Drivers of football fan engagement in MENA: Additional activities and resources

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1. Report writing activity

Sitting at your desk, you wonder where to begin on a report you have been asked to write on football fan engagement in MENA. You have been asked to analyse the secondary data which exists and to make fully evidenced proposals on what is important to MENA football fans and to present ideas on what might grow the number of fans who attend football matches in the region.

You know that there is the potential also to do primary data collection, but only if there is information which you need which is not in existing reports.

Opening the Josoor Institute report on MENA football fans you begin to look at some of the findings (See Section 2).

Re-reading your notes from the briefing meeting, you recall the key questions which you need to answer:

- Would you expect local citizens and expatriate fans in the region to have similar interest and reasons for engaging with MENA football teams? What, if any, might be differences in why they engage?

- MENA fans often support both local and other teams around the world. Would you expect their motives and process of engagement with football to be different for the local MENA and other international teams they

support? If so, in what ways?

- Fans with an interest in international football might be expected to be a good target market for MENA fans looking to build their fanbase and to attract new fans.

  Are there any possible disadvantages for MENA football in targeting fans of international football to support their clubs and leagues?

- Which parts of the data in this case might help you and what other data might you need to collect to complete your report's analysis and recommendations?

2. Analysis of MENA football fan support

In Josoor Institute's research study on football fans in the MENA region, 2133 football fans were surveyed. These fans were split between the following MENA countries:

Table 1: Sample by Country

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Bahrain	14	.7
	Egypt	305	14.3
	Jordan	180	8.4
	Kuwait	55	2.6
	Lebanon	60	2.8
	Oman	31	1.5
	Qatar	70	3.3
	KSA	456	21.4
	UAE	577	27.1
	Turkey	385	18.0
	Total	2133	100.0

The largest number of respondents come from United Arab Emirates (UAE) with 577 respondents, followed by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) with 456 respondents and Turkey with 385 respondents. Not all of those who took part in the research were local citizens of the country from which they responded (See Tables 3 and 4). Just over half (52.3% of response was from local citizens of the respective

countries, with expatriate respondents coming mainly from Asia (18.6%) or Levant Arabic (10.3%)[1].

3. Football engagement in the MENA region

The Josoor Institute Deloitte research study (2016) identified a range of factors which impact on fan engagement in the MENA region (See Appendix 1) based on Cockayne et al (2016):

Fan Motivation

o **Personal**

These factors include people who consider football to be important and perhaps who played football themselves. They see winning and success of their football team as a reflection on themselves.

o **Identity**

Being a football fan gives MENA fans pride, as though they had personally achieved each win. They consider it to be important to be a football fan and consider themselves to be loyal football fans.

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[1] Levant Arabic is a term sometimes used to describe citizens of Cyprus, Egypt, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Lebabon, Palestine, Syria or Turkey.

- **Community**

  For MENA fans, the community role of their football clubs is important. They consider the clubs they support to have prestige in their communities and to be considered to be outstanding.

Football match intensity

- **Pre-game incentives**

  For the fans in this study, the period before, as well as during the match is important. It is important that fans can access tickets, reach the stadium easily and to have a positive experience. Specific factors that are considered important include options for VIP parking, offers on VIP Box tickets, availability of Majilis-style seating and the way in which tickets are promoted and advertised.

- **Satisfaction with the matchday live experience**

  During the match, a range of servicescape aspects add value to the fan experience. Cleanliness, safety and having a good quality stadium are all seen to be important. In addition, it is important that it does not take too long to get in and out of the stadium. It is also important that there are food and beverage options available during the match. Some of the suggestions are for additional added value entertainment options such as stadium tours and family entertainment options and competitions. Of course, to have a

competitive team, to see the team do well and to experience a good football match are also important.

Twin support of local and global teams

Many of the MENA football fans support both an international and a local side. Some fans listed more than one favourite club, or rank ordered their preferences of up to three international and three local sides they follow. Only 20 of 2133 MENA football fans did not support an international club or national team.

Although respondents were not prompted to choose a club or country and could decline to identify an international team they supported, favourite teams included both international club and national teams. FC Barcelona had by far the most support, with Real Madrid second. Manchester United and Bayern Munchen also ranked highly. Interestingly, the fourth most popular international team was Brazil, the sixth, Germany and the seventh. Argentina. This reflects the importance of national team football to MENA football fans.

Rank	International	Frequency Count
1	FC Barcelona	862
2	Real Madrid	543
3	Manchester United	142
4	Brazil	121
5	Bayern Munchen	71

6	Germany	44
7	Argentina	39
8	Arsenal	37
9	Chelsea	35
10	Inter Milan	31
10	Liverpool FC	31
12	Juventus	23
13	AC Milan	22
14	Fenerbace	20
15	Spain	15
16	AS Roma	13
17	England	12
18	Galatasaray	12
19	Turkey	11
20	Italy	10

Table 2: Favourite Overseas Club or National Team
Source: Josoor Institute

Figure 1 shows the countries and regions in which these favourite national and club sides are based, with European team support dominating (88.7%). Figure 2 shows the split of the support for leagues and national teams within Europe. Support for teams in Spain's La Liga, predominantly for FC Barcelona and Real Madrid, is markedly higher than for England's Premier League and Germany's Bundesliga.
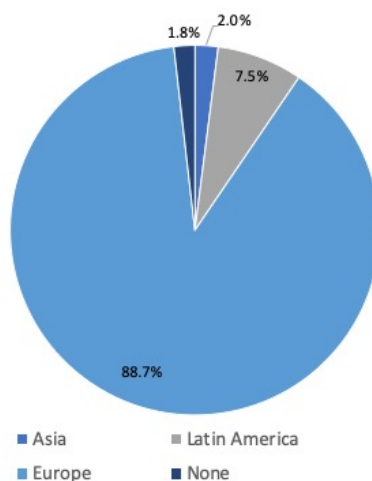
Figure 1: MENA Fans Favourite International Teams by Region
Source: Josoor Institute

Looking at the expatriate status of the research sample, you notice that the percentages of these differs between countries. For example, of the 14 respondents from Bahrain, six are expatriate (42.9%) and eight local citizens (57.1%). For the sample of 305 respondents from Egypt, however, only ten (3.3%) are expatriate and the remaining 295 (96.7%) are local residents. Table 4 shows the study's respondents split by country and expatriate status.

		Expatriate	Local Citizen
Valid	Bahrain	42.9%	57.1%
	Egypt	3.3%	96.7%
	Jordan	14.4%	85.6%
	Kuwait	90.9%	9.1