	<p>"The connection is somewhat related to family, I think that's the case for most fans who have stuck around. It's a bit like that, so my grandfather, on my mother's side, was a Beleneuses supporter, and most of the close family on that side are Beleneuses fans too. My grandfather is still a member, my uncle is also a member, so I used to go to the stadium with them since I was little. When I was born, they immediately made me a member. Next year, I'll have been a member for 25 years, so there wasn't really another option. I also live near the stadium, just five minutes away, so I would go there every week and kept going."</p> <p>"I think the connection is very strong. My first and strongest memories are more of the pavilion than the stadium. Of course, I remember those times with Jorge Jesus, but when I started to have stronger memories, around the age of 8, that time had ended, and football was doing poorly, being at the bottom of the league. At that time, I was very strong. So, my strongest memories are more of a packed Adega Roca than an empty Restelo stadium, which unfortunately, still doesn't have many people today. So, my connection to Beleneuses has always gone beyond football. I was also very connected to other sports and always closely followed, especially some games, whenever I could, and sometimes away games too."</p>	<p>The fan's loyalty to Beleneuses is anchored in family tradition and proximity to the stadium, which allowed for a natural integration of attending games into their routine from a young age. This physical closeness and familial connection fostered a lifelong commitment, with the fan even becoming a member immediately after birth. His relationship with Beleneuses extends beyond football, including strong memories of casual games in the pavilion, which often had more vibrant crowds than the football stadium. This multi-sport involvement shows that the fan's loyalty is to the club as a community entity, not just a football team, and highlights a broader sense of belonging and pride in Beleneuses' identity.</p>	<p>"I think what sets Beleneuses fans apart is that most of them I know are truly passionate, fanatic about the club. Usually, they support only Beleneuses, unlike other smaller clubs where fans often support both the local team and a bigger one, like Académica and another, or Vitória Setúbal and another. It really irritates me when people ask, "Oh, you're a Beleneuses fan, but which one of the Big Three do you support?" The answer is obviously none of them. I think that's what makes us different—we're openly against the Big Three, and we are resilient. [...] We've been through countless crises, lost our stadium, been kicked out of another stadium, had our trophies placed at the doorstep, and nearly came to an end, yet we always survived through the toughest times. If you look at the club's history, it almost seems like, ever since we won the championship in 1945/46, we've been constantly in crisis, gradually losing our competitiveness. Yet, we've managed to keep going. It's really about that resilience and being different—despite everything, we hold on and continue to fight."</p> <p>"I think there have been several phases. I remember when I was younger, there was a big phase of blogs where Beleneuses was intensely discussed, and then when the SAD came in and the relationship started to deteriorate, many fans distanced themselves from the football team and focused on other sports. I remember many fans who wouldn't go to football matches but would attend other sports or even watch the junior. There has always been a strong connection and adaptability, whether online or in person. If something wasn't going well, people would engage more elsewhere, but they never stopped being present in the life of Beleneuses. From 2018 onwards, I feel there was a sense of purpose—a struggle against BSAD, a kind of external enemy that united us, with everything centered around fighting the SAD. There were peaceful times in Restelo because the problems were external. As BSAD weakened and nearly disappeared (only nearly, because they're still lingering like zombies), fans started to look more inward, and some friction emerged, especially due to the disaster that was last season. Fans have very distinct views of the club; if you ask 10 supporters, you'll get 10 different perspectives. Older fans still hold on to the vision of a big Beleneuses that should be beating Porto and Sporting in every competition, not understanding that in handball, for instance, we have about a tenth or less of their size, and they're upset that we lost yesterday.</p> <p>There are also more present fans who try to show that there are various possible paths. We have debates about whether or not to create a new SAD. I often say that we're a bit too big and too small at the same time. We have some habits of a big club, but our reality is more that of a smaller one, so there's always some friction. But at the end of the day, we're all Beleneuses, and it's held with great intensity."</p>	<p>The respondent highlights that Beleneuses fans are defined by their unwavering dedication to the club, often rejecting dual support for larger teams, which is common among fans of smaller clubs. This exclusivity stems from the club's unique origin story, established as an alternative to the "Big Three" and representing Belém. Fans are resilient and committed to the club's legacy, which has endured despite numerous challenges, including conflicts over stadium access and persistent financial and organizational struggles. This resilience has become a core part of the fan identity, symbolizing loyalty through adversity. The evolution of fan engagement is also evident, as Beleneuses supporters have adapted to changes, such as the division with the SAD. At the beginning of the SAD "era", fans started to diversify and focus on sports or younger teams. Later, when the conflicts derived from the rivalry against BSAD—that unfilled fans—were solved, internal debates about the club's future direction emerged. This shift reveals a fan base grappling with balancing the ambitions of a "big club" legacy—mainly in older generations—with the practical limitations of a smaller organization. Despite diverse perspectives, there is a shared intensity and commitment among fans, emphasizing that Beleneuses represents more than just a team—it's a deeply rooted community and a symbol of resilience.</p>		
Fan 2	<p>"As a fan, I started to bring to the games because it was the closest club to my home. I also played for the club, so it was both things."</p> <p>"As a fan, one of my earliest and best memories was a season when Beleneuses avoided relegation from the top division. I don't remember the opponent, but we hadn't won in about 15 games or so, and then we won that match and stayed up. That's the first one I clearly remember, although usually, the stadium is empty, so it's challenging. That was one of the few times it happened. Then there's the Liga 3—it was significant. Not the time, but the first time we were moving up, and it was exciting. I think those are the two most important. As a player? I don't know. I don't have a big moment, just a lot of difficult experiences like injuries. When you're part of a team, it's more about the work than the emotions. You don't feel as connected to what you're doing because you're always changing teams, teammates change, or you have a new coach, so you usually lose some of that emotional connection."</p>	<p>The fan's connection to Beleneuses grew out of both geographic proximity and personal involvement as a player, creating a dual role as both participant and supporter. Key memories best memories are linked to moments of overcoming adversity, such as avoiding relegation and moving up in the Liga 3. These instances of resilience are significant as they evoke emotional highs despite the club's struggles, particularly often low attendance, reinforcing a bond based on shared challenges and the thrill of survival or advancement.</p>	<p>"Nowadays, it depends on perspectives; I think there are two types of views. Many are too demanding given where the club is now. They still see it as a huge club and think that anything that goes a bit wrong is a disaster. For example, there was a game against Sporting that we lost 3-1, and people were already insulting the team, saying it was a disgrace and not something to show the kids. Some are a bit stuck in the past and can't think the club is struggling. But I think today, there are more people who... I think Liga 3 had an impact, and it was the best moment in recent times because, in the regional league, people were united, but it was still a regional league. That was the best moment since relegation, and I think I brought people together. I see more young fans coming now, with a more optimistic attitude. Like, "we're working our way back." So, there are these two perspectives, but overall, the fans are very demanding."</p> <p>"When Beleneuses would move up to the top division, there would be more people wanting to join the team. But in terms of fans, you lose support for two reasons: first, you're no longer winning as much; second, because you're playing against the big three. When those games happen at Restelo, three-quarters of the stadium is for the other team. If the stadium has 10,000 people, you'll have maybe 2,000 or 1,000 Beleneuses fans, and the rest are from other clubs. Support is better now, but it wasn't good in the second division. When Beleneuses came back to the first division with the SAD (Sociedade Anónima Desportiva), some people didn't like the deal and stopped attending games. So, that affected attendance. Even in the second division, some would say, "It's not worth watching," and sometimes there were fewer than 1,000 people at a game, which isn't normal."</p>	<p>The respondent highlights a split within the Beleneuses fan base. According to them, some fans, particularly older ones, are "stuck in the past" and maintain high expectations, reacting harshly to any setback, even minor ones like a friendly loss to Sporting. The respondent describes how matches against the "Big Three" often turn Restelo into a home crowd for the opposition, further discouraging attendance. Despite this, the respondent feels that fan support has improved in recent years, although it remains challenging to attract the level of attendance seen in the past.</p>		
Fan 3	<p>"Well, I think it's something many of us say—it's because of our parents. My father and my grandfather were both Beleneuses fans. I grew up with the club; before I even knew that Benfica or Sporting were, I already knew about Beleneuses. I remember being very young and watching a Portuguese Cup game against Porto, which went to penalties. We lost, and it was the first time I cried over a football match. I didn't fully understand it then, but since that moment, I've been supporting the club, thanks to my father's influence."</p> <p>"Yes, definitely. One of the most memorable moments was in the last years of Beleneuses in the first division before the split with the SAD. It was the season when we finished sixth. In the last match of the championship, we beat Gil Vicente and overtook Nacional to qualify for the Europa League. I was over the moon because it meant European competition. I think it was the 2022/23 or 2023/24 season, something like that."</p> <p>"It's a strong connection. I'm not the biggest football fan in the world, but when the split with the SAD happened, I was still young and didn't fully grasp what was going on. It made me feel disconnected from the club for a while. About three or four years ago, it was moving back to Lisbon from the Algarve, my father and I decided it was the right time to become more involved again. We started attending games more regularly last year (on the 2nd division), and even now, after relegation, we're kept going. There was a period where the connection was weaker, but the interest in the club was always there. I never considered switching allegiance to another team like Benfica or Sporting—it's something I couldn't do. Being a fan of a club like Beleneuses (which is always in the 1st division) is a different experience. It is easier to drop your allegiance to the club, but it is also more rewarding."</p>	<p>The fan's connection to Beleneuses is deeply rooted in family influence, especially from their father and grandfather, who introduced him to the club from a young age. This familial bond acts as a foundation of loyalty before the fan even knew about other major clubs, underscoring how personal heritage plays a significant role in supporting Beleneuses. This connection is highlighted by vivid memories like the heartbreak of watching Beleneuses lose a Portuguese Cup match. Moments of success, such as qualifying for the Europa League, stand out as particularly meaningful and reinforce a sense of pride in the club's achievements, despite its underdog status.</p> <p>Although the split with the SAD temporarily weakened his connection, the fan's loyalty endured. After returning to Lisbon, he re-engaged fully, attending games regularly despite the club's relegation. This resilience in their support highlights the unique, fulfilling experience of standing by a smaller club through challenges, emphasizing that supporting Beleneuses is both demanding and profoundly rewarding.</p>	<p>"I think there are two sides to Beleneuses fans. On one hand, I have great memories of watching matches in the Algarve, when we would face teams like O'Hanense and Portimonense. The same people I saw back then are the ones I see now in Restelo. They've stayed loyal through everything. Even when the club was going through tough times, the fans kept coming to games. Without their support, the club wouldn't have been able to climb back up the divisions. I believe Beleneuses fans are very resilient. However, some fans don't always behave well. For example, last year, at a match against Benfica B at the SAD, our team played poorly, and some fans started blaming everything on the referees or Benfica. I'm not a fan of those kinds of conversations, especially when it's clear that our team didn't perform well. In those cases, I think fans need to take responsibility and recognize the reality of our situation. I also don't enjoy fans going to Facebook to complain. This year, it has been better because the team has been winning. But I think they could behave better in some situations."</p> <p>"When I was younger, I didn't go to every game and didn't notice as much, but now I see these things more clearly. There's always going to be a core group of fans who are more problematic (the Ultras), but I feel that's part of the club's culture. Some fans are overly negative, and that bothers me. However, I think this happens in every club to some extent."</p> <p>"As I mentioned earlier, fan behavior is something I think could improve. I believe we need to stop having that small-club mentality where we blame everything on the big clubs or referees. If we want to maintain Beleneuses' history and legacy, we need to adopt a more confident and proud attitude. On a positive note, I think this season has been much happier for fans, and I've enjoyed going to the stadium. Relegation has been a step back to go two steps forward, as it led to a lot of reflection and improvements in areas like marketing and fan engagement. There's still room to grow, but the club is on an upward trajectory, and that's showing on the field as well."</p>	<p>The respondent perceives Beleneuses fans as a mix of resilient supporters and, at times, critical voices. He fondly recalls a loyal core of fans who have supported the club consistently, even during challenging periods, which he believes was crucial in helping Beleneuses progress through the lower divisions. This loyalty and resilience are defining qualities that the respondent admires in the fan base. However, he also acknowledges a more problematic side to some fans, particularly those who tend to react negatively or shift blame onto referees or rival clubs when the team underperforms. This "small-club mentality" of externalizing failure bothers the respondent, who feels that fans need to take more responsibility and view situations realistically. Reflecting on his experiences, the respondent notes that such divisive fan behaviors are common across clubs, but he feels it's important for Beleneuses fans to rise above this, embracing a more proud and confident approach. He has noticed an improvement in fan morale recently, attributing it to the team's positive results on the field and organizational improvements following relegation.</p>		
Conclusions	<p>All 3 fans share a strong emotional connection and identity with Beleneuses, rooted primarily in family influence, geographic proximity, or personal involvement. 2/3 of respondents emphasize family heritage as a significant factor, with loyalty passed down from parents and grandparents, which sets a foundation for unwavering support even before exposure to larger clubs. This generational connection instills a sense of pride and belonging that extends beyond football itself, embracing Beleneuses as a multi-sport, community-focused club.</p> <p>In addition, all respondents highlight Beleneuses' resilience, recalling significant memories tied to the club's struggle and perseverance—whether avoiding relegation, moving up in Liga 3, or achieving moments of success despite challenges. Such experiences intensify their loyalty, providing shared highs and lows that contribute to a distinctive, enduring identity.</p>	<p>All respondents agree that Beleneuses' fan culture is marked by intense loyalty and resilience through adversity, with 2/3 noting a clear evolution regarding adaptations that the fans have had regarding the changes in the club. 2/3 of respondents identify a split within the fan base: older fans often hold onto the club's "big club" legacy, reacting critically to setbacks, while younger fans are more optimistic and view current challenges as part of the club's rebuilding journey. 1 respondent points out the shift they see in the fan base attitude once the team goes up in the league. As they start to lose more games, frustration wins and fans start attending matches less and less.</p>				

Language	Quote	Tourism Integration	Interpretation	Youth and Future Generations
Fan 1	<p>"In Belém, you might not notice it, but there is a plaque where Benfica was founded, indicating it was there at the Franca Pharmacy, written in both Portuguese and English. But if you go to the bench where Belemenses was founded in Praça Afonso de Albuquerque, across from the palace, the bench only says, "Aqui nasceu o Belemenses" ("Belemenses was born here"), but a tourist wouldn't even notice the writing on the bench, or won't even understand what is written. There should be a plaque next to explaining a brief history of Belemenses, with a map showing that the stadium is 500 meters away. There should be signs pointing to the stadium because I think it's the only stadium in the country that isn't marked in any way. You can only find it with GPS because if you rely on signs, forget it. When I went to visit other lower-division fields, there was always a sign saying "This is such-and-such." At the stadium, there's nothing, and it's a shame because people are already in the area, there's movement in Belém, and it's just a short walk uphill. On match days, you already see a lot of tourists coming to see Belemenses games. There are always large groups. If it were better advertised, it could be much more. Another thing is guiding them to our stand because the ticket offices don't give very clear instructions, and sometimes they place people on the other side, which is the general admission section where there are only about 50 people, and the atmosphere is dead. If they came to our members' stand, the store is right there. They could buy a shirt or a scarf, and for 90 minutes, they'd be fervent Belemenses supporters. This should be more widely promoted, with the website prepared for this, making the ticketing platform like SmartFan more visible, and letting them access the members' side on game day. We could also look for partnerships with companies that organize trips to Lisbon to see Benfica and Sporting games and include Belemenses as an option too."</p>	<p>The respondent observes that Belemenses could greatly improve its visibility in Belém and suggests practical steps to enhance its presence for locals and tourists alike. He points out that the iconic bench that marks the club's founding lacks sufficient context, making it easy for visitors to overlook. A plaque with a brief history in multiple languages, along with directional signage to the stadium, would make it easier for tourists to find and appreciate Belemenses as part of their experience in the area.</p> <p>The respondent also highlights the absence of wayfinding signs to the stadium, noting that, unlike other stadiums—even those of smaller clubs—Belemenses' location remains largely unmarked. He believes that clearer signage would attract more visitors already exploring Belém, who might be unaware that the stadium is just a short walk uphill.</p> <p>Additionally, the respondent suggests practical improvements to enhance the visitor experience on match days. For example, directing tourists to the members' stand would expose them to a more engaging atmosphere and give them convenient access to club merchandise, which could foster a stronger connection. He recommends refining the ticketing process and promoting the platform SmartFan to streamline access for visitors. To further boost visibility, the respondent proposes forming partnerships with travel companies that bring tourists to Lisbon for Benfica and Sporting matches, offering Belemenses as an additional option to broaden its appeal among visiting football fans.</p>	<p>"Moreover, those athletes could be much more engaged. We have 4,000 athletes, and they are the future Belemenses fans, but there's no work to instill Belemenses values in them. The connection could be much stronger. At every football game, they could present a youth team, encouraging pride among fans by showcasing Belemenses' breadth, given that we have 10 or 12 youth football schools. It would help inform fans about what's happening at Belemenses while also bringing those athletes closer to the club."</p>	<p>The respondent sees untapped potential in fostering a stronger connection between Belemenses and its 4,000 athletes, particularly youth players who represent the next generation of fans. He believes the club could actively work to instill Belemenses' values in these athletes, creating a deeper sense of belonging and pride. One suggestion is to feature youth teams at every football game, which would not only celebrate the club's extensive youth programs but also inform fans about ongoing developments across Belemenses' sports programs. This initiative could strengthen ties between athletes and the club, enhancing both community engagement and loyalty among young players and their families.</p>
Fan 2	<p>"I think you'd have to create a page in English or something like that. It also depends on how you originate it. But yes, it would be more interesting because you'd be linking it to some historical aspect, because it's sometimes people don't even know what the club is about. But if it's one of the two clubs in Portugal, not one of the big ones, that has won a title. So, that alone generates some interest. But if you promote it and do it in English, you'll always have a reputation that's seen as negative by your fans. The fans will like, "Oh, these guys want to be big again, or come back," or something like that. In Portugal, it's always seen in a bad light, and it's hard to balance the two, I think."</p> <p>"So, that might happen, but the problem is most tourists in the area since you have the Jerónimos and all that, I think it's very complicated to get there. Very difficult. Because people don't go uphill. They stay down below. What's up there, no one goes to. And then, it would be difficult because what would you have to do? You'd have to offer some discounts for tourists who were nearby. It's very complicated because most of the time, the club is closed, and only open on game days. And so me, that would make it almost impossible to attract attention. I think it's difficult. I don't know how you would do it. I don't know this is just my perspective. I don't know what you were thinking about either, but..."</p> <p>"I think it's difficult. Can you appeal to tourists? Yes, but I think appealing to them is complicated. Maybe having information at a tourist spot wouldn't be a bad idea or something like that. But even then, I don't see much more you could do without incurring high costs to draw people there."</p> <p>"The cool thing would be to maybe run a campaign around the underground position, saying, "Look, you see the others? We're also trying to go good, we can't be like them, but we also have this, this, and this." Sometimes that works, I don't know, if you framed it differently, it might work because people usually like the underground. But anyway, I think the only way would be to appeal to emotion, like, "We need you." If you notice, the big clubs in Portugal don't appeal much to emotion. None of them do, because they don't need to... I think that's where you'd gain, but then again, that's just my perspective. I'm also the kind of person who's inclined to look at smaller clubs, so I don't know. Sometimes, if there's a big club in a city, I'm not interested, I don't know. It also depends on the club's history, but with this club, you could focus on the history of its struggles, like, "They left us in this situation." It's easy to tell it that way. And now we're trying to rebuild. We need everyone."</p>	<p>The respondent considers the idea of creating English-language content to appeal to tourists, highlighting that linking the club's history to its identity could spark interest, especially given Belemenses' unique position as one of the few Portuguese clubs outside the "Big Three" to win a title. However, he feels this approach could risk alienating the club's core fan base, who may interpret promotional efforts as an attempt to compete with larger clubs, which could be seen negatively. Balancing local loyalty with an expanded appeal is, in his view, challenging.</p> <p>He acknowledges the potential to attract tourists but sees practical obstacles. Most tourists stick to lower Belém attractions, rarely venturing uphill to the stadium, and the club's limited access outside of game days makes spontaneous visits difficult. The respondent suggests that discounts or informational displays at tourist spots might help, but they doubt this would be effective without incurring high costs.</p> <p>Indeed, he proposes framing Belemenses as an underdog, appealing emotionally by focusing on the club's resilience and struggles. He believes this narrative could attract support, as people tend to connect with underdogs fighting against the odds. Emphasizing an emotional appeal—"We need you"—and focusing on Belemenses' unique history could help engage both locals and visitors who value authenticity and tradition, setting Belemenses apart from the larger clubs in Portugal.</p>	<p>"Something like that, a small demonstration, would bring people closer. I think it's especially important with children, like at schools. Obviously, you won't change the club a child supports if their parent supports a different one, but it helps more than not doing anything."</p> <p>"For events, it's just about doing a bit more. I would suggest more engagement with children because I think that's necessary. And not just at the British School next door, but with others nearby"</p>	<p>The respondent emphasizes the importance of engaging children to build future support for Belemenses. He believes that even small outreach efforts, particularly in local schools, could foster early interest in the club. While he acknowledges that a child's club loyalty often aligns with family preferences, he feels that proactive engagement is beneficial and preferable to doing nothing. The respondent also encourages expanding outreach beyond nearby institutions, like the British School, to include a wider range of local schools, thereby broadening Belemenses' influence among young potential fans in the community.</p>
Fan 3	<p>"But if you go to the bench where Belemenses was founded in Praça Afonso de Albuquerque, across from the palace, the bench only says, "Aqui nasceu o Belemenses" ("Belemenses was born here"), but a tourist wouldn't even notice the writing on the bench, or won't even understand what is written. There should be a plaque next to explaining a brief history of Belemenses, with a map showing that the stadium is 500 meters away."</p> <p>"On match days, you already see a lot of tourists coming to see Belemenses games. There are always large groups. If it were better advertised, it could be much more. Another thing is guiding them to our stand because the ticket offices don't give very clear instructions, and sometimes they place people on the other side, which is the general admission section where there are only about 50 people, and the atmosphere is dead. If they came to our members' stand, the store is right there. They could buy a shirt or a scarf, and for 90 minutes, they'd be fervent Belemenses supporters. This should be more widely promoted, with the website prepared for this, making the ticketing platform like SmartFan more visible, and letting them access the members' side on game day. We could also look for partnerships with companies that organize trips to Lisbon to see Benfica and Sporting games and include Belemenses as an option too. That's basically it."</p>	<p>The respondent sees significant potential for engaging tourists with Belemenses, especially given the club's historical roots and location near popular tourist sites. He suggests enhancing the visibility of the iconic bench where Belemenses was founded by adding an informational plaque with a brief club history in English and a map showing the stadium's proximity. This addition would help tourists understand and appreciate the club's origins, making it a more accessible part of their experience in Belém.</p> <p>On match days, the respondent notes that groups of tourists already attend Belemenses games but feel that better advertising could increase this turnout. Improving signage and directions to guide tourists to the members' stand, where the atmosphere is more lively and merchandise is readily available, could enhance their experience and encourage stronger engagement. They also propose partnering with companies that organize trips to Lisbon for Benfica and Sporting games, offering Belemenses as an alternative option. Positioning Belemenses as a cultural and historical experience, the club could appeal to tourists seeking an authentic and community-focused football experience in Lisbon.</p>	<p>"I've seen a few events organized there, sometimes involving the SportTV and Canal 11 channel. They have mascots and games for kids, which I think is really important. Belemenses needs to focus on connecting with the younger generation, many of whom are becoming fans because their parents were or because they play in the academy or go to the local school. Activities like these help create a bond with the club early on. But I believe the small field could be better utilized. A lot of the time kids are playing there, which is good for them to associate a game day with fun. But I think sometimes you could promote more activities that pull all ages and types of fans, but I know that also depends on sponsors [which they have a good amount]."</p>	<p>The respondent sees value in Belemenses' efforts to engage young fans through events featuring mascots, games, and activities with partners like SportTV and Canal 11. He emphasizes that connecting with the younger generation is essential, as many new supporters are children of current fans or participants in the club's academy or local schools. These activities are viewed as effective in building early loyalty and creating positive associations with the club. However, the respondent believes that the small field near the stadium could be more actively utilized to engage a broader audience. While he appreciates seeing kids playing there and associating game days with fun, they feel the space could support more diverse, multi-generational activities that appeal to fans of all ages. Acknowledging the role of sponsors, he suggests that with further support, Belemenses could develop a more inclusive pre-game environment, enhancing the match-day experience and strengthening fan bonds across age groups.</p>
Conclusions	<p>All respondents see potential in integrating Belemenses with the local tourist circuit, suggesting that the club's unique history and proximity to Belém's popular attractions could be more strategically leveraged. 2/3 of respondents emphasize the need for clearer signage and historical context, proposing informational plaques around key sites like the founding bench and signage pointing to the stadium. These elements, they believe, would make Belemenses more visible to tourists who may already be exploring the area and could be drawn by the club's storied past.</p> <p>One respondent highlights the importance of balancing this outreach with maintaining local fan loyalty, noting that an overly promotional approach alienates core fans who might see it as a shift toward competing with larger clubs. He instead suggests framing Belemenses as an underdog with a rich, resilient history, which could attract tourists interested in a genuine and historic football club experience.</p> <p>All respondents recommend a balance of historical appeal and practical improvements—such as directing tourists to the more lively members' stand and enhancing match-day access—to foster a connection with visitors and broaden Belemenses' support base while preserving its authentic identity.</p>	<p>All three respondents emphasize the importance of strengthening loyalty and integrating youth more fully into Belemenses, as they represent the next generation of fans. Each respondent identifies specific opportunities to deepen the club's connection with young fans and future generations. 2/3 respondents highlight the value of proactive outreach to schools, with one suggesting that expanding engagement beyond nearby institutions could broaden Belemenses' influence among young potential fans. Additionally, one respondent emphasizes the need for Belemenses to instill its core values in its 4,000 athletes, particularly youth players, and proposes featuring youth teams at games to increase visibility and pride within the community, thereby strengthening bonds between young players and the club.</p> <p>The third respondent appreciates the club's existing efforts, such as pre-game activities with mascots and games, but suggests that the small field near the stadium could host a wider variety of activities for all ages. This, he believes, would create an inclusive environment that fosters community connections on game days.</p>		

Interviewee	Quote	Engagement Efforts from Fans	Interpretation	Engagement Efforts from Belenenses	Interpretation
Fan 1	<p>"Yes, definitely attending games—home games, pretty much all of them—not just football but also trying to attend other sports events. I go to some away games as well and try to be present at the General Assemblies. I'm usually one of the youngest there, which is a bit sad, but I think it's at those meetings where the club is really discussed, rather than on Facebook. Of course, I'm also in the Facebook groups, but I'm not very active because I feel that the opinions there often lack a real understanding of the club's situation, or they come from people who clearly have other agendas and want to do things up a bit. I feel there's a lack of a healthier discussion space online for Belenenses. I also use Twitter and now Reddit, and I find that's where the better discussions happen, with more responsible fans compared to those on Facebook, which seems more about likes and seeking attention. Discussions on Facebook tend to be more superficial in a negative way."</p> <p>"I got more involved when I turned 18 and started being able to vote at assemblies; my first assembly was when we decided to remove the SAD from Restelo, so to speak. From that moment, I felt I could be more involved. I began wanting to know more about the people at Belenenses and started helping with various things. I got a bit involved with the basketball section and later on with communication and sponsorship when we were in the Campeonato de Portugal and Liga 3. I lived it from the inside, not just as a fan. I've always wanted to help, as much as I could, my club. Then I started working, and it became harder to be as present. But I still keep up with things from the outside, and whenever possible, I'm available to help whatever is needed because I believe we are few, and we all need to do our part to help. If the victory against the SAD was somewhat based on associations, I think all members need to do their part, which goes a bit beyond being passive, just attending games, and really involves using our contacts and capabilities to help."</p>	<p>The respondent describes a deep commitment to Belenenses, actively participating in various aspects of club life beyond attending games. Supporting both home and away matches across multiple sports and attending General Assemblies, where he feels meaningful club discussions occur. He observes a generational gap at these meetings, noting that they are often one of the youngest attendees, which he finds disheartening. While he participates in online fan groups, the respondent is less active on Facebook, viewing discussions there as superficial and driven by personal agendas rather than genuine understanding. They feel that platforms like Twitter and Reddit offer a healthier environment for reasoned fan discourse.</p> <p>His involvement intensified at 18 when he gained voting rights at assemblies and experienced the pivotal decision to remove the SAD from Restelo. This moment of increased agency inspired him to contribute more directly to the club, engaging in activities like communication, sponsorship, and basketball support during the Campeonato de Portugal and Liga 3 periods. Though work commitments have since limited his involvement, he remains dedicated, seeing active participation as essential to preserving Belenenses' legacy. For the respondent, this dedication transcends passive support and embodies a collective responsibility among members to use their skills and networks to uplift and strengthen the club's future.</p>	<p>"Yes, I do think there's some ease [being easy to stay in touch with the club] in it. At least, whenever I started wanting to get more involved with Belenenses, I always felt that people were receptive to showing me how things worked. I do think there could be more openness to accepting help because I know other members have presented very valid projects, and the club didn't embrace them as much as I think it should have. But overall, the club is welcoming when it comes to meeting people, although advancing projects isn't always as straightforward. I think it would be good for all members to be involved in a section—whether it's basketball, volleyball, swimming, athletics, football, or whatever—to understand the reality of it. Often, the reality is tough, and it helps to dispel the illusion that Belenenses is just the name, even though it's a strong name and we're proud of it. The reality is quite different, and the problems the club faces are significant."</p> <p>"Older members used to talk about a social room at the Restelo stadium, where people would gather, play snooker, read the newspaper, etc. Today, if you go to Restelo during the week, there is indeed a lot of sports activity with kids playing football or using the pavilion, but unless members have to handle something at the store or office, it's not a common meeting place. The people you see during the week are mostly parents and athletes. The connection with the club is more of a weekend thing, not something that happens every day."</p> <p>"I believe there could be a greater effort in communicating with the members. Right now, communication is very focused on social media, and there's no personalized outreach. The website, for instance, hasn't even been updated this year. Since Liga 3 started, there haven't been any new posts on the site, and it's still a place where many fans go for information. It's the face of Belenenses and seems to be abandoned, which doesn't make sense."</p>	<p>The respondent reflects positively on the welcoming nature of Belenenses, finding that club members were receptive when he sought to become more involved. However, he feels that the club could be more open to member-driven projects, noting that valid ideas from other members have not always been embraced as much as they could be. This suggests a gap between a generally welcoming atmosphere and the practical limitations of implementing new initiatives within the club.</p> <p>The respondent believes that deeper involvement across different sports sections would benefit members by providing a more realistic view of the club's challenges beyond its name and historical prestige. This perspective, he feels, would ground members in the club's current reality, highlighting the significant issues Belenenses faces.</p> <p>However, he feels that the club's communication with members could be improved. Currently, outreach relies heavily on social media, with minimal personalized engagement or updates on the website, which he views as outdated and poorly maintained. He sees the website as a critical touchpoint for fans and feels that neglecting it harms the club's image.</p> <p>He also observes that the social aspect of Belenenses is limited mainly to weekends, with the Restelo stadium lacking a daily gathering space for members. While sports activities are prevalent throughout the week, the respondent sees the absence of a social space—once a staple for older members—as a missed opportunity for fostering continuous connections. As it stands, he feels that the club's community engagement is largely restricted to game days, rather than an everyday presence in members' lives.</p>	
Fan 2	<p>"I go to games whenever I can and see an opportunity—weekends or whenever—it's always fun. Usually, I go with friends who aren't even fans, but I always enjoy watching the games. Generally, I don't buy a lot of merchandise, but it depends on the product. I remember last year a friend and I bought something, but that's not usual. Mostly, it's about going to games, and following what's happening with the club because I care about it. I keep up with social media and those things. Sometimes, depending on who you know, you hear about what's going on inside the club, but that's more specific information. But mainly, it's about going to the games. If you ask me whether I comment on social media, no, I don't. I mostly just follow passively without much interaction."</p> <p>"Family, friends, usually, it depends. Sometimes it depends on the interest level, but generally, it's about encouraging someone to come and watch a game. I don't talk about it too much because if the person isn't a fan, they aren't as interested in what interests me. But yes, I do talk about it occasionally."</p>	<p>The respondent's engagement with Belenenses is centered around attending games, which he views as an enjoyable activity often shared with friends who aren't necessarily fans. While he doesn't frequently purchase club merchandise, his connection to Belenenses is sustained through regular attendance and passive following on social media. He keeps up-to-date with club developments, sometimes gaining insider knowledge through personal connections, but he generally avoids active engagement in online fan discussions, preferring to observe without much interaction.</p> <p>The respondent occasionally encourages friends and family to attend games, but he limits conversations about the club with non-fans, recognizing that the same level of interest may not be shared. Overall, his connection to Belenenses is expressed more through personal attendance and support at matches than through online or social media interactions.</p>	<p>"Mainly Twitter [the social media that the interviewee believed to be managed in the best way]. But the posts are nearly the same everywhere. Twitter almost has no replies, which makes it more interesting because there's hardly anyone on it. The posts are mostly identical across platforms. The only issue is that sometimes on Twitter, due to the character limit, the descriptions aren't complete, so you have to check the post on Instagram or Facebook, although Facebook is best avoided because of the comments. But yes, those are the main three. If you asked if the club had a TikTok, it wouldn't be for me. I think it would be a bit odd because I'm not sure it wouldn't alienate some people. That's the problem. For a newer club or depending on the area, it might work. I think Estrela da Amadora gained some fans this way, but their demographic is different. Here, I'm not sure you'd get many supporters. I remember they tried doing teasers for new signings at the start of the season, like taking pictures with the player in silhouette, and people complained, saying, 'At other clubs, they just reveal the player.' So, I believe if Belenenses did something weird on TikTok, it would just get those kinds of comments most of the time, so I don't think it would add much. It's a cultural thing, too, because I think it's difficult to get fans here to engage with that. I'm not sure children would even find it interesting. Maybe, but I think the problem is that it would alienate some of the older fans. It's a shift. Sporting does something similar, and it depends on how it's managed. I remember Sporting doing things that seemed very strange to me, and then they'd post older videos, which might appeal more to me or older people. But if Belenenses started a TikTok, people would probably say, 'This seems weird; this isn't Belenenses,' regardless of the content. I'm not even sure they'd have the capacity for it right now, as I remember the YouTube channel being poorly managed, mostly by volunteers."</p> <p>[About what the club could do to increase engagement:] "Sometimes offering more perks, for example. Last year, in the Second League, they only organized trips for two away games. Things like that are a bit strange; they didn't even give information about buses or anything. It's up to you to get their own fan bags or games. I think rewarding members would be nice. They do have annual ceremonies for the club's anniversary, but beyond that, I feel like there's a lack of connection in terms of member benefits."</p> <p>"Posts on social media don't even provide information for regular fans, only for members. They only mention member ticket prices, not the general public. So, I think that's a bit lacking too. Online ticket prices could be more specific."</p> <p>"If you post a photo of the training, and that's because there isn't that much interest in social media, I think in terms of fans, you don't have many people who are die-hard supporters. The level of engagement would seem forced if you tried to push it. They post enough for you to know they're here and doing something, and I think that's fine. Outside of game days, posting a picture from training or something is enough. It doesn't need to be every day or have a 'Happy Monday' message every week. After a game, a post thanking the fans is good enough for me. There should be something like, 'We had a good training session' or a mention of a sponsor, or just a photo of a player. If it were just game-related posts, it wouldn't be great. The way things are now seems fine to me, and I wouldn't change much in terms of content unless it involved using different social media platforms, which I don't use myself."</p>	<p>The respondent feels that Belenenses' social media, particularly on Twitter, is well-managed but largely standardized across platforms. He appreciates Twitter for its minimal interaction, as it avoids the sometimes contentious or superficial comments found on Facebook. However, he notes occasional limitations due to Twitter's character constraints, which sometimes require checking other platforms for complete information. The respondent is cautious about newer social media like TikTok, which they feel may alienate Belenenses' older fan demographic and lack appeal within the club's traditional supporter base, unlike other clubs that attract younger audiences. He believes that attempting to introduce trendier content might be met with skepticism, potentially clashing with Belenenses' culture and limited social media management capacity.</p> <p>In terms of engagement, the respondent suggests offering member perks, particularly for away games, as he sees a lack of support for fans traveling independently to matches. He feels that the club could improve communication about ticketing by including information for general fans, not just members, to make it clearer and more accessible.</p> <p>The respondent is satisfied with the current level of content on social media, preferring a low-key approach with occasional updates, such as post-game messages or midweek training photos. He sees no need for daily posts or overly enthusiastic content, viewing it as potentially forced within the club's culture. Instead, he suggests that straightforward, game-focused updates are sufficient for maintaining a steady connection with fans without oversteering engagement efforts.</p>	
Fan 3	<p>"I've been to Varanda Azul (restaurant) a few times, especially for family occasions like my father's birthday, and I'll occasionally buy something from Loja Azul. I also have friends who rent the field next to the stadium to play football. It's a nice experience to play there, even if it's not inside the stadium itself. I always watch the games on Canal 11. I can't make it to the stadium. I think that's good as well. There is not a single week where we don't talk about Belenenses in my household... engagement occurs outside games."</p> <p>"Yes, I talk about it with my father every week. Sometimes my friends bring it up, especially when the club is doing well. My girlfriend Maribel is from the area, so she goes to games often, and we talk about it as well. There's a general interest in the club, even among non-supporters, because it's a historic team."</p> <p>[When the interviewee was living in Algarve:] "It didn't affect it much, mainly because I had SportTV back then, which I don't have now. When Belenenses was in the first division, or even the second, all their matches were broadcasted, so it was easy to follow the team. I didn't attend many games in person, but I always stayed connected. I remember coming to Lisbon a few times to watch Belenenses play Sporting or Atlético. It wasn't as often as I would have liked, but the broadcasts kept me in touch with the club."</p>	<p>The respondent's connection to Belenenses extends beyond game attendance and includes various forms of engagement that contribute to their sense of loyalty. He celebrates family occasions at the club's restaurant, Varanda Azul, and occasionally purchases items from Loja Azul, signaling his commitment to supporting Belenenses in different ways. He also enjoys recreational activities near the stadium, such as friends renting the adjacent field for football, which further connects them to the club environment.</p> <p>In his household, Belenenses is a regular topic of conversation, especially with his father and girlfriend, who also attend games. This regular discussion reinforces the club's presence in his daily life and its role in family and social bonds. Even when he lived in the Algarve, the respondent maintained this connection by watching broadcasts on SportTV, allowing him to stay up-to-date despite the distance. He particularly remembers traveling to Lisbon for significant matches, demonstrating that his support remained strong even when not attending in person. Overall, the respondent's engagement is marked by these diverse interactions with the club, from family traditions to media and recreational connections, which collectively sustain his loyalty to Belenenses.</p>	<p>"I think the club has been making an effort to be closer to the fans, mainly this year. As someone who works in marketing, I can see the effort they've put into engaging through their Instagram page. They're promoting not only the football team but also basketball, handball, futsal, and other sports. This is important because the club isn't just about football. Last season, the comments on social media were often harsh, especially after defeats, but this season things are better. The team is performing well, and the criticism has decreased. The relationship is improving as a result."</p> <p>"I use Twitter occasionally, but I mainly follow them on Instagram. I'm part of a couple of Facebook groups, but I don't like some of the discussion themes there and feel people tend to go over the boundaries."</p> <p>"I appreciate that they announce all the new athletes joining the club, across all sports. It helps keep fans informed about what's happening in basketball, handball, and other sports. It's a good way to keep fans connected with the club outside of football. They're also doing well in terms of marketing techniques, which even some first-division clubs lack. I believe social media is an effective way to maintain a connection with fans outside the stadium and I think they are doing well and being consistent. Recently, they had a comedian visit the club, and they gave him a jersey. That kind of initiative shows the club is open to new fans and visitors."</p>	<p>The respondent acknowledges recent efforts by Belenenses to strengthen its relationship with fans, particularly this season, noting improvements in the club's Instagram engagement. As a marketing professional, he appreciates the consistent promotion of various sports—not just football—which reinforces Belenenses' identity as a multi-sport club. He feels this approach helps diversify the fan base's interest and showcases the club's broader athletic involvement. Social media management, especially on Instagram, is seen as a valuable tool for keeping fans connected. The respondent finds the club's efforts to announce new athletes across all sports helpful in maintaining a sense of community and inclusivity. He observes that the reduction in online criticism correlates with its focus on consistent updates, and they avoid Facebook groups, feeling that discussions there often become overly negative or cross personal boundaries.</p> <p>Overall, he believes Belenenses' social media presence is well-executed and professional, even comparable to that of first-division clubs. The recent initiative to host a comedian and give him a club jersey is seen as an effective marketing move, showing openness to new fan engagement and broader visibility.</p>	
Conclusions	<p>All three respondents display strong and varied engagement with Belenenses, although the nature and depth of their involvement differ. One respondent exhibits a high level of active commitment, attending both home and away games across sports, participating in General Assemblies, and engaging in club initiatives like sponsorships and communication.</p> <p>In contrast, another respondent's connection to Belenenses is primarily expressed through regular game attendance, often with friends who aren't fans. This respondent's engagement with the club is more passive, marked by occasional social media following rather than active involvement in online discussions or club activities. While he avoids deeper online engagement, he maintains his connection by encouraging friends and family to attend games and supporting Belenenses in his personal lives.</p> <p>The third respondent demonstrates a diverse and family-oriented connection to the club. His engagement includes visiting the club's restaurant, making purchases from Loja Azul, and enjoying recreational activities near the stadium with friends. For him, Belenenses is an integral part of family traditions and daily conversations, which helps sustain a strong sense of loyalty. This respondent's commitment remained steadfast even when he lived far from Lisbon, as he stayed connected through media broadcasts and occasional travel for key matches.</p>	<p>All three respondents recognize Belenenses' efforts to engage fans, particularly through social media, with 2/3 emphasizing Instagram's role in promoting a diverse range of sports and building connections beyond football. There is a shared preference among respondents to avoid Facebook, as they feel it fosters negative commentary. Instead, they favor platforms like Instagram and Twitter, where engagement is more streamlined and positive.</p> <p>The respondent who markets background appreciates Instagram's consistent updates, noting that it effectively showcases Belenenses' multi-sport identity and contributes to a reduction in online negativity. Another respondent values Twitter for its low interaction, concise updates, contrasting it favorably with the sometimes contentious discussions on Facebook.</p> <p>2/3 of respondents identify areas for improvement in engagement. One suggests establishing a dedicated social space at Restelo stadium to foster member connections beyond game days, reviving a tradition valued by older fans. Another calls for additional perks for traveling fans and clearer communication on ticketing for both members and the general public.</p> <p>Lastly, one respondent also points out that communication relies heavily on social media, with minimal personalized engagement or updates on the website, which he views as outdated and poorly maintained.</p>			

Interviewee	Club Governance and Fan Involvement in Decision-Making		Ticket Prices and Membership	
	Quote	Interpretation	Quote	Interpretation
Fan 1	<p>"Yes, I think so. From what I can tell, Patrick has been holding a lot of assemblies; he's someone who really brings matters to the members in those spaces, and they often discuss Belenenses extensively. There's always a time for member interventions, which usually lasts quite a while, and people share what's on their minds, leading to some interesting discussions. I think it's much more valuable to attend the AGs than to discuss the club on Facebook. But I do think much more could be done. Four years ago, during the elections amid COVID, Patrick did a series of online Q&A sessions where we all joined a Zoom call to ask questions. I think something like that could be repeated—status updates or discussions on various topics, perhaps every three months, focusing on key themes. Also, last year when Mariano Barreto was president, we had a kind of town hall where Patrick was there answering fans' questions. I think that event went very well. It was held at the stadium, and I expected everyone to focus on questions about the football team, like why we hired a coach who hadn't worked in Portugal for years. But no, it wasn't just about football. We also discussed other sports, communication, sponsorships, requalifications—several in-depth topics. I think these initiatives, whether online or in person, where the president and the board address and respond to the members on matters outside AGs, are good and should happen more often. I think the communication could be more open. Patrick usually does an annual interview with questions from the members, which is nice, but the answers are very thought-out and controlled; I get the questions themselves, I'm not sure how they are selected. There should also be efforts to open the club more, creating content that other clubs do, showing what Belenenses is like beyond what we see on game days. Many members don't really know what goes on behind the scenes, so they end up making unfair criticisms because they don't understand the difficulties the club faces. So, I feel there's an effort to communicate, but it could be bigger. I'm not sure if I answered your question, because I don't remember everything you asked."</p> <p>"Yes, I do feel that the club is mine, but to some extent. I feel that if I wanted to remove the board tomorrow, I could probably do it. I have some decision-making power by voting in the assemblies, but of course, I'm trusting the elected leaders to run the club. I also know that if they wanted to decide me, they could. They are the ones on the inside, they know how things are run. So, I have some control—the club is mine, but they hold the real control."</p>	<p>The respondent values the club's efforts to engage members through assemblies and other interactive events led by the president, noting that these gatherings allow for meaningful discussions and give members a platform to share their perspectives on Belenenses. He finds these assemblies to be more valuable for club discourse than online forums like Facebook, where discussions can often lack depth. The respondent recalls successful initiatives, such as town halls and online Q&A sessions during COVID, where members could directly interact with leadership, asking questions on a range of topics beyond just football. He feels these types of open forums should occur more frequently, perhaps every quarter, to improve transparency and foster a stronger connection with the club.</p> <p>While he acknowledges current communication efforts, the respondent believes there is room for a more transparent approach. He finds the annual interview format somewhat controlled and suggests that more behind-the-scenes content would help members understand the complexities of running the club, potentially reducing misguided criticisms that stem from limited awareness.</p> <p>The respondent feels a sense of ownership through their voting rights at assemblies. However, he also recognizes the limitations of this power, as the club's day-to-day control ultimately rests with elected leaders. While he trusts in his ability to influence decisions, he acknowledges that real operational control lies with the board, leaving members somewhat distanced from the inner workings of the club.</p>	<p>"Yes, I think the tickets are overpriced because Belenenses fans already pay membership fees comparable to those in the first league. The adult membership fee is around 5.5 EUR now, a student and a reformer pay half that, and it's free for those under 16 or 12. I can't remember exactly. But an adult membership fee is quite expensive, and if you compare it to Sporting or Benfica, they might pay 10-12 EUR, so the difference isn't that big. We're talking about a club in Liga 3, after all. Belenenses members already pay a lot in membership fees, and then they also have to pay a lot for tickets. Last year, we had some of the most expensive tickets in the second division, or at least comparable to the highest prices. This year in Liga 3 it's unlikely to be different.</p> <p>I think more consideration or care for the fans would be welcome. The mentality seems to be, 'We know these 2,000 will always be here, whatever the price is, 10, 20, or 50 EUR.' And I'm guilty of this. They buy season passes every year without thinking about the price. I just want to support my club. But I think the ticket prices could be reconsidered to try to attract more people beyond the usual 2,000. The season pass price is still the same even though we were relegated. It indeed includes access to other sports this year, unlike last year, but ultimately, most fans aren't drawn by the other sports. It's the same, despite being in Liga 3 instead of Liga 2.</p> <p>There's also the issue of how tickets and season passes are promoted. I recall only seeing one Facebook post about the 1919 pass, and there was no email communication, for instance, via messages. There's no real personal or personalized communication with the members encouraging them to buy tickets and passes."</p>	<p>The respondent feels that Belenenses' ticket prices are disproportionately high, especially considering that membership fees are already close to those of first-division clubs despite Belenenses' current position in Liga 3. He notes that fans pay a premium both in membership and ticket costs, observing that last season's ticket prices were among the highest in the second division. The respondent suggests that a more considerate pricing strategy could help attract fans beyond the regular 2,000 core supporters, whom the club seems to rely on regardless of ticket cost.</p> <p>While he buys a season pass each year without hesitation, out of loyalty, he feels that the club's pricing does little to encourage a broader attendance. This year's season pass includes access to other sports, which the respondent acknowledges as a new benefit, but he believes it still fails to compensate for the club's relegation to Liga 3, as most fans are drawn specifically by football.</p> <p>The respondent also points out a lack of effective promotion for tickets and season passes, recalling minimal communication about key offerings like the 1919 pass. He suggests that a more direct, personalized approach—encouraging ticket purchases could foster better engagement with members and potentially boost attendance.</p>
Fan 2	<p>"Well, with the current model, I do have a lot to say. Every proposal has to be voted on. But honestly, for the bigger decisions, it's all approved by the members, so really, the issue is if you disagree with the majority. But I don't think that's a problem because the current management is all about the members. Obviously, in my opinion, a member doesn't have the right to dictate who is a good coach or a good sports director. It doesn't make sense to fire someone just because the fans want it. Otherwise, with the supporters we have, coaches would be fired after every game. But I think it's adequate the way it is. I think it's going to get worse because technically, you need to bring in an investor somehow."</p>	<p>The respondent feels that Belenenses' current model grants members substantial influence, with every proposal subject to member voting. He acknowledges that disagreements may arise if an individual's view differs from the majority, but he sees this as part of the democratic process, with the management's focus being on member input. However, he draws a line at decisions on technical or professional roles—like hiring or firing coaches—arguing that such choices should be left to the club's leadership rather than dictated by fan sentiment, as this could lead to impulsive, reactionary decisions. Looking forward, the respondent anticipates potential challenges, suggesting that securing an investor may become necessary to support the club's financial needs. While he finds the current model satisfactory, he implies that the involvement of external funding might complicate the balance of member influence in the future.</p>	<p>"I think where the club struggles the most is precisely in the perks it offers to members because members pay more than at other clubs of the same level. Even tickets are more expensive. If I'm not mistaken, last season in the Second League, only Toriense had more expensive tickets for members, and then they made them free. Sometimes there were even restrictions for bringing guests to the stadium, which I also don't think makes sense. If you want to bring people to the stadium, you shouldn't limit that. It was reduced to one guest, which isn't right.</p> <p>So, I think there's a lack of incentive. The majority of people go to see football matches, and I don't think the club offers much in that regard. There are discounts for members on merchandise, but the shop isn't great. Sometimes products that were supposed to arrive haven't, so you might have seen. Online, it says one thing, but reality is different. The member online area is a good addition, but some things still require going to the club office, which is bureaucratic and not well-organized. It's more about the fan going to the club rather than the club reaching out to the fan. There's no great advantage to say this is nice."</p> <p>For example, the neighboring club, Atlético, when they were promoted, they had cheap tickets. I think it was 5 EUR for non-members, while Belenenses was charging that for members. They also had community perks, like discounts for residents of Alcátara, which I feel Belenenses doesn't do. It's still very much the old-fashioned style of 'members pay, and that's it.'</p>	<p>The respondent feels that Belenenses falls short in providing sufficient perks and incentives for its members, who already pay comparatively high fees. He points out that last season's ticket prices were among the highest in their league, with even member tickets priced similarly to non-member tickets at other clubs. Restrictions on guest tickets further detract from the stadium experience, limiting fans' ability to bring others and expand the supporter base.</p> <p>Despite some membership benefits, such as discounts on merchandise, the respondent finds these perks lacking in quality and accessibility. He describes a bureaucratic requirements often demand in person visits to the club office. The respondent feels this "member-first" approach could be modernized, making the club more proactive in engaging its supporters rather than relying on members to seek out benefits.</p> <p>He emphasizes that high ticket prices create a significant barrier for non-members and families, who face costs close to first-division prices despite lower league quality. He believes these prices discourage attendance, particularly for non-members, preventing broader community engagement. Reflecting on a previous Third League game with €15 tickets, he notes that such prices are unsustainable for a club outside the top tier, where more affordable pricing would be necessary to grow the fan base and foster a supportive community atmosphere.</p>
Fan 3	<p>"Perhaps a bit more involvement [of the fans in the club's decisions] would be good. Last season, for example, I felt that members weren't being listened to enough. It was a tough season with poor planning. We went through three coaches, and members were calling for changes earlier. I think some of the good players from the third division season, when we reached the final at Jamar, were let go without much consideration. One example is João Costa, who was our top scorer but wasn't kept on the team. He ended up at Aveiro, where he became the top scorer in the division, and now he's nearly a starting forward for AFS in the first division. Members sometimes have valid points, and the club should be more attentive to their opinions. This year, I think the club has done better in that regard, and the results reflect it."</p> <p>"Yes, definitely [feeling a sense of ownership of the club]. I don't feel like I am influential within the club, maybe because I'm not the most vocal or hardcore fan, but it's still my club, and I feel like I am heard."</p>	<p>The respondent believes that fan involvement in club decisions could be improved, particularly by highlighting last season's struggles. He felt that management did not adequately hear member concerns, especially regarding team planning and player retention. He cites the example of João Costa, a high-performing player who was released despite fan support, only to excel with another team, suggesting that more attention to member feedback might have prevented such oversight.</p> <p>However, he acknowledges that the club appears to be more receptive to member input this season, and he views this shift positively, noting that it correlates with improved team performance.</p> <p>Though he does not see himself as particularly influential within the club, the respondent still feels a sense of ownership and believes that his voice, along with other members, is heard. This sense of connection reinforces his identity as a Belenenses supporter, even if his contributions are not among the most vocal.</p>	<p>"My father and I weren't members for a long time. I had never been one, and he used to be, but then stopped. We decided to rejoin two years ago. It's a way to support the club, which has always struggled financially. Even if it's not much, our contributions help improve areas where we see the club lagging, even within the same division. The membership fees have contributed to positive changes in recent times. Even with relegation, I feel it was a step back to take two steps forward. The club's dynamics and structure have improved significantly, and I believe it's up to members to keep paying their dues and attending games to maintain this momentum. I remember last year when the club was playing badly, my father wanted to stop being a member, but I incentivized him to keep paying because if we all think like that, then the club will go bankrupt and we don't want that."</p> <p>"Yes, of course [feels that there are personal benefits to being a member]. As a member, I can buy a season ticket, which my father and I have. We also get discounts at the Loja Azul, which is nice for gifts or buying shirts. But beyond the practical benefits, it's a matter of pride. I love having my Belenenses membership card in my wallet—it's something that means a lot to me personally."</p> <p>"No, I don't think so [that ticket prices are an obstacle]. As a member, I pay around €4 per ticket now, which used to be €6 or €7. I think it's a fair price, and honestly, the club could charge more, but the goal is to fill the stadium, which makes sense."</p> <p>"Considering the club's financial situation, yes." [Considers the ticket prices fair for the experience offered]</p>	<p>The respondent and his father recently rejoined Belenenses as members, viewing membership as a meaningful way to support the financially struggling club. They see their contributions as essential, helping to foster improvements and maintain stability despite the club's challenges, such as relegation. For the respondent, remaining loyal and encouraging others to do the same is vital to avoid financial decline and ensuring membership as a shared responsibility that enables Belenenses to make the necessary progress, even if incremental.</p> <p>Beyond financial support, the respondent finds personal satisfaction in being a member. The practical benefits, like discounts at Loja Azul and reduced ticket prices, are appreciated, but he sees their membership card as a symbol of pride and loyalty. The respondent finds current ticket prices fair, especially given the club's focus on filling the stadium and its financial situation, and believes that membership fees are ultimately justified by the impact on the club's operations and community.</p>
Conclusions	<p>All respondents value the role of assemblies and voting in giving fans a voice in Belenenses' governance, highlighting a strong sense of ownership among members. 2/3 of respondents appreciate the democratic process within the club, with one viewing assemblies and open forums as essential venues for meaningful discussions. They recommended more frequent town hall-style events to improve transparency and allow for deeper engagement with club leadership. While another feels that decisions on professional roles should remain with management to avoid reactionary choices influenced by fan sentiment, 1/3 of respondents suggest that more fan input would enhance club operations, reflecting on a past example where disgruntled member opinions may have impacted team performance. However, he observed an improvement in management's responsiveness this season, linking it to positive outcomes on the field.</p>	<p>All three respondents agree on the critical role of membership and ticket sales in sustaining Belenenses financially, with 2/3 expressing concerns that current ticket prices are excessively high. They feel that the combination of high ticket prices and substantial membership fees restricts attendance to a core group of 2,000 regular fans, limiting broader community engagement. One respondent suggests that ticket prices should be reconsidered to attract a wider audience and notes a lack of targeted marketing for options like the 1919 pass, which could benefit from a more direct approach to encourage both current and potential members.</p> <p>Regarding membership perks, 2/3 of respondents find the existing benefits insufficient. One respondent highlights logistical challenges in accessing merchandise and restrictions on guest tickets, suggesting that a more proactive, member-centric approach would enhance the fan experience. The other respondent appreciates recent changes, such as the season pass's expanded access to additional sports, though he feels these perks don't fully address the limitations of being in a lower league. Overall, these two respondents believe that ticket prices are too high for the current stadium experience provided.</p> <p>The third respondent, while recognizing the high costs, views membership as a meaningful financial and symbolic commitment to the club's stability. He feels that the fees are justified by the improvements and progress supported by loyal member contributions. For this respondent, membership represents a badge of pride and a way to actively support the club through its financial and competitive challenges.</p>	<p>85</p>	

Interviewee	Quote	General Suggestions	Interpretation
Fan 1	<p>"I think we can offer a different experience than what Benfica and Sporting provide. Sure, when you go to their stadiums, it's impressive with the large crowd and great atmosphere. But the experience at Restelo is entirely different. It's a much more authentic and family-oriented experience. I believe that's where we should build our identity—a club truly owned by its members, in constant relationship with them, and promoting these values. We should try to attract students, even if they aren't from Portugal and are here on Erasmus or for a master's degree, to learn about Belenenses and take advantage of the tourist area we're in."</p> <p>"The 1919 pass could also reward the most frequent fans. For example, there are no discounts for the next season for fans who attended a 10 or more than half of the games, as many clubs do. There's no recognition for being a loyal fan. There used to be initiatives with members, like the José António tournament, where member teams played a summer tournament at Restelo, allowing members to play on the stadium's pitch, which is a point of pride. It was a moment of socializing for the members. It was a weekend tournament that went on for a year or two, then stopped."</p>	<p>The respondent sees a unique opportunity for Belenenses to differentiate itself from larger clubs like Benfica and Sporting by creating an authentic, family-friendly experience at Restelo. He believes Belenenses can build an identity rooted in member ownership, close connections with fans, and values that emphasize community. The respondent suggests that Belenenses could leverage its location in a popular tourist area to attract international students and visitors, introducing them to the club and enriching the fan base with diverse perspectives.</p> <p>Additionally, the respondent suggests implementing rewards for loyal fans, such as offering discounts on season passes for members who frequently attend games, a common practice at other clubs. He fondly recalls past initiatives like the José António tournament, where members participated in a friendly competition on the Restelo pitch, fostering social bonds and pride among fans. The respondent believes that reviving such initiatives would enhance the sense of community and loyalty, reinforcing Belenenses' identity as a club owned and supported by its members.</p>	
Fan 2	<p>"I don't think so. I mean, I'd like to have the swimming pools back, but that's not going to happen. The only other thing would be, but it's impossible because there's no money, to invest more in the different sports. It's kind of sad to see how much the level has declined nowadays, but other than that, I don't think there's much that I haven't already mentioned. One thing would be a suggestion, though: since the fans are older, and the club is kind of oriented toward history, they should focus more on the club's history."</p>	<p>The respondent expresses a desire for Belenenses to restore certain facilities, like the swimming pools, but acknowledges that financial constraints make this unlikely. He also feels that the club's multiple sports programs have declined in quality over time, which is disappointing, though he recognizes that improvements would require significant investment.</p> <p>As a suggestion, the respondent believes that Belenenses should focus more on its rich history, especially given its older fan demographic and the club's heritage-oriented identity. He sees historical emphasis as a way to honor the club's legacy, aligning with the interests of long-time fans and enhancing the club's unique appeal in a way that resonates with its supporters.</p>	
Fan 3	<p>"General renovation of the stadium and greater financial capacity."</p> <p>"Completely remove those who still support the old SAD and work together to help the club. More support for different sports and making trips to the stadium a routine." [regarding the question "How do you think the club could get closer to distant fans?"]</p>	<p>The respondent believes that Belenenses could benefit from a comprehensive stadium renovation and increased financial resources to strengthen the club overall. He also suggests unifying support by distancing the club from individuals still aligned with the old SAD, aiming to foster a collaborative environment focused solely on advancing Belenenses. To enhance engagement, the respondent advocates for greater investment in various sports and encourages fans to make attending games at the stadium a regular habit, which he sees as key to building a cohesive and dedicated fan base.</p>	
Conclusions		<p>All respondents emphasize the need for Belenenses to leverage its unique characteristics and reinforce its community-centric identity, with each offering specific suggestions to strengthen the club's connection to its fans. One respondent suggests that Belenenses could distinguish itself from larger clubs by fostering an authentic, family-friendly environment and a more personalized, member-owned club experience. He believes this could appeal not only to local fans but also to international students and tourists, broadening the fan base. Additionally, he proposes implementing rewards for loyal members and reviving past initiatives, such as friendly competitions among members, to enhance social bonds and pride.</p> <p>Another respondent highlights the importance of focusing on Belenenses' historical legacy, seeing it as a way to engage the club's older fan demographic and honor its heritage-oriented identity. He believes a stronger emphasis on history would align with the interests of long-time supporters and could enhance the club's unique appeal compared to other teams.</p> <p>Finally, the third respondent advocates for substantial stadium renovations and an increased financial commitment to improve both facilities and the quality of the club's multi-sport programs. He also suggests creating a unified fan base by reducing ties with individuals linked to the old SAD, emphasizing that greater collaboration and regular attendance are essential for building a dedicated community.</p>	

Appendix 2.2 – Interviews with locals

Interviewee	Relationship with the Club		Club Perception	
	Quote	Interpretation	Quote	Interpretation
Local 1	<p>I have some sympathy for Belenenses because I played sports there (it was the closest to my house). Playing sports there required being a member. So, the first club I joined was Belenenses. Also, because my grandfather is a Belenenses supporter. I'm a Sporting supporter, but whenever there was a game between Sporting and Belenenses, I would always go with my grandfather. Nowadays, those matches no longer happen, but when I can, I like to watch Belenenses because I like their story of rising again. The issues with the SAD (Sociedade Anónima Desportiva), the separation, and then how Belenenses managed to break records every season since being relegated to the district league and working their way back up, gaining promotion every year during this period. The season I followed most closely was the one when Belenenses moved up from the third to the second division. It's a shame they lost to União de Leiria and didn't become the champion of the Third League, but I think it was a good season for them in the "Third League".</p> <p>"I'm not quite sure how I became a Sporting supporter because my family doesn't really follow football, and those who do are either Benfica or Belenenses fans. So, I think Sporting was more of an influence from school because my primary school teacher was a Sporting supporter and loved the club. My grandfather, instead of trying to make me a Belenenses fan like him, simply accompanied me when I went to Alvalade. So, that's how Belenenses wasn't really instilled in me as my main team, but more as a club I respected, especially because of its history and being the club of the area where I'm from. At the very least, I got to know great players from Belenenses and heard my grandfather's stories about the times when Belenenses fought to be champions and win the Portuguese Cup."</p>	<p>The respondent says that even though her grandfather is a Belenenses supporter, he didn't instill that in her. However, she still holds sympathy for Belenenses because of her grandfather, because she used to swim there (which required her to be a member), and because she is a fan of the recent Belenenses' history and their courage to split from the SAD and progress to rise through the divisions once again.</p>	<p>"I think it's a club in reconstruction. I consider Belenenses one of the great clubs in Portugal because I believe that a club that has been a national champion should be regarded as a major club, even if today it's facing difficulties. But I'd say that at this moment, it's a club in reconstruction, trying to return to those times. In the 2000s, Belenenses still reached a Portuguese Cup final against Benfica. So, it's about regaining that place it once had in Portuguese football which today is occupied by clubs like Vitória or Braga."</p>	<p>The respondent sees Belenenses as a club in reconstruction, trying to regain the major place it once had in Portugal. However, even though it is in a lower division, she still considers the club one of the greats in Portugal, much because of having been a national champion in the past.</p>
Local 2	<p>"[...] I'm not a Belenenses supporter, at least not as a member and as someone who goes to the games. But I ended up becoming quite attached to Belenenses (I would say I have a lot of affection for the club) since I went to a lot of games with people from the area who are supporters of the club. I'm a supporter of Casa Pia because I was part of the institution and played there. My mother is a teacher there, my father was a coach, my brother also went there, and my grandfather as well. My roots ended up growing on the other side of Belem. It's an institution that tends to be a bit forgotten due to legal issues from the past. But that doesn't mean I don't feel connected to Belenenses, because that's where I started playing rugby, which was a very good start. So, I end up having a good connection. Now that the club started to grow and return to its roots after the split from the SAD, there's a satisfaction in seeing that. However, I don't consider myself a supporter, but someone with a special fondness for the club."</p>	<p>The respondent isn't a Belenenses supporter as his family is connected to Casa Pia (also in Belem). However, he still has a special fondness for the club because he went to many games with people from his living area who are actually supporters, played Rugby at Belenenses, and lies the direction the club has taken since splitting from the SAD.</p>	<p>"Training is a big differentiator. Belenenses accompanies the athlete from youth training to the senior level if the athlete wishes, offering excellent conditions to play and forcing them to be competitive." / "There is a lot of competitiveness within the club, which forces athletes to give their best from an early age and become high-performance athletes very young. Rugby, for example, was quite demanding in training, reflecting the club's desire for success in the youth teams and then transferring that to the seniors." / "Belenenses dominates in Rugby, it's good in Basketball, and excellent in Handball. I know they're a national force. The training mentality is something I see as a strong and differentiating point of Belenenses." / "The youngest end up joining the club at a very early age and growing up within the club."</p> <p>"Management was a bit different in rugby, and that created a certain discrepancy. I came from Casa Pia, so I didn't have the same roots as many of the other players, who came from families with connections to each other and the club. This created a more closed environment, where I felt a bit outside of that core where everyone was very similar (in terms of lifestyle, attitudes, clothing, etc.). Rugby is a sport characterized by families with a medium-high capital, and when you're not part of that environment, you end up feeling marginalized, even if the training and dynamics are great (which they were). There was a lack of that team dynamic, and this also hindered the educational part of sports training. I don't know how it is now, but when I left rugby, it was largely because of this."</p>	<p>The respondent sees the club as a reference when it comes to the academy and development of players from a young age to a senior level. Its main differentiator from other clubs is the training. For him, it offers excellent conditions to play, competitiveness within the teams, and a big desire for success. He sees the club as a national sporting force, being competitive in many sports.</p> <p>However, for him, Rugby has a different management and culture. Being a sport that attracts more medium-high capital individuals, which can lead to segregation of others who don't belong to that environment.</p>
Local 3	<p>"I did taekwondo there for two years, but I think taekwondo at the time wasn't part of the Belenenses club. They rented a space, so I don't know if there's any actual connection to the club. But I think they just rented the gym space."</p> <p>"I know a lot of people, really a lot, in my class at high school at Restelo who played sports at Belenenses. I remember at least two people from my class who were big Belenenses supporters, and throughout my school years, since I always studied in the area, I met some people who were really dedicated to Belenenses and who considered it their main club."</p>	<p>The respondent's relationship with the club comes mainly from having practiced Taekwondo there, feeling an indirect connection to the club during her high school years, due to some classmates who were Belenenses supporters.</p>	<p>"I know they have very passionate supporters, but not many. I know the current conditions at the stadium aren't the best. I know they've built a new rugby stadium, which is somewhere in Monsanto, near Cif. I'm not sure how to describe the club, but I know the conditions at the stadium aren't great. I also know they have some restaurants there, which I sometimes go to. I haven't been in a long time, but there was a time when I used to go often. I also know they split from B-SAD. It's a historical club, and they had a very famous player in the past century. I know it's a well-known club in Lisbon, and they host events and concerts at the stadium."</p> <p>"I know it used to be much more than that, but now I think it's become more of a neighborhood club."</p>	<p>The respondent is aware that Belenenses is a historical club, well known in Lisbon, and their recent split from the SAD. She currently sees it as a neighbourhood club, but she knows it is much bigger than that before. She recognizes it's supporters as passionate, even though not in large numbers. She also knows that the current infrastructure conditions at the stadium aren't the best, but it has restaurants and hosts events and concerts.</p>
Conclusions	<p>All of the respondents practiced sports in Belenenses or in its facilities. Only 2 of the 3 respondents had family ties to Belenenses (her grandfather) but 2 out of the 3 mentioned having sympathy towards Belenenses, with both of them mentioning playing sports there, and the recent split from SAD and change in direction of the club as motives. Having watched live matches and having family ties were also mentioned as motives for sympathy towards the club (but mentioned only by one individual).</p>		<p>When asked about how they perceived the club and how they would describe it, the themes each respondent covered differed significantly. One of the respondents emphasized how rigorous and competitive Belenenses is across all the sports both at an academy and senior level. Another respondent mentioned how passionate the supporters are and how the current infrastructures have deteriorated, even though it is a place that hosts events and concerts. Lastly, other respondent sees Belenenses as a club in "reconstruction".</p> <p>However, a common theme among respondents was that the club is a national reference, with Local 1 saying it was a "big club", Local 2 mentioning it as a "national force" and Local 3 as a "well-known" and "historical club".</p>	

Interviewee	Community Identification with the Club		Community Engagement and Local Actions	
	Quote	Interpretation	Quote	Interpretation
Local 1	<p>"The Restelo area is a place of people who have a certain status and some money, thus a quality of life that most Portuguese people may not have. It's a parish (as seen in elections) that leans heavily to the right. Belenenses, however, is a club that, at least through its supporters, seems to have a much greater social conscience and connection to social causes. You see it in the various stickers around the stadium. These social causes seem to be more of a priority for the club's members than for the general population of Restelo and Belém.</p> <p>For the residents, the main priorities are things like taxes and accessibility (there's no metro). So, I think these issues are easier to associate with a football club than with the area itself, so to speak." / "The typical person who lives in that area and a person who supports Belenenses are quite different. There's a lot more variety, in terms of different social classes, among the people who gather to support Belenenses, unlike the more uniform community of Restelo, which doesn't represent the diversity within Belenenses."</p> <p>"[...] I've also met many people who support the club but don't live in Belém or even Lisbon. I'd say most Belenenses supporters I've met throughout my life were not from that area. That's why I think there's this diversity among supporters, which is reflected in the club, making them distinct realities."</p>	<p>The respondent believes Belenenses as a neighborhood is very uniform and inhabited by people with higher life conditions. For her, Belenenses has much more diversity in terms of social classes of supporters and therefore doesn't restrict itself only to high-income individuals. This diversity between the supporters is further emphasized by the fact that she knows many people who are Belenenses' supporters and don't live in the area. Furthermore, the perception is that the Belenenses members seem to have social causes as a bigger priority than the majority of the population of Belém and Restelo. Ultimately, this local believes the club and the community are distinct realities.</p>	<p>"I've heard that there were games where they gave out Pastéis de Belém. If that's true, it's a gastronomic promotion of the area, and I think those initiatives are interesting, even for tourists. There were also many times when I went with friends who weren't from the area (but were from Lisbon) and wanted to have a Pastel de Belém after the game. So, if Belenenses can facilitate access to the Pastéis de Belém (because the lines are usually huge), it can attract people to the games and also provide access to the culture of the area."</p> <p>"I think Belenenses players did visit my school, and two years ago, they also gave out free tickets."</p> <p>"I don't think people around the area are aware of what happens in the club. I think people only notice when it is game day, and it affects them because they can't park or there is a lot of noise. I feel like I know what's going on because I actively look for it, not because the information is easily accessible. I think they do a good job of the things they do, but the information only reaches those actively looking for it, not those who are indifferent and who would be exposed to it through an algorithm. Or even through the streets, it doesn't have to be just the algorithm. (Around the stadium) The most there was would be a flyer wrapped around a pole with information. In the area, you'd also occasionally find things written by fans or the supporters' group related to Belenenses, often against the SAD."</p>	<p>The respondent enjoyed when Pastéis de Belém were offered in the stadium and that, when typically watching a game with friends from outside the area, they always wanted to eat a Pastel de Belém after the match. Since there are always big lines to buy them, getting them in the stadium would attract people to the games and also provide access to the culture of the area.</p> <p>The visits made to her school and the free tickets stayed in her mind until today.</p> <p>In this respondent's opinion, the club doesn't do a good enough job of informing and engaging the community in what it does, with the information not accessible. Even in the area around the stadium, the information is very scarce. Overall, they should be more proactive and not expect only the people to actively look for it.</p>
Local 2	<p>"The club is a mirror of the community around it. Belém is a privileged area, with a lot of development and people with high capital, close to embassies. This naturally influences the club and the people within it. Sports like rugby end up reflecting this cultural reality more, while football, being broader, also attracts people from outside and therefore has greater multiculturalism (and doesn't mirror the community as well). Rugby ends up being more selective and elitist, which reflects Belém's culture well. Belenenses also connects very well with the older community since it's the club they were born into and that has accompanied them throughout their lives. But in short, I'd say it mirrors it well."</p>	<p>The respondent believes the club mirrors the community well. For her, Belém is a privileged area with people of high capital which is reflected in Belenenses. Rugby reflects this cultural reality more, while football can attract a bigger variety of people even from outside the area. This leads to Rugby being a better mirror of the selective and elitist culture of Belém, while football has a bigger multiculturalism. Lastly, being such an old club with such a big history, it is particularly easy for the older community to identify with it.</p>	<p>"I think the SAD had a focus on football and wanted to get more involved in the other sports. This might have caused a discrepancy. So, I believe the split was something that the club members wanted, and although it was detrimental in the short term, it helped reconnect the club with its fans. The people from the area gathered to help since the club was a bit down. I remember a movement in the Parish Council encouraging people to support the club, which has always been deeply rooted in the area of Belém and the Torres do Restelo and surrounding areas. At least that's what I felt, but I believe the players also noticed this greater support. I went to games during the SAD period that also had support, but not like now."</p> <p>"The Parish Council of Belém is a very active council with its parishioners, organizing many activities (garage sales, Pilates classes, etc.). It's quite dynamic and has money. I remember when the club split that there was an attempt by the council in its newspaper to energize people to go to the games."</p> <p>"The community engages with the club, but I think there could be greater reciprocity from the club. What I would do is open days for people to visit the stadium (I think the Restelo Stadium is one of the stadiums with the most beautiful view, if not the most beautiful). More initiatives to show the club what it stands for, its history, its values, and the stadium. Not only do the people have to take the initiative to discover more about the club, but they also show themselves."</p> <p>"I think there could be more initiatives like discounts on pitch rentals for locals, or campaigns to encourage locals to become members or reclaim their member number (I know they did this many years ago, but then there was no more contact)."</p> <p>"I studied at Restelo Secondary School, and I didn't feel much of the club's presence. What I felt came from the fact that most of the students were Belenenses athletes. The presence of Belenenses was always there for that reason, but the club itself didn't have a presence or initiative. But I think it's something they should do and could invest more in. I think they could promote inter-class tournaments with the club's support to attract young players to their academy and raise awareness about the club. They have Restelo Secondary School or Paula Vicente nearby, for example." / "I think creating a veterans' team would be interesting for older people who still want to play football."</p> <p>"For example, Casa Pia has a very good initiative where every year the senior team players go to visit the Casapiano center."</p>	<p>For the respondent, since the split from the SAD, the engagement between fans and the club increased and so did the support. Since the club is very rooted in the area, the Parish Council also took action to encourage people to support the club in these tougher times in the lower divisions. The respondent believes the Parish Council of Belém to be very active.</p> <p>The respondent believes the community engages with the club, but that there is not enough reciprocity from the club. The club should take more initiative to present themselves (giving the example of open days). Moreover, he feels there could be more initiatives target directly at locals like discounts, campaigns to become a member, promotion in schools of the region and creating a veterans' team.</p>
Local 3	<p>"(When asked if Belenenses represents the values of Restelo and Belém, well) I think so because Restelo is almost like a community since it's a neighborhood within Lisbon. In that sense, yes, because everyone, especially those who have lived in Restelo for a long time, with their parents and grandparents, form a strong community among themselves. I think that's somewhat reflected in Belenenses because many of them end up playing or having played rugby, football, or another sport at Belenenses."</p> <p>"This area, Restelo, is very 'posh.' Everyone knows each other, everyone is related or almost related. Everyone has a friend of a friend, and it's like a bubble of people, partly because it's generations and generations living here. Even if I don't know someone, my grandparents might. I think there's not much of that in other areas of Lisbon, because people keep moving to different places. Here, there's a lot of tradition of staying in Restelo for the social status that living here provides and because they've always lived here. For example, Thebes is just full of apartment buildings, but here there are a lot of houses. It almost feels like it's separate from the rest of the city, like a bubble. Then, if you go a little further into Belém, it's a more touristic area with the Belém Tower, the Monastery, etc. So, I think there's a different dynamic compared to the rest of the city."</p> <p>"However, I don't feel like Belenenses is the center of Restelo at all."</p>	<p>She believes Belenenses represents well the values of Restelo and Belém. For her, this neighborhood is a very strong community with roots that perpetuate for generations, in opposition to the majority of neighborhoods in Lisbon which have a big rotation of people. She feels that is reflected in Belenenses since many of the residents end up playing sports there. However, for her, Belenenses is not the "center" of the community for this local.</p>	<p>"(When asked if the school colleagues were involved with Belenenses) Yes, because many people went for rugby, and then one thing leads to another. When they were promoted to the third and second divisions, I remember everyone going to the stadium to watch the promotion games. I didn't go, but a lot of people did."</p> <p>"With Belenenses, I never know when the games are, and I've never informed about them, and I live 10 minutes from the stadium (but I also don't make an effort to find out)."</p>	<p>The respondent feels that colleagues who played sports in Belenenses were engaged in the club because of it. And that promotion games gathered big crowds. But she feels like the information never gets to her, as she doesn't make an effort to look for it either.</p>
Conclusions	<p>The respondents have distinct views on whether the club represents well the community and its characteristics. One of the respondents affirmed it mirrored very well, another said it represents well, while another said the community and the club are two distinct things. On the other hand, all of them described the area of Restelo and Belém as a very uniform neighborhood, inhabited by higher-income individuals. Even though one of the respondents believes the higher social class culture is very present in Belenenses' Rugby, 2 of the respondents believe football has a much more diverse fan base, even attracting many people outside the area.</p>		<p>All the respondents believed that Belenenses doesn't actively do enough to engage the local community. Local 2 believes the community does engage with the club, but it is not reciprocal with the club having the potential to do many more initiatives targeting the local audience. Local 1 says that she actively looks for information (and that's why it gets to her) while Local 3 who doesn't actively look for it, isn't informed. Showing that passive individuals aren't being addressed by the club.</p> <p>Local 3 pointed out that practicing sports at the club leads to engagement, while Local 2 affirms that after the split from the SAD, the engagement increased by the local community, with the support of the Parish Council. Two of the respondents mention actions in local schools as something that creates a lasting impact and engages the community.</p>	

Interviewee	Belenenses Stadium as a Multi-sport Hub of the Region		Influence of Sports Matches Beyond Football and Activities Besides Matchday	
	Quote	Interpretation	Quote	Interpretation
Local 1	<p>"[...] I played sports there (it was the closest to my house). Playing sports there required being a member. So, the first club I joined was Belenenses."</p> <p>"Everyone who played rugby did so at Belenenses, and most people always practiced their sports there. I think Belenenses competes a lot with Alges since they're so close, and each excels in different sports. Given the prices in the area, I'd also say that Belenenses makes sports more accessible with cheaper options. I only regret that the pool, where I used to swim, closed down. When that happened, I was forced to look for other places nearby (which were more expensive). They were really large pools, and it's a shame that Belenenses didn't continue with that. The pools could close, but Belenenses could have said, 'hey, we've arranged this solution.' Even collaborating with the municipal pools, I don't think that happened at the time, and a lot was lost. When you do sports there, you're required to be a member, so Belenenses is a lot of money too. Those who aren't Belenenses fans and are just there for the sports won't keep paying their membership fees without that incentive."</p>	<p>The respondent played sports in Belenenses, as it was the closest club to her residence. Which required her to become a member. For her, most people the met practiced sports there (particularly the ones who played Rugby). However, Belenenses faces some competition from Alges, with each one excelling at different sports.</p> <p>She didn't enjoy the fact that the swimming pools were closed and how Belenenses handled it. And she believed it damaged the revenue from the club, as people who weren't fans also stopped being members because they didn't need the membership anymore. But, she does like that Belenenses offers the possibility to practice sports cheaply.</p>	<p>"I think using the stadium for concerts is always a good idea. But I think Restelo Stadium is still strongly associated with the concerts that used to happen there, like in Alvalade Stadium and now Estádio da Luz. But it's an easy way to draw people in and introduce them to the stadium. Organizing sports tournaments and better communicating that people can play on the fields at Restelo Stadium would also help promote physical activity and generate revenue from the fields. Ideas could also come up from there, like paying an extra 2 euros for field rental and getting a ticket to watch Belenenses. I think people who go there to play football might be interested in attending a game. And now, with Lidl nearby, parking is easy, which also encourages people to go."</p>	<p>The respondent believes using the stadium to do concerts is good as it is an easy way to draw people in and introduce them to the stadium. The club could also use its facilities to organize sports tournaments as well as better promote that the fields can be rented. This could even generate synergies.</p>
Local 2	<p>"I studied at Restelo Secondary School, and I didn't feel much of the club's presence. What I felt came from the fact that most of the students were Belenenses athletes. Their youth academies have so many players that if a lot of them attended the games, the stadium would be packed. I think they could capitalize more on their youth athletes, as all the kids from private schools around here end up being Belenenses athletes."</p> <p>"[...] (Belenenses) is where I started playing rugby, which was a very good start. So, I end up having a good connection. / Belenenses dominates in Rugby, it's good in Basketball, and excellent in Handball. I know they're a national force. The training mentality is something I see as a strong and differentiating point of Belenenses. The youngest end up joining the club at a very early age and growing up within the club. Training is a big differentiator. Belenenses accompanies the athlete from youth training to the senior level if the athlete wishes, offering excellent conditions to play and forcing them to be competitive. There is a lot of competitiveness within the club, which forces athletes to give their best from an early age and become high-performance athletes very young."</p>	<p>The respondent says most of her colleagues in school played at Belenenses and that the club should capitalize more on the academy players to fill the stadium. Moreover, he feels the club is a reference in training and athlete development, having excellent conditions to play and a competitive environment.</p>	<p>"I think the club could better promote the youth games. Many people watch those games, but if there was better publicity, more people would attend. I think there's interest in various sports, not just football. People would go to basketball or handball if they knew more about these games. Considering the strength they have in these sports, I think they should capitalize more. For example, by placing the game schedules in the parish council's newspaper."</p> <p>"What I would do is open days for people to visit the stadium (I think the Restelo Stadium is one of the stadiums with the most beautiful view, if not the most beautiful)."</p>	<p>The respondent believes the club could better promote youth games and games from other sports besides football (for example, using the parish council's newspaper) as he thinks there is interest in them. He would also promote open days for the community to visit the stadium.</p>
Local 3	<p>"I did taekwondo there for two years, but I think taekwondo at the time wasn't part of the Belenenses club. They rented a space, so I don't know if there's any actual connection to the club. But I think they just rented the gym space."</p> <p>"I know a lot of people, really a lot, in my class in high school at Restelo who played sports at Belenenses. I'd say half of my class did volleyball, rugby, or some other activity at Belenenses."</p> <p>"In that sense, yes (the community identifies with Belenenses), because everyone, especially those who have lived in Restelo for a long time, with their parents and grandparents, form a strong community among themselves. I think that's somewhat reflected in Belenenses because many of them end up playing or having played rugby, football, or another sport at Belenenses."</p> <p>"I think improving the conditions at the stadium would help. I know many people who used to train there, especially a close friend who played football there. The conditions were horrible, so it discouraged people from continuing the tradition of playing sports there due to the stadium's poor conditions. But I also know that money isn't infinite. I know they built a Lidl store there, and I think they renovated that part of the stadium, which is great. But maybe improving the facilities a bit would help motivate more people, new generations, to keep going. To go there instead of switching to bigger clubs. Even in football, many players moved on to Alges and the youth programs at Sporting and Benfica. I feel like in terms of football training, Belenenses is already a second option to Alges."</p> <p>"I think yes (the club is positive for the area) because it cultivates a lot of sports in the region. I feel like many people do sports at Belenenses (I did too). So, I think maybe investing more in sports programs, developing players, and maybe building more of a name around that since they're losing in football."</p>	<p>The respondent practiced a sport in the Belenenses stadium and many of her classmates in the local school practiced sports in Belenenses. However, she feels that Belenenses infrastructure conditions aren't perceived as the best and that can lead to the club losing players to others. She has the perception that the club has a positive impact on the region because it fosters a lot of sports practice, and since they aren't at the top in senior football right now, they build on that.</p>	<p>"I know it's a well-known club in Lisbon, and they host events and concerts at the stadium. I also know they have some restaurants there, which I sometimes go to. I haven't been in a long time, but there was a time when I used to go often. / Hosting concerts there brings people in. I know they're doing a few concerts, but I feel like they're losing some to the Passeio Marítimo in Alges. It feels like more events are happening there and fewer at the Belenenses stadium. So, promoting more events and using the space they have would help. I haven't been to a concert there, but my parents have been, so I know they exist. I never went because it just didn't happen, and in recent years, I feel like there hasn't been much going on, and the events that have happened didn't interest me. / But I think hosting more events there is key."</p> <p>"I know that at least Belenenses Rugby has a big community, especially that part. I don't know if they have one, but I'd assume they have an Instagram for Belenenses Rugby where they post the lineup and such because I think Rugby has more of an impact at Belenenses than football at the moment. Restelo is a very 'posh' area, and there's a much bigger attraction to Rugby. I went to Colégio Helen Keller until the sixth grade. There are many people there who don't live in Restelo, from places like Alfragide, Miraflores, Linda-a-Velha, and I felt a bit outside the Restelo bubble, and all my classmates played football. I don't even remember hearing about Rugby. However, when I went to high school at Restelo, there were maybe one or two boys who played football, and the rest were all into Rugby. / Being a smaller sport than football, Rugby allows Belenenses to have more of an impact than in football, which is much bigger. I think football is still bigger here in the area than Rugby because it's football, and it's the biggest sport ever. But I think there's more of a Rugby culture here than in other areas of Lisbon."</p> <p>"I think Lidl was a great addition and brings a lot of people to the area. The restaurant, I haven't been in a long time, and I don't even know why I stopped going. I know the food was good, so maybe more promotion of the restaurants could be important. Partnering with The Fork, for example. Speaking for myself, when I plan a dinner, I use The Fork to see where there are discounts."</p>	<p>The respondent believes holding events in the stadium is key. But also wants that the fees Belenenses is losing concerts and events to Passeio Marítimo de Alges. She also believes the restaurants can be a good way to attract people to the facilities, suggesting more promotion and partnerships with The Fork. She also suggests Rugby as a sport where Belenenses could capitalize, since she feels this area of Lisbon is the one with the biggest Rugby culture.</p>
Conclusions	<p>All of the respondents practiced sports in Belenenses at some point in their lives and so did many of their school colleagues in the local schools. Two of the respondents mentioned Belenenses as a sporting reference and one mentioned how it can offer the opportunity for people to practice sports at a cheaper cost. The infrastructure conditions and the closing of the swimming pools were also mentioned as something that makes Belenenses lose athletes (and members). With two of the respondents talking about Alges as a competitor.</p>		<p>2 of the respondents pointed to promoting concerts and events as a way to use the facilities besides matchday. One of the respondents suggested promoting more tournaments and the fields that can be rented, while another suggested open days for the community to visit the stadium.</p> <p>One of the respondents believes with a better promotion that the club could capitalize more on youth and non-football games with another respondent focused particularly on Rugby, as she believes Belenenses could capitalize on the stronger culture of that sport in the region.</p>	

Interviewee	Economic Impact and Synergies with Local Businesses		Tourism Integration	
	Quote	Interpretation	Quote	Interpretation
Local 1	<p>"I know that Belenenses has partnerships with nearby schools. But I think the main targets should be Pastéis de Belém and Careca with their croissants. These are two well-known attractions, or if people don't know them, they become aware of them and may want to not only attend Belenenses games but also visit those specific places. Everything is very close, so the accessibility is good."</p> <p>"There are several schools nearby, including the Ajuda University Campus. I think it would be cool for Belenenses to have initiatives with these institutions. For example, offering tickets, like the first 10 people to show up at the stadium get a free ticket. Making it easier to buy tickets at these points as well, because people see there's a game nearby and think it's interesting and go."</p> <p>"I also think that partnerships with student associations could be a good idea, as they're always looking for sponsors, and having Belenenses as a sponsor would add a certain prestige to their list."</p>	<p>The respondent believes Belenenses' main targets for synergies should be Pastéis de Belém and Careca with its croissants. Moreover, since many schools and universities are nearby (Ajuda University Campus), they should have initiatives with these institutions like offering tickets or establishing selling points. They could also capitalize on the student associations of these institutions as they are typically looking for sponsors and Belenenses is a name that adds prestige.</p>	<p>"There were also many times when I went (to Belenenses' games) with friends who aren't from the area (but are from Lisbon) and wanted to have a Pastel de Belém after the game. So, if Belenenses can facilitate access to the Pastéis de Belém (because the lines are usually huge), it can attract people to the games and also provide access to the culture of the area."</p>	<p>The respondent says that when she went to games with friends who weren't from the zone, they typically wanted to eat a Pastel de Belém after the game. Therefore, facilitating access to this sweet can attract more people and show the culture of the area to outsiders.</p>
Local 2	<p>"The Lidl that was built in the area had a big impact and, for me, made it an excellent and useful zone. It also boosts the area a lot on game and concert days with much more movement, which benefits businesses like Pastéis de Belém and other local shops. Personally, whenever I went to see a Belenenses game, I'd go eat a Pastel de Belém."</p> <p>"If Belenenses continues to grow in the Portuguese League, that could be more economically advantageous for the community."</p> <p>"I feel that Belenenses is quite integrated into the local ecosystem. But there are possibilities for more. For example, here near there's a car dealership called Auto Restelo, and I would try to integrate them with the club, for instance, advertising with the players on social media, providing rental cars to the players, or partnerships with people who go to games to get a discount on car rentals."</p>	<p>The respondent feels that Belenenses is integrated into the local business ecosystem boosting local shops (like Pastéis de Belém) during game days and concerts, with that impact tending to increase as Belenenses continues to grow in the Portuguese League. He gives some good examples such as the Lidl partnership, however, he believes there is potential for more and suggests a partnership with a local car dealership.</p>	<p>"Looking at tourism, despite having a great history, since it doesn't have many recent achievements, I think it's complicated. However, there are many travel agencies nearby, and I think it could be interesting to have a package where someone visits Belém, eats a Pastel de Nata, and watches a Belenenses game."</p> <p>"They could also open up Belém Park with activities aimed at tourists."</p> <p>"Belenenses is one of the most important landmarks of Belém and has everything to be even better."</p>	<p>For the respondent, despite Belenenses having a great history, since it doesn't have many recent sporting achievements it's harder to attract tourists. However, it is one of the most important landmarks of Belém and has potential. To fulfill this, he suggests partnering with local travel agencies and offering a package for visitors to watch a Belenenses game and eat a Pastel de Nata (same as Pastel de Belém, but from different bakeries) as well as open up Belém Park with activities aimed at tourists.</p>
Local 3	<p>"Answering whether Belenenses had a big economic impact in the region (I'd say no, but I'm not very knowledgeable on the subject, so I can't say for sure. But no, I don't think so. People only go to Belenenses (besides the games) for the restaurants or to play sports. Especially considering Belém is such a touristy area, I think most of the economy comes from that, like the Monastery, the Belém Tower, and Careca. It's involved, meaning it's part of the ecosystem in Belém, but not a big part of it. But I think adding Lidl was a great improvement because it refreshes the area."</p> <p>"I think Lidl was a great addition and brings a lot of people to the area. The restaurants, I haven't been in a long time, and I don't even know why I stopped going. I know the food was good, so maybe more promotion of the restaurants could be important. Partnering with The Fork, for example. Speaking for myself, when I plan a dinner, I use The Fork to see where there are discounts."</p> <p>"I think hosting more events there (in the stadium) is key"</p>	<p>The respondent believes Belenenses is part of the business ecosystem. However, it does not have a big economic impact on the region because the region is much more geared towards tourism. She enjoyed the partnership with Lidl and also believes restaurants and events in the stadium are important.</p>	<p>"Considering Belém is such a touristy area, I think most of the economy comes from that, like the Monastery, the Belém Tower, and Careca."</p> <p>"Making the stadium a bigger tourist attraction (would help the finances of Belenenses)"</p>	<p>The respondent believes Belém is a very touristy area with most of the economy coming from that. Therefore, making the stadium a bigger tourist attraction would be beneficial for Belenenses.</p>
Conclusions	<p>Of the 3 participants, 2 said that Belenenses was part of the business ecosystem. However with contrasting views, as one thought it had a reasonable impact on the economy while the other said it didn't impact much, as the economy of the area is much more affected by the tourist activities.</p> <p>2 of them believe the partnership with Lidl was great for improving the area and bringing more people.</p> <p>2 respondents stated they think there is potential for more synergies and suggested some establishments for partnerships: Pastéis de Belém, Careca, local schools and universities, and a car dealership. The bakery "Careca" was mentioned by 2 respondents while the bakery "Pastéis de Belém" was also mentioned by 2 respondents.</p>	<p>A respondent identifies Belém as a very touristic area, which Belenenses could capitalize on by making its stadium a bigger tourist attraction. Another respondent corroborated that potential, saying the Belenenses' stadium is one of the biggest landmarks in Belém. However, not having many recent top-flight sporting feats can be a barrier to attracting tourists.</p> <p>One of the respondents says that when going to Belenenses games with friends from outside they always wanted to eat a Pastel de Belém after the game. Another respondent also suggested that to appeal to tourists a package could be offered for people to attend a Belenenses' game and eat a Pastel de Belém. It was also suggested that Belenenses promotes activities for tourists in Belém Park.</p>		

Interviewee	Quota	Communication, Merchandise, Marketing, and Digital Presence	Interpretation	Quota	Game Days and Stadium Attendance	Interpretation
Local 1	<p>"I think people today love collecting jerseys, and they don't identify with modern styles. When people see a retro jersey, it sells a lot. In the case of Estoril, their main jersey was already sold out by August. I can't remember ever seeing an Estoril jersey sold out. But the fact that the jersey is beautiful and they do the photoshoots at specific locations around Estoril also connects the community to the club. People might see a beautiful place in the photo and think, 'Where is this? I want to visit.' I think their retro jersey should be marketed more because I know many people who like it, and I don't think it's too expensive. I've also seen several clubs like Atlético Madrid or Real Valencia where one of their kits supports a social cause. I think Belenenses could do something different by associating with causes."</p> <p>"In terms of marketing, they could follow clubs like Estoril. I'm not sure how effective those initiatives are at drawing people, but I think any attention they can bring to the club is positive. But after drawing that attention, you have to continue engaging people and be consistent. The last game I attended was in December last year, and they had a bunch of scarves, and they were going to wear [and everyone wanted one]. For example, I didn't have anything because I was late, and I got the scarf. I think that makes a difference on TV because Belenenses came away with a lot more people with Belenenses merchandise."</p> <p>"Information usually reaches me through Instagram, and what doesn't come directly from the source, I see because I follow Belenenses fans, and things always find their way to me. So, if I don't see it on Instagram, I hear about it from a Belenenses supporter through social media like Twitter. Belenenses also shares information quite well regarding tickets on Twitter, which is good."</p> <p>"I don't think people around the area are aware of what happens in the club. I think people only notice when it's game day, and it affects them because they can't park or there is a lot of noise. I feel like I know what's going on because I actively look for it, not because the information is easily accessible. I think they do a good job of the things they do, but the information only reaches those actively looking for it, not those who are indifferent and who would be exposed to it through an algorithm. Or even through the streets, I don't have to be at the stadium. Around the stadium the most there would be a few wrapped around a pole with information. In the area, you'd also occasionally find things written by fans or the supporter group related to Belenenses, often against the SAD."</p>	<p>The respondent believes we are currently seeing a trend where people are looking for retro and authentic jerseys and that Belenenses could capitalize on that, giving the example of Estoril and its Marketing efforts. She also believes Belenenses could partner with associations to support causes and do something different with them.</p> <p>Her main source of information about Belenenses is Instagram, but what she reads there she finds through the Belenenses supporters that she follows. Twitter is a good source of information regarding tickets. However, she believes people around the area aren't aware of what happens in the club as the information is not easily accessible and there are no efforts to reach people who don't actively look for it. Even around the stadium, there is almost no information.</p>	<p>"I know sometimes the ticket prices can be a barrier because I've seen many Belenenses fans complaining. I think people's price limits for watching third division football should be around 10 euros at most. There's a lot of talk about Belenenses being a tough stadium to fill, even when they were in the top division. I think all the facilities are quite outdated. For example, the place where you buy tickets is unappealing and very small, and when I went, they only accepted cash payments. So, Belenenses doesn't make it easy with prices or with the ticket selling process. It also seems like online ticket sales aren't very encouraged by Belenenses, and I think that's a bit of a problem. The comfort of your home and pay via MB Way would help because people don't want to go out to do anything. For example, the Sporting website is terrible for buying tickets. If Belenenses can differentiate itself there, that would be good. Last year, I was thinking about getting a season ticket, and the price wasn't even that high. From what I remember, becoming a member and getting a season ticket was quite affordable. So, encouraging more people to buy a season ticket could be a good move because it's more affordable than always buying a single ticket for 15 euros. One thing Belenenses does well at is that regard is that the season ticket card allows you to bring a guest. As attractive as it may be, not everyone will want to become a member or have a season ticket. So, being able to bring someone with you is always good, and it's a way to fill the stadium."</p> <p>"[Talking about the stadium conditions] For me, no, those things don't matter much. But I know that to some people, it makes a difference, or for those going for the first time, it leaves a bad impression. Even though the stadium has a great view, that can impact the experience."</p> <p>"[Talking about what she likes the most about a game day at Belenenses] I think it's the atmosphere. I think Belenenses' fan group is very dedicated and stays engaged throughout the whole game. The supporters are quite loyal, and you might not see that level of support at other clubs. That's something that makes a difference. The stadium has a very family-friendly atmosphere. You never feel like something bad is going to happen or that there's going to be trouble with fans. It's an environment where you feel safe, even when it rains are there."</p> <p>"[The game day you could always feel it because there were always a lot of cars. Especially as you get closer to the stadium, you'd see many cars and a buzz of people arriving early to eat nearby. Recently, there was a concert at Belenenses Stadium, and the fan thing my dad did was call me and say, 'Oh, there's a game happening?' He saw so many people that he assumed it was a Belenenses game. Maybe just about the food trucks. I think there could be more activity around them, like at Alvalade or Estádio da Luz. Having that culture also attracts people and makes them arrive earlier than just a game time. I bring people together two hours before the game to socialize because I think promoting that social aspect is really at the heart of football and why people go to the stadium." / "I know Belenenses has a fan zone, but I think people like the opportunity of food trucks because they're organized activities by the club. Fans also associate club-organized events with being more expensive, whereas with food trucks, you have more choice since there are more options."</p>	<p>The respondent says many people complain about ticket pricing at Belenenses. Furthermore, the process of buying tickets isn't very appealing as the physical place is not very comfortable, and there is little promotion of online ticket sales. She mentions the example of Sporting as a bad website from which to purchase tickets and says it would be good if Belenenses could differentiate itself in that regard. She believes the season ticket is seen as a great option as the prices are affordable and the option to bring a guest is great. Because of this, it is believed that season tickets should be encouraged over buying tickets individually.</p> <p>When she was visiting in the area, she could always feel when a game day was happening because there were always a lot of cars and a buzz of people arriving nearby. She believes, when going to the stadium, people value socializing in the food trucks a lot and that is one of the key things that makes people attend matches. For her, Estádio do Restelo could be more actively around it, as the fans' food truck activity isn't so big as in Benfica or Sporting stadiums. She also doesn't appreciate a fan zone as much as food trucks because it doesn't have the same spontaneity and fans associate club-organized events as being more expensive because of the lack of choice.</p> <p>For her, the strongest aspect of a match-day at Belenenses is the atmosphere, with fans being engaged throughout the whole game. Moreover, the stadium has a very family-friendly atmosphere which makes you feel safe, even when playing against rivals. She does imagine that for some people the state of the stadium might leave a bad impression (mainly for first-time guests), but she doesn't mind at all. She also notes that the stadium has a great view.</p>		
Local 2	<p>"They could also improve the club store with more merchandising options, especially aimed at different age groups. They could, for example, create gifts or baskets (instead of cans), something that appeals to older people. I think having dedicated offers for various age groups would attract more people."</p> <p>"I think the club could better promote the youth games. Many people watch those games, but if there was better publicity, more people would attend. I think there's interest in various sports, not just football. People would go to basketball or handball if they knew more about those games. Considering the strength they have in these sports, I think they should capitalize more. For example, by placing the game schedules in the parish council's newspaper. The newspaper is a good means of dissemination and could be used more to inform about games and activities. I think an app with updates about games, events, and other activities would also be a good idea, as it would allow more direct communication with the fans. The club needs to modernize and have a greater digital presence. If there was more publicity of the game schedule in advance, people could plan. For example, having the whole schedule on the website or a dedicated app."</p> <p>"Belenenses never comes through a neighbor, who's a very active supporter. Through sports newspapers like A Bola. Or through social media, because I follow Belenenses even though I'm not a supporter. But I feel like what they post on social media is never all the news, it's just the most dynamic, or what they will go viral. But if they had another way to expand it, it would be good because otherwise, the source is just Instagram or people who are aware. Like what there is doing now, with the most active channels here, it could also be interesting to be more transparent and open the doors more."</p> <p>"I don't remember any posts. Very stagnant. It shouldn't just be a channel for dissemination. It should also be a channel for interaction with fans. I like Casa Pia's social media because they do challenges with the players, and tend to follow trends (cosplay challenge, locker room content). Casa Pia also does many stunts on social media, and Belenenses could pick up on that as well. Today, digital is so important, so I think they should invest in it."</p> <p>"For example, my nephew, who played at Belenenses, won the 'Jogador de Elite' award for being a dedicated and hardworking player, and the award was taking a photo with the senior players, which the parents then received. I don't know if it was publicized in another way, but I think it could be shared with the whole community."</p>	<p>The respondent believes that the club could offer merchandise tailored to different age groups.</p> <p>He believes Belenenses could better promote its youth games as well as non-professional football games and capitalize on those as well. Still at the academy level, they could share information about what happens inside it to the whole Belenenses' community.</p> <p>He suggests Belenenses should focus more on digitalization and improving its digital presence. Maybe even having its own app. Continuing on digital, he believes what is posted on Instagram is not all the information and that they could have a platform where they expand more on non-social information that will be as being more transparent. For him, Belenenses' Instagram is also very stagnant and they should look at it also as a channel to promote interaction with fans.</p> <p>Lately, he believes the parish council's newspaper is also a good source for disseminating information. With him believing that having the whole season schedule published in a platform would be good.</p>	<p>"[...] I went to a lot of games with people from the area who are really supporters of the club." / "When in his house on game days I feel everything, the anthem even when the anthem, the intro whistle, even the screams of people when there's a goal. Due to the way the stadium is built. You see the presence of the police, the barfa stands open, the traffic. Speaking of the barfa stands, I think if they had Belenenses barfa stands, it would be very good. If the club doesn't charge high prices and invests in something of its own. It could be a very inclusive move. A discount for members like in-merchandising football games and capitalizing on those as well. Still at the academy level, they could share information about what happens inside it to the whole Belenenses' community."</p> <p>"Since those food businesses aren't there, I imagine there are no discounts."</p> <p>"[The stadium is incredible. The conditions are good, although they could improve. Being on the break and looking at the view is something great. What I liked more was the interaction between the players and the fans at the end of the game. It was a very family-like dynamic that didn't exist in other clubs. Fans talking to the players is a positive thing because fans feel included. They have the opinion and are part of the team. Of course, there's always the downside of some more aggressive behavior, so there's always risk involved, but I think it's worth it. It would like to see, for example, in both interviews, a hearing that the academy would be interesting. This would help attract more people on social media, and a fan would get the opportunity to ask that question."</p> <p>"[Talking about factors that influence his decision to go to the stadium] Positively, how close the stadium is. Negatively, the price of tickets is something that doesn't help. If there were more publicity of the game schedule in advance, people could plan. For example, having the whole schedule in the website or a dedicated app."</p> <p>"Their youth academies have to be present. That if all of them attended the games, the stadium would be packed. I think they could capitalize more on their youth athletes, as all the kids from private schools around here end up being Belenenses athletes."</p>	<p>The respondent went to some games with people from the area who are supporters of the club. He thinks the stadium is incredible, even though conditions could improve a bit. The view of the stadium is very good. He really enjoyed the family-like dynamic with fans talking to the players and thinks it should be promoted even more, giving the idea of having a question bank at the stadium in the post-match interviews. He says the stadium is so close to his house positively influences his decision to go to the stadium, but sometimes the schedule is not very convenient. And if they were publicized in advance, people would attend more because they could plan with it in mind. For him, Belenenses could capitalize more on its youth athletes, since the club has so many, it could be a way to fill the stadium. In his view, Belenenses could also pursue its own barfa truck, on which it could offer discounts for members. This is also in merchandising.</p> <p>The respondent affirms that in his house, during game days, he can hear everything: the initial whistle, the anthem, even the goals. Due to the stadium having one open section. During those days, he also sees much more traffic, police, and the barfa truck, which is clear for him it is a game day.</p>		
Local 3	<p>"With Belenenses, I never know when the games are, and I'm never informed about them and I live 30 minutes from the stadium (but I also don't make an effort to find out). There are no billboards or signs around the stadium that I am aware of. I have also never seen anything from Belenenses on social media or any influencers' pages. I also never had the interest to check Belenenses social media."</p>	<p>The respondent affirms that she never knows when games are taking place, even though living close to the stadium. There are no billboards or signs around the stadium and she has never seen anything from Belenenses' social media or anything about it in influencers' pages. However, she assumes she doesn't make an effort to look for it.</p>	<p>"I've never been (to a Belenenses game). I think it's just because I never had the opportunity. Even though my family is very supportive of Benfica, we're not against Belenenses at all, because I don't think they're a real rival to the Benfica games, and I think that's enough football for me, so going to Belenenses games doesn't interest me much. Also, whenever my friends were going to a game, I couldn't go. So I think it's more a matter of coincidence than not wanting to go."</p> <p>"[Answering to what motivates her to attend Benfica games] Because I have a Red Bull, I enjoy going, and it's a family event (we always go together). It's something historic in our family, we've been going forever. I like the atmosphere, the supporters, but mainly because it's a weekly event where I spend time with my family, and we're all together doing something we all enjoy. So I also like that family aspect. I don't think it's specifically because it's Benfica games, but more because it's tradition. But Benfica games in particular, I really like the club, so watching the games is something I enjoy. And the atmosphere/community feeling is something I like. Everyone wants the same thing and fights for it."/></p> <p>"For me, going to a Benfica game is like going to a restaurant. It's something frequent, and I don't spend the whole week looking forward to it. But the low frequency of Belenenses games makes people want to go more because they haven't been in a while."</p> <p>"[Answering if it would have been possible to have the family's tradition of going to Belenenses instead of Benfica] I think I would have had interest. Once a team is in the third division, how interesting it is to go to the games? Maybe we would still go to the important games, but I don't think I'm passionate enough to go to all the games of a team that's always losing or not playing well, especially against bad teams. So the fact that it's not a very competitive team, I think it demotivates people from going."</p> <p>"[Answering what makes a game appealing for her to attend] I'd say the atmosphere. I feel like with Benfica, there are so many people there, and that helps bring more people. If there are a lot of people, it must be good."</p> <p>"I've never known when it's game day (in Belén). I only find out later from people's Instagram stories. And only when, when it's a really important game, not on regular game days."</p>	<p>The respondent has never been to a Belenenses game. Not because she is against the club, but rather because the price of all of Benfica's matches and therefore doesn't have an interest in watching more football. The only fan opportunities to go with friends, but she could never go. In her case, Benfica is a weekly family event that is rooted in the whole family and that is the main reason she attends Benfica games. She enjoys those games because that's time spent with the family, because she really likes the club and because the atmosphere/community feeling is something she likes. She reinforces atmosphere being a key factor in attending games as well as being crowded, which demonstrates quality in her eyes. However, she can't imagine this family tradition happening with Belenenses instead of Benfica, as she believes she would have had interest in the team playing in the third division. She doesn't feel so passionate enough about football to watch both types of matches.</p> <p>She also mentions that she never knew when a game day in Belén and only sometimes find out via people's Instagram stories. And even that, only in important games.</p>		
Conclusions	<p>In this section, various award. One of the respondents believes that is very well informed about the club, with Instagram, Twitter, and other supporters being the reason for it. Another supporter says that even though she lives very close to the stadium, she never knows when things are happening. She says this happens since there is no physical information around the stadium and she never sees anything on social media about the club. This is corroborated by the respondent who believes to be well informed, as she says that it is only because the activity looks for information, and that there are few efforts to reach people who don't actively look for it, also corroborating that there is very few information around the stadium.</p> <p>For one of the respondents, Belenenses should publicize more what happens in the academy and sports besides football as she believes there is interest in them. For that, he suggests the use of the parish newspaper as well as transparent digital channels, affirming that Belenenses needs to focus more on digitalization, maybe even developing its own app. This respondent also thinks the club's Instagram is too stagnant and should promote more interaction with the fans in it.</p> <p>When it comes to merchandise, one respondent said he thinks the club should develop products tailored to different age groups, while another thinks Belenenses should ride the trend of producing more retro and authentic apparel.</p>	<p>Of the 30 respondents, 21 of them notice when it is a game day in Belén. Saying they feel the increase in traffic, people circulating around the stadium, and police. One of the respondents even stated that he could hear what happens inside the stadium due to the way it is built. Those same 21 respondents have been to Belenenses games (privately and point out as key strengths of those experiences the passionate atmosphere, the great view and beautiful stadium, the family-like dynamic, and the safety. They both acknowledged the stadium could be a little bit better maintained but none of them point it as a major factor to not attend the matches. The respondent who has never attended a Belenenses game, she states that the key factor that leads her to go to games is the atmosphere and the crowds. She typically attends Benfica games, and what she likes the most about them is the atmosphere and that she gets to spend time with her family. For her, Belenenses playing in a lower division is a big factor in not watching the games.</p> <p>When it comes to tickets, one of the respondents says the price is quite expensive and the process of buying them is not very pleasant. For her, Belenenses should improve and incentivize the process of buying tickets online. What she does applaud is the season ticket as she believes is reasonable in price and has the feature of a person being able to take a guest with him.</p> <p>One respondent touched upon the fact that he believed Belenenses could capitalize more on the big numbers of academy players it has to fill its stadium.</p>	<p>"I've never been (to a Belenenses game). I think it's just because I never had the opportunity. Even though my family is very supportive of Benfica, we're not against Belenenses at all, because I don't think they're a real rival to the Benfica games, and I think that's enough football for me, so going to Belenenses games doesn't interest me much. Also, whenever my friends were going to a game, I couldn't go. So I think it's more a matter of coincidence than not wanting to go."</p> <p>"[Answering to what motivates her to attend Benfica games] Because I have a Red Bull, I enjoy going, and it's a family event (we always go together). It's something historic in our family, we've been going forever. I like the atmosphere, the supporters, but mainly because it's a weekly event where I spend time with my family, and we're all together doing something we all enjoy. So I also like that family aspect. I don't think it's specifically because it's Benfica games, but more because it's tradition. But Benfica games in particular, I really like the club, so watching the games is something I enjoy. And the atmosphere/community feeling is something I like. Everyone wants the same thing and fights for it."/></p> <p>"For me, going to a Benfica game is like going to a restaurant. It's something frequent, and I don't spend the whole week looking forward to it. But the low frequency of Belenenses games makes people want to go more because they haven't been in a while."</p> <p>"[Answering if it would have been possible to have the family's tradition of going to Belenenses instead of Benfica] I think I would have had interest. Once a team is in the third division, how interesting it is to go to the games? Maybe we would still go to the important games, but I don't think I'm passionate enough to go to all the games of a team that's always losing or not playing well, especially against bad teams. So the fact that it's not a very competitive team, I think it demotivates people from going."</p> <p>"[Answering what makes a game appealing for her to attend] I'd say the atmosphere. I feel like with Benfica, there are so many people there, and that helps bring more people. If there are a lot of people, it must be good."</p> <p>"I've never known when it's game day (in Belén). I only find out later from people's Instagram stories. And only when, when it's a really important game, not on regular game days."</p>	<p>The respondent has never been to a Belenenses game. Not because she is against the club, but rather because the price of all of Benfica's matches and therefore doesn't have an interest in watching more football. The only fan opportunities to go with friends, but she could never go. In her case, Benfica is a weekly family event that is rooted in the whole family and that is the main reason she attends Benfica games. She enjoys those games because that's time spent with the family, because she really likes the club and because the atmosphere/community feeling is something she likes. She reinforces atmosphere being a key factor in attending games as well as being crowded, which demonstrates quality in her eyes. However, she can't imagine this family tradition happening with Belenenses instead of Benfica, as she believes she would have had interest in the team playing in the third division. She doesn't feel so passionate enough about football to watch both types of matches.</p> <p>She also mentions that she never knew when a game day in Belén and only sometimes find out via people's Instagram stories. And even that, only in important games.</p>		

Appendix 2.3 – Interviews with tourists

Interviewee	Quote	Awareness and Promotion		Positioning and Historical Background	
		Quote	Interpretation	Quote	Interpretation
Tourist 1	<p>"I was aware that there was a stadium, but I had no clue how big it was or how modern or how professional the stadium was. I just knew there was a stadium and I think maybe it was once that I had a conversation with the cab driver that he explained that previously Belém was quite a good club."</p> <p>"If I would visit a football club because I want to experience football as well, it would rather be Benfica or Sporting, because I've heard of them and not that much of Belém."</p>	<p>Even though the respondent knew about the stadium, the knowledge was very reduced, due to the lack of awareness around Belenenses.</p> <p>Benfica and Sporting also contribute to this, since they overshadow smaller clubs, like Belenenses.</p>	<p>"If I would visit a football club because I want to experience football as well, it would rather be Benfica or Sporting, because I've heard of them and not that much of Belém."</p> <p>"Yeah, I think if it's truly an experience to go there. So, I think if it's more promoted and there is a lot of history that you can learn about and how it was the first really big club in Portugal."</p>	<p>As referred previously, the dominance of Benfica and Sporting impacts Belenenses, since fans' first choice isn't Belenenses almost every time. On the other hand, the history and location of Belenenses may leverage it to new heights, attracting new fans and taking advantage of its competitive advantages.</p>	
Tourist 2	<p>"But I have to admit that I love going to smaller stadiums and smaller clubs as well. I just didn't manage to do so. And to be honest, I did not really know what kind of clubs there were like within the Lisbon area besides the two big clubs."</p> <p>"But I was just missing the time and maybe also you were not able to get as much information about the smaller clubs on the internet, so maybe that could be something that could be improved by those smaller clubs."</p> <p>"So, I felt like you don't have that much information about the small clubs or that are like in the area of Lisbon."</p>	<p>This tourist is a dedicated football fan, who loves attending smaller stadiums and clubs. However, the lack of information regarding them didn't allow him to know as much as he would've liked about their history and current state. He noted that information on lesser-known clubs was hard to find, especially online, highlighting a need for targeted promotion, particularly toward tourists interested in local sports experiences.</p>	<p>"But for me, it's definitely worth a visit, I just googled it up and it's quite big. I was not expecting that."</p> <p>"It's obviously always interesting to look ok: what has the club achieved already? Have they been part of the First Division in the past or did they get those major trophies, which interesting player played for them? It's kind of like not a museum, but it's kind of a history storytelling about the club. I think that would be quite interesting."</p> <p>"I think attracting especially this niche of football enthusiasts could be really interesting. To actually engage those people, there are several apps you should take the word groundhopping into account. That's like a huge base of football enthusiasts who are interested in visiting exactly those kinds of stadiums. So, there are several Facebook groups and several mobile applications."</p>	<p>Following the example of other clubs that use their historic background to attract visitors and fans curious about it, Belenenses could also bet on an approach similar to this. This would allow them to not only have more fans engaged but also more people looking to know about their history more in-depth.</p>	
Tourist 3	<p>"I've always been drawn to clubs with history and community ties rather than the biggest clubs. So, I am well aware of Portuguese football, mainly the bigger clubs. Belenenses, as far as I know, is 3rd division, right now."</p> <p>"Atmosphere-wise, it was clear it was a third-division game, and only the dedicated fans were there. But it was a nice atmosphere."</p>	<p>Belenenses benefits from a visible location near Belém's key attractions, but the lack of direct promotion at high-traffic spots may harm the club. To solve the problem, the interviewee proposed targeted promotions, such as student and tourist discounts, to attract an international crowd interested in football culture, which can leverage their heritage.</p>	<p>"Everyone visits Belém when they first arrive, and you can see the stadium lights from there. When driving down from Monsanto to Belém, you pass by the stadium. I always thought I wanted to visit because it looked like it had a great view of the bridge."</p> <p>"Not really, but I did see some fans wearing shirts near the stadium. Maybe not down there at the Monastery where it is full of tourists, but as soon as you go up the hill a little bit you see sometimes people with a shirt. You can even see the lights off the stadium even from the water so, for me, it is quite obvious that it is there."</p> <p>"Big games against top teams would draw more people. A lot of the opponents on the third division I haven't even heard their name so I don't know what to expect."</p> <p>"Definitely the older, classic stadiums built in the 60s, 50s like the one from Belém."</p> <p>"In Germany, there is this ground-hopping guys who want to go to the stadiums to see them and check it off the list. For me the stadium itself is very important, but as a complement to the game itself."</p>	<p>The club's strategic location can appeal to fans who may want to combine a sports-related experience with an amazing city view.</p> <p>Fans who value authentic and community-centered clubs will be attracted to its historical and traditional stadium.</p> <p>Nevertheless, the lack of promotion around the games and the lower divisions where Belenenses has been playing these last few years may cause lower attendance.</p>	
Tourist 4	<p>"We had to look up, what teams do we have in Lisbon? I knew Belenenses from before but I'm not sure what Swedish play was there. Maybe Felix, but maybe someone else. So that's why we knew them. And ok, this is kind of a big team, but why are they playing the third division? Aren't these guys in the top flight?"</p> <p>"And then we got the name of the stadium from some soccer app, you know, Live Score app. And then we could give that to Uber. Yeah, but it was a fantastic stadium, I mean."</p>	<p>The interviewee and the friends, familiar with Portuguese football's top teams, initially knew little about Belenenses but were drawn by its unique history. This gap suggests that the club has the potential to reach fans who are interested in both sports and cultural narratives.</p> <p>A social media presence could help foreign fans and 'groundhoppers' find match information more readily, making it an interesting target for the club.</p>	<p>"And then we had to look it up and we realized that they kind of were some issues with the club and then they split up. This was kind of the supporter side of the club, right? So, we thought, yeah, this is good. They started all over again with all the supporters still there. I mean we'll be going to love this. So, we need to go to that game. I mean, we could have chosen Porto as well, which was playing some other Lisbon team. But I mean, this felt more like it could be an even match and we would cheer for Belenenses."</p> <p>"We were aware of the name, but we didn't know much about the history. But I mean, we've managed to look it up."</p>	<p>Belenenses' recent history and happenings made this tourist interested and wanting to know more about the club. They found it very interesting and unique, as the club had reestablished itself with support from loyal fans. Even though this is a sensitive topic among the local fans, it may attract the interest of fans wanting to know more about stories like this.</p>	
Tourist 5	<p>"I am aware of the Portuguese Football Landscape. In particular through the so called 'big clubs': Le Benfica, Sporting, and Porto. Largely through their exploits in European Football."</p> <p>"I am aware of Belenenses and know that they play in the Belém district of Lisbon. I'm also aware that they are one of the very few teams to have been Portuguese Champions, largely because I have an interest in football and am inquisitive about football."</p> <p>"It does have a unique selling point."</p> <p>"A central souvenir shop or ticket booth may have made people aware."</p>	<p>The interviewee learned about Belenenses through his general interest in football, rather than seeing promotional content, as the club has much less visibility and brand recognition than Benfica or Sporting. The club's visibility could improve if it were marketed more actively.</p>	<p>"I'm also aware that they are one of the very few teams to have been Portuguese Champions."</p> <p>"Belenenses was chosen as I was aware of their previous history, however, not so aware of their recent history although I was aware that they have dropped through the divisions of the Portuguese League structure."</p> <p>"The floodlights are amazing, and I was left thinking of what it must have been like during their glory years."</p> <p>"So it has to find a differential. It certainly has the location to do that, however, it is quite dilapidated as an asset."</p> <p>"I would suggest that a lot of money would need to be spent to update the stadium and with current attendances, I don't think that this is feasible. As opposed to a 'must see' I would recommend more publicity around the game. Selling tickets in existing tourist booths may help"</p>	<p>This tourist noted that the historical context of the club could appeal to football enthusiasts, taking advantage of its legacy and achievements. The historical depth can attract the type of fans who want to know more about their past achievements, like being one of the only five Portuguese champions. The location of the stadium is a plus, making it an important advantage to the club, which can benefit from it. Highlighting this heritage and positioning could distinguish it from Lisbon's biggest clubs.</p>	
Conclusions	<p>The feedback from most of the participants highlights that Belenenses, despite its unique history and location, suffers from low visibility due to the dominance of larger clubs.</p> <p>The club misses on delivering accessible information to the fans, which should be improved and could help fans and tourists interested in local football culture. Belenenses could benefit from targeted promotions, improved signaling, and a stronger social media presence.</p>	<p>Belenenses has an opportunity to leverage its unique century-old history, building on its main capabilities, like the scenic stadium location and strong legacy, being one of only five Portuguese champions. Adding to that, their fans' support even through tough times may function as an attraction point for football enthusiasts and tourists interested in authentic, historical experiences.</p> <p>However, low promotion and recent lower-division placements may be impacting attendance, which may be opposed by stronger promotional efforts around games and events that could help the club engage a broader audience.</p>			

Interviewee	Merchandising and Related Commerce		Digital Presence and Marketing	
	Quote	Interpretation	Quote	Interpretation
Tourist 1	"And I think it's really because I don't how expensive it is in Portugal, but I believe that club jerseys are in general quite expensive. But I mean, the scarves or a hat? Or maybe something like that? That's a little lower in price. Could be a very much a nice thing."	The interviewee mentioned her preference for affordable and smaller items, that are meaningful and not that expensive. This could be an interesting point for Belenenses, to look for new and different items that can satisfy several types of fans.	"I think also what to visit in Lisbon, probably there's an Instagram for it as well and that would be a way for me to see what places I would like to visit. So, I think that's definitely a way to promote your stadium to people like me." "Maybe if they would promote the stadium and I would see it come by and it interests me, I would follow it temporarily because I would want to visit it, but not in a permanent way, I wouldn't follow or engage with the Instagram." "So, if my friends would have visited Lisbon and posted this and it looked nice, I would remember it and try to save it for a time when I would visit."	This interviewee puts a heavy focus on recommendations that are found on digital platforms or social networks. This way, the interviewee considers that Belenenses should focus on these kinds of means to advertise the club to the biggest number of people as possible. Additionally, the fan refers to the importance of own network to know what to visit, by using what other people found interesting as recommendations.
Tourist 2	"Only from my own club."	A difficult attendance for Belenenses. However, the club can try to look at other clubs' best practices to know how to develop their merchandising.	"As a smaller club, you need a really good marketing strategy for that. So that you show people in a specific way why you should come to visit our like history." "I think especially as a club that is not really that relevant anymore, it's actually super important to have a good marketing and social media strategy." "I think you have to specifically search for that to find out that they have a football club. And if I knew that before, I probably would have entered a game actually, because I like those, as already mentioned, smaller clubs and visiting a game which is not that typical." "I think attracting especially this niche of football enthusiasts could be really interesting. To engage those people, there are several apps you should take the word groundhopping into account. That's like a huge base of football enthusiasts who are interested in visiting exactly those kinds of stadiums. So, there are several Facebook groups and several mobile applications."	The respondent found it challenging to access reliable information on Belenenses, given the lack of presence of the club on social platforms, contrary to the current information-sharing trends. The interviewee suggests Belenenses could tap into niche platforms like Futbology and groundhopping Facebook groups to reach international fans interested in unique stadiums and smaller clubs.
Tourist 3	"We checked out the shop when we arrived. We looked at the shirts and for any special offers from last season, but there wasn't much available." "I like to collect interesting shirts to show off at my local club. It's a way to start conversations. I've bought scarves before, but they end up in the wardrobe and rarely come out, so I stick to shirts now." "When you're visiting a new team, you're more price-sensitive. I wouldn't spend more than 20K and of course, you won't get an official shirt for 20K so you always have to find some cheaper options from last season."	The limited selection in the club's shop could be expanded, especially with affordable items, as tourists often seek reasonably priced items. Club shirts, including past seasons ones, could make them important items for the fans.	"We found out two days before that there was a cup game." "It depends. It needs to be the right kind of tourist who enjoys football culture and wants to watch football matches. Maybe something with Nova and the Student Union to offer discounts for the students. I could see the Germans going once to check it out." "In Germany, there is this ground-hopping guys who want to go to the stadiums to see them and check it off the list. For me the stadium itself is very important, but as a complement to the game itself." "No, I didn't feel the need since I knew I could get tickets on the day because it wouldn't be sold out, for sure."	The club's digital presence was noted as minimal by the interviewee, who found out about the game just two days before. If the club had a stronger digital presence, it would probably be easier for the fans to find information about it. However, the respondent didn't feel the need to buy tickets in advance due to predicted low demand. Strengthening online engagement and updated match information might attract a broader audience.
Tourist 4	"It was a very pleasant day out there where we could buy all this merchandise so cheap, and the beer was so cheap and the food was so cheap. So, I think we're gonna come back." "That you could buy some burger or something and we could visit the shop. That was great. And as I said, the price is very good, and we all got shirts and everything." "We typically buy like a scarf, but here we bought as well matched jerseys and a hoodie."	Fans were enticed by Belenenses' low-priced merchandise, buying not only the usual scarf but also shirts and hoodies. In their opinion, the low prices, compared to the ones from their country, encouraged more purchases, highlighting that affordable merchandising can boost engagement. The pre-game bars were highly appreciated by these fans, making it a valuable practice for those moments.	"We didn't know how to get tickets and all that. The website was not up to date, but someone managed to look up that the ticket office was open two hours before and we still didn't know if the stadium was going to be full. We were here exactly 2 hours before, but we didn't need to. It turned out ok." "First of all, it was Portuguese and the website wasn't really much up to date, so we struggled to find out where they were playing the home games and how to buy tickets. We didn't have a club, but then someone managed to get that information that the ticket office was going to be open." "No, I mean we were happy to be able to do that because we didn't really know if it was gonna be full or not. So that would have made us more secure. But now we know that that wasn't going to be an issue anyway. And I think the ticket price was very cheap, it was like 45 we were expecting 20K or something." "I go on the Futbology app and that's that's it."	A social media presence could help foreign fans and "groundhoppers" find match information more readily. The respondent noted that it was extremely difficult for them to find information on the club and the stadium, and on how to buy tickets. These challenges in finding information on the club's website illustrate a need for updated digital platforms to simplify access for fans.
Tourist 5	"I don't usually buy any memorabilia, however, may purchase a fridge magnet if there is one available. I do, however, take a few photographs and keep the match ticket as a souvenir."	Some small pieces of merchandising could be important to tourists, since a lot don't want to spend a lot on these products and may not have a lot of available space in their luggage to take them home. Going for this kind of items could be positive for the club.	"An online presence is essential today and sadly Belenenses FC doesn't appear to have this." "As opposed to a 'must see' I would recommend more publicity around the game. It needs to be publicized more in the Belém area." "A central souvenir shop or ticket booth may have made people aware." "In addition, the club's website is woefully out of date and lacks information in relation to ticket sales, etc." "Certainly raise awareness via Social Media and upgrade the website to offer ticket sales and merchandise. It does seem though that if the people of Belém itself can't be bothered to attend then why would a tourist unless out of curiosity." "It needs to be publicized more in the Belém area. Whilst Belenenses will not have the pull of Benfica and Sporting, it does have a unique selling point. The Belém area itself which is beautiful and could be billed as a hidden gem!"	The interviewee highlighted the need for Belenenses to improve its digital presence, which could help it get more people to see their games and be more aware of the club. The club's website was outdated and lacked ticketing or match information. Enhancing the website to include ticketing options and updated game details is paramount to improving digital engagement and attracting fans to their games.
Conclusions		Belenenses could boost engagement by expanding its merchandise with affordable, smaller items that appeal to both fans and tourists. This kind of offer would attract budget-conscious visitors and fans alike. Additionally, the positive feedback on pre-game bars highlights the value of these practices, since social spaces make room for people to get along with each other, deepening a sense of community.	The feedback highlights a need for Belenenses to strengthen its digital presence. Given the high reliance of fans on social media, the club's limited online presence hinders accessibility. Improving the club's website with up-to-date match details and ticketing could help them increase fan engagement. Other platforms, like Futbology, would help increase the stadium's attendance.	

Interviewee	Tourism Potential and Integrated Experiences		Experience and Landscape	
	Quote	Interpretation	Quote	Interpretation
Tourist 1	<p>"Yeah, I think if it's truly an experience to go there. So, I think if it's more promoted and that there is a lot of history that you can learn about and how it was the first really big club in Portugal."</p> <p>"And maybe it will be possible to buy an audio tour of Belém, which includes the stadium and the landmarks which have just little voice recordings of people or maybe even with pictures and additional information that would share the history behind the landmarks and the stadium."</p> <p>But yeah, so you just purchase a tour and do it at your own pace and with your own phone and with your own family or whenever you're visiting with. So, it's quite low effort and very flexible."</p>	<p>The respondent points out that stadiums with immersive experiences are more attractive to tourists. Taking advantage of their rich history, Belenenses could help them have more fans engaged.</p> <p>Adding to that, the integration of the stadium into tourist routes, based on historical exhibits and scenic views, could be more attractive to tourists, suggesting that Belenenses could enhance its appeal by offering this type of experience.</p>	<p>"And I don't know if it maybe has a nice view or there's at a lounge or a bar maybe that you can have a drink to end your tour. I think that would also be very nice to also be able to just chill in the stadium and enjoy."</p> <p>Looking out over the fields, I don't if that's possible, but that may be. It triggers also some non-extreme sports fans to visit."</p>	<p>The interviewee argued that a nice lounge or bar could be a good complement to a possible tour integrating the stadium. This would allow the tourists and fans to relax and enjoy the view, taking advantage of the magnificent view.</p>
Tourist 2	<p>"As a smaller club, you need a really good marketing strategy for that. So that you show people in a specific way why you should come to visit our like history."</p> <p>"But I think having that at the stadium is kind of nice then because it's like haptic, you see that, you feel that you have the vibe when you go to the stadium. I think that could be like quite interesting."</p> <p>"I did not see that they have like a football club or a stadium. So that was kind of not really present online. I think you have to specifically search for that to actually find out that they have a football club."</p>	<p>In his opinion, Estádio do Restelo could be part of a broader lightening experience. The scenic views from the stadium, which could complement nearby tourist sites, were highlighted, providing visitors with a full day of experiences in the Belém area. However, this would depend on the club's ability to share these activities.</p>	<p>"I think that's quite interesting for the storytelling of what I was just talking about. So, if it's not really an active stadium anymore, you can tell people, oh, yeah, we used to be this fancy Portuguese club and we have this huge stadium and I think it's actually quite interesting to find out why there are not that big games anymore. Maybe they are, but I don't know. But just looking at it like 20,000 seats there, it's crazy. Also with the view and the bridge behind, I think you can make a lot out of out of it."</p> <p>"If you have some restaurants around, then I think that could be quite interesting. If you have these amazing views on the bridge and whatsoever."</p>	<p>The scenic views from Estádio do Restelo, including the bridge and river, as well as its dimension, added to the stadium's appeal, making it a fascinating place. The unique landscape and ambiance at the stadium could appeal to visitors looking for an authentic experience.</p>
Tourist 3	<p>"I'm not too keen on tours, but I enjoy museums if they're authentic and created by people who care about the club. I don't like overly commercialized or artificial only for tourist experiences."</p> <p>"No, I didn't see any signs or indications about it. I only saw the statues they had close to the club shop and took a photo of that."</p> <p>"I think only if you really connect with the club and you know already someone who is a fan and goes repeatedly with you. Just by myself, I don't see it happening because the quality of the 3rd division and the attendance in the 3rd division is a hard thing to sell. Of course, if there are already 5000 people going to every game, then it incentivizes you more. If only 1000 people go and it isn't that big of an atmosphere, then it's hard."</p>	<p>The interviewee suggested Belenenses could be a supplementary experience for tourists who enjoy football culture. Authenticity is highly valued by this fan, one of the club's recognized attributes.</p> <p>A better integration of the matchday experiences with Belém's tourist attractions could foster more visits.</p>	<p>"I just went as it was obvious to me that it would be a nice view from that higher location. The stadium is old and has a roof that adds an old charm. I'm a bit of a football romantic that way."</p> <p>"Atmosphere-wise, it was clear it was a third-division game, and only the dedicated fans were there. But it was a nice atmosphere, even Gil Vicente had some guys supporting them as well. It felt special, but I could imagine it would be incredible with a full stadium, even more with that low roof that it has."</p> <p>"Definitely the older, classic stadiums built in the 60s, 50s like the one from Belém. The running field around it is a bit of a problem because you are further away from the pitch. I also like stadiums with standing sections in Germany. I don't like the modern, multifunctional arenas as they often lack atmosphere."</p>	<p>The stadium's location and view of the bridge provide a unique landscape that contributes to the overall appeal. This scenic element, with the presence of more fans, both in number and enthusiasm, could make the experience more interesting and memorable for visitors.</p>
Tourist 4	<p>"We went there and then we saw the view and it looked like really old nice buildings by the water. We should go there because otherwise, we thought about going into the Lisbon center, but instead, we went there so the match got us to see that part of Lisbon as well."</p> <p>"I think it's a really nice area, I really do. There were some tourists down at the border, there were buses. I mean, there's a lot of things to do."</p> <p>"Probably not. Maybe the museum then, but probably wait until there's a match."</p> <p>"I wouldn't say we got any. I mean, the taxi just dropped us off in, like, a neighborhood area. Here we are. We. Oh, is it? Because we couldn't really see the stadium at that point."</p> <p>"Oh, I mean the best part of it is that you see areas that you probably wouldn't have gone to otherwise and you meet people that you probably wouldn't have spoken to."</p>	<p>The respondent and the friends felt the stadium could make part of a tourist route, given its proximity to Belém's historical sites.</p> <p>However, they didn't feel like visiting the stadium or the museum without watching a game, which may reveal a lack of interest from the fans.</p> <p>Another important point is the absence of indications pointing to the stadium, which can lead to errors.</p>	<p>"View of I mean the view of the river, and I'm in the area. I see so very nice houses. It felt like it was some copy of the Fulham in London, England. It kinda looked the same. Fantastic."</p> <p>"I like that old school style. And I mean it's not the most. What do you say? I mean, there are cleaner stadiums or newer ones built. But I mean, I really like that one. It was empty, that was the downside, of course. But people were still engaged on our side. We had no problem buying tickets. I mean we were happy we could sit wherever we wanted basically. That's good."</p>	<p>Comparing the stadium to Fulham's Craven Cottage, the fans had a charming and vintage feel, with the help of the incredible views from the stadium. Adding to that, the fans' engagement, as well as the ease of buying tickets contributed to a good overall experience.</p>
Tourist 5	<p>"Raise awareness via social media and upgrade the website to offer ticket sales and merchandise. It does seem though that if the people of Belém itself can't be bothered to attend then why would a tourist unless out of curiosity."</p> <p>"I don't think it resonates as a tourist attraction at the moment, however, it does have the potential to be. The Belém area does attract a lot of tourists. Walking up to the stadium from the train station. It was hard to believe that a game was taking place such a short distance away."</p> <p>"Offering a stadium tour the trophy room at the stadium was very good! may attract more visitors although it needs to be well publicized."</p> <p>"I wouldn't recommend it as a tourist attraction in itself due to its current state."</p> <p>"A tour package offering a stadium tour may be a way forward."</p> <p>"Add the stadium tour to existing Belém tour packages would be an option."</p>	<p>The interviewee stated that, if promoted in local tourist information centers, the large number of tourists going to Belém could also have an interest in visiting the stadium, promoting it as a historical and scenic landmark.</p> <p>Offering guided tours and adding the stadium to broader Belém tour packages would make it more appealing to tourists exploring the area.</p>	<p>"Nothing springs to mind... Most people wouldn't have been aware that a game was taking place."</p> <p>"A big stadium, which looks like it needs some love and care! That said, the view over the river with the bridge and the statue of Jesus was quite spectacular! The floodlights are amazing, and I was left thinking of what it must have been like during their glory years."</p> <p>"It needs to be publicized more in the Belém area. Whilst Belenenses will not have the pull of Benfica and Sporting, it does have a unique selling point i.e. The Belém area itself which is beautiful and could be billed as a hidden gem!"</p>	<p>The stadium's views over the river and bridge impressed the tourist, indicating that these could be promoted as part of the stadium's appeal to tourists. Despite its dated appearance, the views and the proximity to key landmarks make it a special place.</p> <p>In this tourist's opinion, a better promotion could increase the number of fans at the games.</p>
Conclusions	<p>Estádio do Restelo, even though it may not be in the best state of conservation, has strong potential as a tourist attraction if integrated into Belém's visitor routes.</p> <p>Partnerships with tourist centers and information points could boost the club's visibility and increase the number of visitors.</p> <p>Enhanced matchday experiences could also engage the fans, allowing them to have an authentic glimpse into local football culture. However, better promotion and clearer directions are fundamental.</p>	<p>Interviewees loved the great views from Estádio do Restelo, which attracted fans and tourists. They suggest adding a lounge or bar to improve the experience. The stadium's traditional structure is unique and the common opinion is that it should be kept, with some improvements though. Promoting and maintaining its historical appeal can boost fan engagement, and draw more visitors.</p>		

Interviewee	Atmosphere and Authenticity		Diversity of Events	
	Quote	Interpretation	Quote	Interpretation
Tourist 1			<p>"If there's a nice view just to drink and some food, I think that's good to make people that don't only go for the game but go for the experience. I think having good food and drinks and a group of people and with also local people I think is always really nice. So, I think that would definitely make it a full experience."</p> <p>"They could use that for such like a food market and just an experience with Portuguese food, with sardines and sausage. I think that could be a trigger for people to go for sure."</p>	<p>By associating the Portuguese culture with the sun, markets, and outside activities, this tourist would find it interesting for the club to promote initiatives like these, a strong point for Belenenses to attract more people to come to their games, in an integrated experience.</p>
Tourist 2	<p>"But what I really like is to speak to like those normal fans."</p> <p>"Overall, I enjoyed the experience, especially the atmosphere that was present in front of the stadiums because the people are going crazy in front of the stadiums. The food is great, you get beer everywhere. The people are just cool and you can have lots of fun with them."</p> <p>"But I'm personally a big fan of experiencing the game and the atmosphere that you are surrounded with, so all the chance, the songs, people, singing, jumping, clapping."</p> <p>"Yeah, exactly like that's what I always love to do. Going through or going around the stadium and experiencing, how's the atmosphere around it. 'What can you eat?' I love eating all the foods that you get in front of the stadiums."</p>	<p>The interviewee values experiencing the game and the atmosphere around it. At the game, the tourists loved to feel like a part of the crowd. All of these contributed to an authentic matchday experience.</p>	<p>"You can do so many things in the stadium, like hosting concerts. Different activities and events that they can host there because that makes on the one hand the stadium more popular, it makes the club more popular because there's all the gigs and it says it's in the stadium of Belem and whatever. So that could also be something to attract people that are not really into football."</p> <p>"So if the infrastructure is kind of nice and you have a nice marketing strategy behind those restaurants and some additional packages, like visit the game now and get 50% off of the dinner or whatever, you can think about some stuff there. I think then it could be quite interesting."</p>	<p>The respondent suggests that offering non-football events like concerts could attract people who might not usually attend games. This would increase the stadium's appeal as a multi-functional venue.</p>
Tourist 3	<p>"Atmosphere-wise, it was clear it was a third division game, and only the dedicated fans were there. But it was a nice atmosphere, even Gil Vicente had some guys supporting them as well. It felt special, but I could imagine it would be incredible with a full stadium, even more with that low roof that it has."</p> <p>"More people would definitely help with the atmosphere, but that is hard to achieve. It was around 2,000 or 3,000 people, which is OK, but it's a big difference from a stadium with 10,000 people. You could offer free tickets to have more people in the stadium but you want dedicated supporters rather than too many tourists or uninterested fans to keep the authentic feel, so I wouldn't do that."</p> <p>"What I liked about Belenenses was the community feel. It was a club atmosphere where everyone knew each other, and they gathered at the bar afterward."</p> <p>"So what amazes me the most is the atmosphere and legendary players."</p>	<p>The fact that Belenenses plays in lower divisions affects the number of fans attending the games. However, this makes them closer to the local fans, since only the dedicated fans are always there. This gives a community feeling and a sense of authenticity to the people who visit the club.</p>		
Tourist 4	<p>"Yeah, but I mean it was a very engaged audience. It was great to see them. And what we realized, was that it was both men and women in the crowd that was cheering. I mean, we're not used to that, at least not here. It's only men. So, we thought that was really nice and it felt familiar. I mean, like families out there. And it was, it was a great day."</p> <p>"People seem very engaged. I mean, there was this guy who just walked forward and back all the game and was smoking and was very nervous. It felt like this was important to these people. I like that."</p> <p>"If you go to a big match, there could be a lot of tourists, and this felt genuine somewhere."</p>	<p>The crowd's genuine passion left a powerful impression. The strong presence of the community in general, as the diverse audience (families, with both men and women) contributed to the authenticity of the experience.</p>	<p>"Oh, I could really, if I knew I would have done it. Yes, I guess so. We didn't have a clue. (about the existence of a museum related to the history of Belenenses)"</p> <p>"I mean, it's really close. It's just a few minutes walk. It felt like there were always some kid games going on around. It's something to look at, some cultural thing maybe. You go through and then you see it, why not? I'm not sure how big it is, but at least it's fun to see a stadium and so on. But yeah, I think it's a full day watching football and just seeing the scenic views and everything."</p>	<p>This tourist didn't get to visit the museum, but he expressed interest in visiting it if it had been more visible. This could be a point of improvement for the club, so they can take advantage of this important venue.</p> <p>This indicates a potential for non-game-day attractions, like stadium tours or cultural events, to diversify Belenenses' offerings.</p>
Tourist 5	<p>"Raise awareness via social media and upgrade the website to offer ticket sales and merchandise. It does seem though that if the people of Belem itself can't be bothered to attend then why would a tourist unless out of curiosity."</p> <p>"What stood out was the really low attendance in a big stadium, which looks like it needs some love and care! That said, the view over the river with the bridge and the statue of Jesus was quite spectacular! The floodlights are amazing, and I was left thinking of what it must have been like during their glory years."</p> <p>"I would recommend people to attend a game there. It is quite unique as a location and has potential. The people we met there were friendly and were very passionate about their club."</p>	<p>Even though only a few locals were present at the game, the respondent felt like the atmosphere was really authentic. From his perspective, an increased promotion of the game and activities of the club would help them get more people to see their games. This would allow them to make more out of an incredible venue.</p>		
Conclusions	<p>Attending a Belenenses game offers an authentic experience, highly valued by the fans who go there.</p> <p>The support of their fans, even through tough times, gives a feeling of loyalty.</p> <p>An increased promotion could leverage the venue's capabilities, expanding the club's reach while preserving its authenticity.</p>		<p>Belenenses can attract a broader audience by promoting cultural activities, hosting non-football events like concerts, and improving the visibility of attractions like the club museum, positioning itself as one of Belem's main attractions. These strategies would make the stadium a more versatile and appealing venue.</p>	

Appendix 3 – Brief History of Belenenses | Source: Own elaboration

Belenenses is one of the most historical sports institutions in Portugal, being once one of the best and most recognized clubs nationally, as well as one of the most disruptive. However, the club has faced several difficult moments over the last few years, causing it to be completely rebuilt from scratch.

Belenenses was founded on September 6, 1919, on a garden bench in Jardim Afonso de Albuquerque (Marques 2014). This moment gave football in the region a new dimension. The founders, known as “Os Rapazes da Praia” (“The Beach Boys”), reflected the working-class roots of Belém, then a fishing district. They were honored by the club that named the viewpoint after them (Lusa 2024). This was a derogatory name people used since they doubted the longevity of the club. However, Belenenses overcame numerous challenges and established itself as one of Portugal’s most recognized football institutions.

Artur José Pereira stands out as the club’s most important founder. He proudly left Sporting Clube de Portugal to reestablish a football club in the Belém neighborhood, left without one after Sport Lisboa moved to Benfica. This way, Pereira united fans who believed Belém deserved its football club, founding an institution that represented its people (JMA 2014). However, other people had a crucial importance on the club’s development. Adding to the other founders, some players left an indelible mark on the club and Portuguese football. Vicente Lucas, renowned for his leadership, and his brother Matateu, the club’s all-time leading goal scorer, became iconic figures. José Manuel Soares, also known as Pepe, remains one of Belenenses’ most revered players despite his untimely death at 23. His statue at the entrance of the sports complex symbolizes his lasting impact (JMA, VG, and NG 2014)

They started playing in Campo do Pau de Fio (now Jardim Vasco da Gama), in Belém, attracting many people to see the games. However, as the club grew, the facilities proved inadequate. After a brief stint at Stadium do Lumiar, Belenenses inaugurated Campo das Salésias in 1928. It was

also named Estádio José Manuel Soares, honoring one of the club's most important players. This stadium was revolutionary, becoming the first in Portugal with artificial lighting, cement stands, and a grass field, making it the home of the Portuguese national team. However, the club was forced to leave the stadium in 1956, by the City Council of Lisbon, which offered the club a new location: a former quarry. Although the land presented significant challenges, making exploration extremely challenging, it became Estádio do Restelo. This new stadium further solidified Belenenses as a pioneer in Portuguese football since it was one of the best infrastructures existing in Portugal at the time. Even if nowadays the infrastructure may be outdated, it had a big impact on Portuguese society at the time, given its quality and all the difficulties that its construction posed (Amaral 2016; JMA 2014b; Leite 2016)

As mentioned before, it is one of only five Portuguese champions and one of the clubs with the most seasons in Portuguese football's top tier, along with several other titles in football and other sports. Despite its past, Belenenses has faced several challenges, most notably in 2018, when the club split from its SAD, which was responsible for the professional football of Belenenses. This led to serious identity fragmentation since the club was split in two and Belenenses was forced to compete in the last tier of Lisbon's Football Association. This split marked a turning point in the club's trajectory, but the fans remained loyal to the club, showing their deep connection to it (Gomes 2023). The SAD tried to claim Belenenses' heritage, among which its conquests, stadium, and name, which led to intense off-field battles that threatened the continuity of the club. Once again, the fans didn't feel the SAD was defending the club's interests, as well as theirs, and remained side-to-side with the club through the process (Zerozero 2018). This is one of the most important moments in Belenenses' history and left a profound mark on Portuguese football.

Appendix 4 – PESTEL Analysis | Source: Own elaboration

Legal

Sports regulations – the club must comply with labor laws and national and international regulations set by governing bodies, like PFA and UEFA.

Intellectual property – protecting the brand, logo, and merchandise rights, is crucial for the clubs to maintain a competitive advantage against competitors.

Broadcasting rights – the centralization of TV rights could lead to an equitable revenue distribution, benefiting smaller clubs.

Environmental

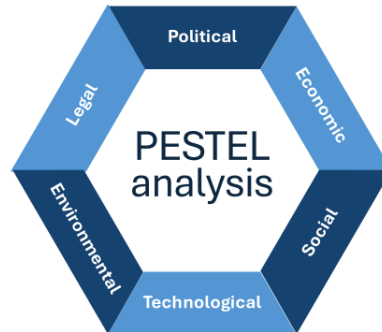
Sustainability – initiatives such as reducing waste, promoting recycling, and reducing water consumption are highly valued and align with growing public interest in sustainability.

Local infrastructures – improvements to sustainable transportation and facilities around Belém may impact accessibility and get fans closer to the club.

Political

Government support – local and national policies on sports funding and tourism can impact club operations since they can represent an important form of financing.

Sports governance – changes to the regulations in the competitions played by clubs, as well as the ones related to club ownership may impact their functioning.



Technological

Digitalization of processes – clubs with dynamic social media and an up-to-date club website tend to enhance the fan experience and facilitate communication between the parties.

E-commerce – upgraded platforms related to ticketing and online stores can increase revenue streams, especially with a global fanbase.

Data analytics – using data to understand fan preferences may optimize the club's performance, providing insights for an improved strategy.

Economic

Economic conditions – periods of economic downturn directly impact ticket sales, merchandise, and the partnerships the club may secure.

Tourism – Lisbon's tourism scene may benefit the club by having more visitors and expanding the club's fanbase among visitors.

Financial health – the financial difficulties faced by clubs may affect their capacity to invest and be competitive.

Social

Fan culture and identity – clubs with a well-defined identity that resonates with their fan base can deepen emotional connections and create a strong sense of belonging among supporters.

Demographics – Lisbon has a growing international population, which can help the club to expand its fanbase, without losing its identity.

Social presence – being a present club in the local community can foster identification with the organization and promote a positive image.

Appendix 5 – SWOT Analysis | Source: Own elaboration

INTERNAL	<p>STRENGTHS (S)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Historical and traditional club with a huge sporting legacy The history and symbolism of the club are deeply connected with its surrounding area's history, community, and landmarks It has a considerable number of sócios (members) and academy athletes for the Portuguese reality, with a fan base distributed throughout Portugal and not only in Lisbon Beautiful stadium with a great view in a prime touristic location (Restelo/Belém). It has been rented multiple times for concerts and events besides football Big sporting complex with many facilities concentrated in a single place (various football pitches, stadium, indoor court, coffee shops, restaurants, gymnasium, grocery store, club's store, viewpoint, museum, private school, etc.) Eclectic club with a strong presence beyond football (rugby, Handball, volleyball, futsal, basketball, etc.) Member ownership, fostering a deep sense of loyalty and involvement. Fans are known for their deep passion, resilience, dedication, and authenticity. Consistent leadership over the last decade provides a stable foundation for long-term planning and execution Matches are characterized by a friendly, spontaneous, vibrant, and passionate atmosphere, creating an authentic fan experience that appeals to both locals and tourists Known for its strong academies and youth development. Being a reference nationwide Partnerships and great relationships with big entities such as Repsol, LIDL, Novoverde, The British School, Efforts to improve and promote sustainability practices like the sporting complex's energy coming from solar panels or the partnership with Novoverde promoting electronic waste recycling Strong support and connection with the local community 	<p>WEAKNESSES (W)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Stadium's seating capacity is too big for the current club reality and stadium attendance, making it look emptier Lack of organized stadium and museum tours. While the club has a museum, tours are not dynamic or well-promoted, missing an opportunity to attract visitors and engage fans No targeted promotion for tourists, relying only on organic and coincidental interactions Fragmented brand and club identity, both in terms of historical narrative, club values and culture (with opinions differing inside the club), and its branding. Individual sports sections operate independently, creating inconsistent messaging and branding Majority of current supporters are older, and the club has struggled to attract younger fans Underdeveloped digital presence, hampering internal processes and limiting the ability to personalize or enhance fan interactions Limited use of social media. Focusing solely on informing fans rather than involving fans The club operates on very tight budgets, limiting its ability to hire qualified personnel or invest in initiatives. Financial stability has improved, but resources remain scarce The club relies heavily on a small, overstretched team, with many volunteers helping. This lack of professionalized staffing hinders the club's capacity to implement projects and strategic initiatives Certain areas of the stadium are poorly maintained with limited signage and cleanliness issues Lack of engaging pre-match and half-time activities Poor communication with members. E-mail marketing is solely used to inform about critical situations and general assemblies. Lack of strategic planning for almost every area of the club. Often resorting to short-term fixes and reactive behavior rather than structured plans
	EXTERNAL	<p>OPPORTUNITIES (O)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> The region of Belém is very touristic, with landmarks such as "Torre de Belém" and "Mosteiro dos Jerónimos" and local businesses such as "Pastéis de Belém", "Manteigaria" and "O Careca" attracting big crowds Growing interest in sports tourism and groundhopping offers a chance to attract international fans seeking authentic football experiences in historical settings Lisbon's immigration boom and urban growth brings new residents who may be seeking a local club to support, offering a chance to expand the fan base Lisbon is home to some of the best universities in Portugal and Europe, including the Ajuda campus near Belém, offering opportunities to connect with a young and dynamic academic community Active and supportive Parish Council of Belém Advances in digital tools and increasing internet penetration in Portugal (already at 82,05%) provide opportunities to modernize fan engagement New technologies and innovative strategies, such as crowdfunding, digital loyalty programs, and online fan clubs, are being adopted in the football industry to create additional revenue sources Digital media allows clubs to bypass traditional media channels, often dominated by larger organizations, giving smaller clubs an equal platform to promote themselves

Appendix 6 – Notes from our visits to the stadium during matchdays | Source: Own

elaboration

	Topic	Description	Grade (1-5)	Positive points	Negative points	Observations	Ideas
Stadium atmosphere and matchday experience	Physical Environment	Quality and condition of the stadium facilities (seating, restrooms, concessions, signage).	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The view from the stadium is very pretty (we saw some people just admiring the view in certain locations) Very beautiful stadium with bright colors A lot of open space as well as sitting areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Random things on the floor (like flags) Not very comfortable chairs that felt like they were going to break if leaning back Stadium screen not working. No way to know the time or score No signs to know where anything is (club shop, Pavillion, bars, ticket shop or museum) Girls bathroom does not have any soap to wash the hands or towels 	<p>The signage was so lackluster that we went into the wrong stadium sector.</p> <p>There was many graffiti's around the stadium made by fans against the old SAD and modern football</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The stadium definitely needs a renovation/better maintenance It would benefit immensely from better signs and directions
	Fan Amenities	Variety, quality, and pricing of food and beverages, and whether these contribute positively to the overall match experience.	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Three different places where you could buy food. The prices were reasonable when compared to big Portuguese clubs (particularly more trendy items like Bifana or beer) Outlet clothes options (besides the main store) Ambulant seller selling food items during the match (popcorn, water, sweets, and even "Pastel de Nata", which was a nice touch) Snack shop open and accessible during the match and with prices very similar to the outside ones 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There was no cloakroom (however, people at the club shop were nice and let you leave stuff there) Big line for food at half-time Both restaurants at the stadium were closed (even though the game was on a Sunday at 15h) All the bars were exactly opposite of the side where you have a great view, losing a good opportunity to have a great terrace 	Tasted the Bifana and beer and it was good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Selling bundle tickets specially tailored for foreigners to have the "authentic Portuguese footballing experience" with the match ticket, a Bifana, a beer, and a Pastel de Nata
	Pre-match and Half-time activities	Activities or entertainment options available to fans before the match and during half-time (music, fan zones, interactions with mascots, etc.).	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There was a mascot walking around the area and taking photos with kids, but had low energy and wasn't particularly charismatic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No fan zone/particular activities for kids. They just had a small football field open where they could play together For grown-ups there was not much to do besides visiting the shop and watching the start of a Volleyball game on the Pavillion or an Under-17 football match (but both of them were just on the warm-up) No dedicated Belenenses music outside the stadium to create ambiance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No activities at half-time The museum was closed The recently built viewpoint was closed 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Having inflatables for kids or people doing cool make-up on them/balls or footballing challenges Pressure federations to schedule other sports games to 1/1h30 before the football matches, as that way people could watch that as a "warm up" for the main event Have the museum open on gamedays with free entrance and for specific games have specific curated expositions. Ex: For the game against Atlético CP have at the entrance of the museum trophies won against them or crucial events in the history of both clubs.
	Accessibility	Parking options, options to go to the stadium	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is parking inside the stadium and it is cheap (1€ per car) There are also plenty of parking spots around the stadium Bus lines stopping close to the stadium There is also the "Belém" train station but is a reasonable walk 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No metro It is close to the "Linha de Cascais" train system and not the "Linha de Sintra" which is the most widely used 		

	Topic	Description	Grade (1-5)	Positive points	Negative points	Observations	Ideas
Fan Engagement and Atmosphere	Fan Behavior and Atmosphere	How was the atmosphere before and during the game	4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People generally arrived 1h/45 minutes before the game • Ultras sang for a big portion of the game with many times the rest of the fans singing with them • Clearly the fans were very passionate and very invested in the game • A very "bairrista" (neighborhood/authentic) spirit with people complementing each other when arriving at their seats and talking without any filters between each other or with the players/coach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There wasn't a big bustle outside the stadium before the game. If I didn't know there was going to be a match there, I wouldn't notice as a passerby. Completely different story inside the stadium (but people can't see because it is walled) • The hymn before the match didn't feel like a big moment and not many people were actually singing it 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do marketing initiatives around the stadium on days leading to the matchday and during the matchday itself to create buzz and noise in the area around the stadium • Foster game day initiatives outside the stadium as well
	Fan Reactions to Performance	Note how fans respond to different phases of the game (e.g., goals, fouls, referee decisions)	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were very passionate during the whole game even when losing • Did massive amounts of noise when decisions were taken by the referee against Belenenses • Very supportive of the team and players pushing them to go for the draw (which was very electrifying) but also very demanding of the team to go forward and play with an attacking style • The older ladies were very funny when speaking to Belenenses players or complaining about the opposition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Even though the atmosphere was very loud, electrifying, and even funny, it wasn't very family friendly with some kids also joining the insults towards referees and opposition 		
Stadium Attendance and Demographics	Demographic Profile of Attendees	Make observations about the demographic diversity of the crowd—age, gender, family groups, etc. Understanding who the current fan base is will help identify potential new segments to target	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very spread out demographics: older people going as a couple or with their family. A lot of young families and couples as well. Many teenagers and kids. Even foreigners 			
	Stadium Occupancy Levels	Estimate the percentage of seats filled and the overall attendance compared to the stadium's capacity. Also, see if there are noticeable differences between the types of attendees (e.g., hardcore fans vs. casual spectators)	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Ultras area was filled (they are a big group) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The stadium is huge (around 20,000 seats) so the majority of it is closed. Everyone is placed on the same sector (which makes it look like we are surrounded by a lot of people, maybe 3 500), but when you look at the rest of the stadium it looks very empty (the visiting fans are on the opposite side of the stadium but they weren't also that many) 	The atmosphere was very good and the range in demographics as well, what they were missing was more people in the stadium	
	Interaction Among Fans	How fans engage with each other. Are there community-building interactions (e.g., shared chants, and discussions)?	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Super sympathetic and friendly fan base. No one knew us and we still talked with 8 different people. • People would talk with us about occurrences in the game or even help us with information (even without us asking for it) • Felt very welcome in that environment • Even a server from a local pastry that we went to after the game talked with us about Belenenses as he saw our branded shirts • Many fans already know each other so they would greet each other 		Awesome environment to bring in local people who haven't been to the stadium. Just not so sure if foreigners could enjoy it as much as people might not speak English (we didn't test that)	

	Topic	Description	Grade (1-5)	Positive points	Negative points	Observations	Ideas
Marketing and Communication Strategy	In-Stadium Marketing	How does the club communicate with fans inside the stadium—do they use big screens, banners, or announcements to engage and inform? Are there advertisements for club memberships or upcoming events?	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There was a speaker in the stadium that pushed for the fans before the game They have some big advertising tarpaulins, very visible, inside the Stadium to advertise their partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The speaker was very silent after the match started and didn't celebrate much when the goal happened or intervened at half-time or when the game ended As mentioned before, there was basically nothing related to the marketing of the club or its initiatives showed anywhere (either digitally or physically) 		
	Merchandising	Look at the availability and visibility of club merchandise. Are there stands that promote the brand?	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> They had both the shop (which was full) and the outlet station in the stadium. There was merchandising being sold outside the stadium <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Almost everyone with much merchandising (hats, scarfs, and shirts mainly) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There was no signage to indicate where was the shop or outlet station (or even that it existed). Even though the shop was full, the majority of customers were there to buy tickets, which probably made people who wanted to actually buy merchandise find it more difficult to walk around the shop and have to wait for more to purchase The merchandising sold outside the stadium was by an ambulant vendor selling what looked to be counterfeit items 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The shop will be moved to the boundaries of the stadium which is good for passersby, but on matchday, there should also be a shop inside the stadium. We find it hard to imagine that people who are already inside the stadium will go down all the stairs to go to the shop whenever they want to kill time or just see what's new (for convenience purposes)
	Social Media Integration	Are there social media prompts or campaigns being advertised at the stadium (e.g., hashtags, photo opportunities)? This can bridge the in-stadium and digital fan experience	1		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Absolutely no social media integration inside the stadium The photos taken during the game and posted on Instagram by Belenenses are taken with the empty stands as background and not the full ones, making it look like there was no one in the stadium. There wasn't a single photo of fans shared on the official social media channels of the club We didn't see many fans taking photos in the stadium or off the stadium 	<p>We suspect people didn't take many photos because the club isn't trendy, currently (and therefore not very sharable on social media)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have someone from the club interview and do challenges with the fans pre-match (in exchange for a scarf or piece of merchandise) to then be shared on the club's social media Collaborate with sports influencers to have them go to the stadium (pay them the full experience) and therefore record and advertise their experience

Appendix 7 – TOWS Analysis | Source: Own elaboration

	STRENGTHS (S)	WEAKNESSES (W)
OPPORTUNITIES (O)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. S1, S2, S4 + O1, O2: Use Belenenses' deep historical roots and connection to Lisbon's landmarks to position the club as a key cultural attraction for tourists visiting Belém, integrating it into the local tourism landscape. 2. S3, S10 + O2: Market the unique and authentic matchday atmosphere to attract sports tourists looking for historical and community-based football experiences. 3. S5, S6, S10 + O3: Promote the club's youth academies as a way to attract the new residents of Lisbon and their children, fostering a new generation of supporters. 4. S3, S7, S8 + O6, O7: Make use of digital tools to engage their passionate fan-base and monetize them through new sources of revenue coming from the digital 5. S12 + O6, O7, O8: Leverage existing partnerships to fund and implement digital initiatives for engaging fans and increase Belenenses' reach 6. S5, S14 + O5: Leverage the strong support of the local community and their big complex to collaborate with the Parish Council of Belém on initiatives that drive attendance and community engagement 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. W6 + O6, O7: Invest in digitalization and make use of new cheaper technologies to improve fan engagement and loyalty 2. W12 + O6, O7, O8: In an era where almost every fan has access to internet, use social media and other digital tools to personalize the communication with the fans and offer a tailored experience 3. W2, W3 + O1, O2: Create targeted promotions, such as guided stadium tours or dedicated experiences, to attract tourists who are already visiting Belém's landmarks 4. W3, W7 + O8: Make use of social media and digital platforms to reach tourists and don't be drown out by the presence of Benfica and Sporting 5. W1, W5 + O3, O4: Develop youth-focused initiatives and school/university programs to attract younger fans and diversify the audience. 6. W4 + O8: Use social media and it's reach capacity to promote a cohesive branding and the identity, values and culture the club wants to transpire 7. W8, W9 + O4: Partner with nearby universities to develop joint initiatives, leveraging academic expertise to generate innovative solutions while addressing human resource limitations, saving costs and engaging the young
THREATS (T)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. S1, S7, S14 + T1, T4, T5: Highlight the club's member-owned structure and legacy as a differentiator, promoting community-driven values to stand out from larger, corporate-driven rivals. 2. S6 + T2: Emphasize successes in other sports like rugby and volleyball to diversify the fan base and offset the dominance of football-focused media coverage on the "big 3." 3. S9, T3: Leverage stable and experienced management to design comprehensive, long-term, financially sustainable strategic plans and ensure they are implemented 4. S12 + T3: Make use of its strong partnerships to build upon synergies between club and partners. Allowing Belenenses to do initiatives and offer services/experiences that it would never be able to do alone 5. S5, S8, S14 + T1, T3: Promote the facilities within the sporting complex to increase non-matchday revenue, reducing reliance on rising operational budgets while enhancing ties with the local community and inserting the club into their daily lives 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. W13 + T7: Establish a long-term strategy to safeguard the club's stability against future economic challenges. 2. W9 + T3: Prioritize hiring key personnel for essential operations, ensuring the club can remain competitive within its financial limits 3. W10 + T6: Improve the stadium's condition and cleanliness to ensure it remains an attractive venue for fans and potential event partnerships 4. W1 + T4, T6: Develop initiatives to boost attendance. These initiatives can attract younger audiences and families, counteracting the threat of newer entertainment options and retain fans 5. W4, W7 + T1, T4, T5: Enhance digital storytelling to communicate the club's unique history and member-owned identity as a differentiator from other clubs and a counter-narrative to investor-driven transformations 6. W5, W6, W7 + T6: Develop a dynamic digital engagement strategy focused on attracting younger audiences. By modernizing the club's digital presence, Belenenses can compete with emerging entertainment options, fostering deeper connections with a digitally-savvy audience while addressing the aging fan base

Appendix 8 – Analysis of current fan engagement and loyalty strategies | Source: Own elaboration

Belenenses actively engages with its local community to attract younger audiences and foster long-term loyalty. The club collaborates with local schools by offering tickets to children, requiring accompanying adults to purchase their own (Marketing Head). Players and the club mascot also visit schools on special occasions, strengthening connections with the youth (Local 1). Additionally, students from those schools also benefit from discounts of 14% for participating in club activities and 10% for hosting birthday parties or attending summer camps at the club facilities (Marketing Head). Partnerships extend to universities like Nova and IADE, where collaborative projects engage students in the club's activities, fostering a deeper connection with young adults in the surrounding area (Board Member; Marketing Head). Partnerships with local businesses and associations further expand the club's community impact, such as initiatives with Lidl and ReFood to redirect food waste to those in need and other socially responsible campaigns like cancer awareness events with Liga Portuguesa Contra o Cancro or a special event promoted by the club yearly for the International Day of People with Disabilities. However, the Marketing Head believes the club has some room for improvement when fulfilling contractual obligations. Something corroborated by Fan 1 who previously worked on sponsorships.

When it comes to direct communication with members, the club uses email marketing, focusing on internal updates such as general assembly convocations. Segmentation is limited to demographic data and membership fee payments, with no complex profiling based on behaviors such as match attendance or shop purchases because the club does not have that information. The club doesn't know the items it sells the most or what are the days with the most purchases, as no data is collected (Marketing Head).

Belenenses leverages its social media platforms primarily for informational purposes but also pursues some fan engagement initiatives. Promotional photos are often taken in key areas of the

region, as well as occasional photos of supporter crowds are posted, and informative updates such as news on club management, partnerships, convocations for General Assemblies, and information on closed doors training games (CF Os Belenenses, n.d.-a; n.d.-b). Instagram is also leveraged for gameday build-ups in collaboration with rivals (CF Os Belenenses n.d.-b), while X is used for expressing the club's culture and identity through bolder, funnier, and more authentic content (CF Os Belenenses n.d.-c).

In terms of ticketing, they started to sell them online last season, even though only for members and not the general public. The club's structure knows this is not enough, but it is a step in the right direction, just like the fact that members can pay their membership fees online now (Marketing Head). Fans also appreciate that the "Passe 1919" (which is equivalent to a season pass) allows them to bring a guest to games, promoting the social event aspect of a football match and fostering inclusivity and engagement (Local 1).

On the matchday itself, food trucks and bars within the stadium are recognized by fans as effective ways to encourage community interaction. A fan zone is occasionally present but was only available in one of the three games we visited, with 2 of the 3 fans we interviewed finding it underwhelming. Previously, players greeted fans after matches, creating a stronger player-fan bond, but this tradition ceased last season when they played in the professional league (2nd division) (Marketing Head).

When it comes to facilities, efforts are being made for the sporting complex to become more welcoming and comfortable, particularly through partnerships like the one with British School, where the area around the old swimming pools was re-painted and reconditioned (Marketing Head), the collaboration with Lidl to improve the entrance area, which now includes a sightseeing space, or the transformation of the current space of the club shop into a café and terrace where parents can relax or work while waiting for their children (Board Member). Additionally, they also have a museum (which has free visits during matchdays for people who

bought a ticket) and offer guided tours of it (Appendix 9). However, the museum suffers from a lack of promotion. This was evident in our interviews, as none of the three tourists who attended a match (and were eligible for free entry) were aware of its existence. Moreover, even though the information provided is that they offer guided visits to the stadium, they do not do it, and their guided visits to the museum are in Portuguese only.

Appendix 9 – Museum Price List | Source: Own photo



PREÇÁRIO SALA DE TROFÉUS E MUSEU MANUEL BULHOSA

Tipos de visitas:

- Visita guiada só ao museu
- Visita guiada ao complexo do Restelo (museu incluído)

(Ponto de encontro – Loja Azul → Sala de Imprensa → Balneários → Relvado e pista de atletismo → Mural dos Campeões → Pavilhão Ramos Lopes → Pavilhão Acácio Rosa → Museu → Topo Norte → Loja Azul)

	Visita guiada só ao museu	Visita guiada ao complexo do Restelo (museu incluído)
Sócios do Clube de Futebol "Os Belenenses"	Grátis	Grátis
Não Sócios (Preço por pessoa)		
Até aos 12 anos	Grátis	Grátis
Maiores de 13 anos	5,00€	10,00€
Grupos (preço coletivo e perante marcação prévia)		
De 6 a 10 pessoas	30,00€	45,00€
De 11 a 20 pessoas	45,00€	65,00€
De 21 a 25 pessoas	75,00€	90,00€

Informações adicionais:

- Não é permitido a entrada de animais de estimação nos espaços interiores, relvado e pista do estádio principal.
- Não é permitido fumar durante as visitas.
- Durante a visita não é permitido filmar. Apenas fotografar.

O Clube de Futebol "Os Belenenses" agradece o interesse demonstrado nas visitas e deseja que desfrutem, regressando brevemente às nossas instalações.

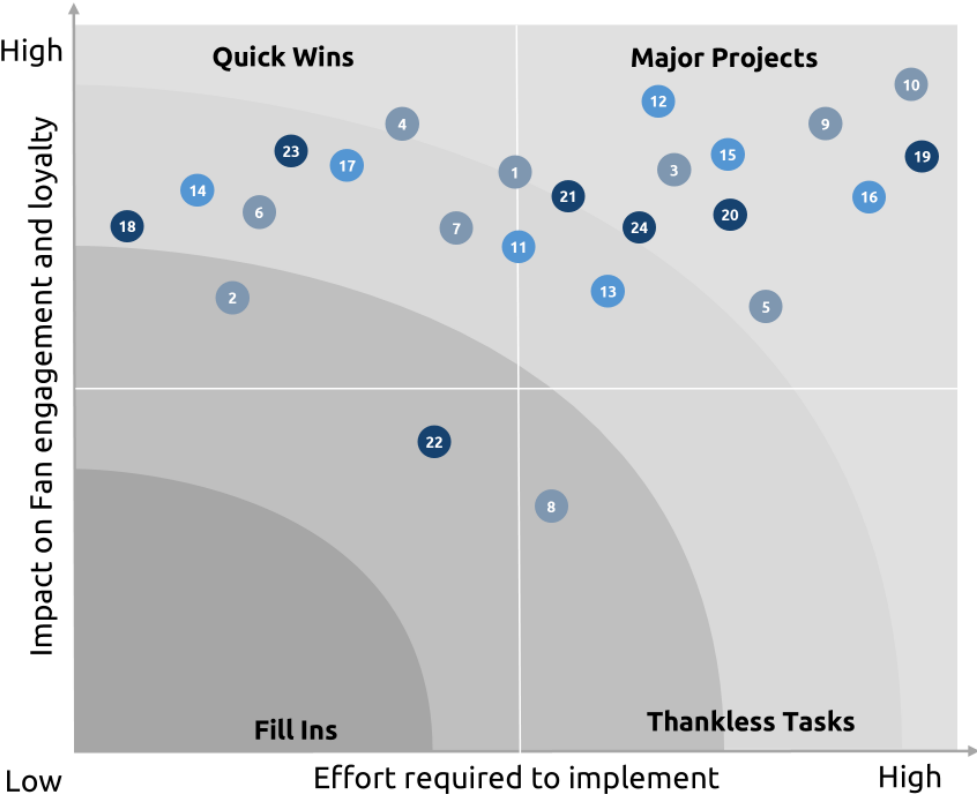
Appendix 10 – Impact/Effort matrix applied to our recommendations | Source: Own elaboration

- Digitalization and Social Media**
- 1 Produce more dynamic content, mainly through video
 - 2 Involve more players in digital efforts
 - 3 Revise the social media mix, improving focus on YouTube and TikTok
 - 4 Actively promote fan participation and fan creation
 - 5 Develop a digital remuneration program
 - 6 Promote fan discussion and fan-to-fan interaction
 - 7 Improve the website and have it as a focus
 - 8 Offer exclusive content
 - 9 Collect data and use it to personalize communication with fans
 - 10 Develop the club application

- Club Identity**
- 11 Capitalize on history and authenticity
 - 12 Leverage resilience as a branding Pillar
 - 13 Foster innovation without compromising authenticity
 - 14 Align leadership vision and fan perceptions
 - 15 Enhance community involvement
 - 16 Boost membership engagement and broaden non-member appeal
 - 17 Encourage fan participation

- Tourism Integration**
- 18 Partner with Turismo de Lisboa
 - 19 Create a flagship store in Belém
 - 20 Revitalize the stadium and the museum
 - 21 Improve the use of the club's complex
 - 22 Revitalize historical content series
 - 23 Improve matchday experiences
 - 24 Collaborate with similar institutions

*the numbering serves only to ease the graphical representation of the recommendations



Appendix 11 – Future Developments roadmap | Source: Own elaboration

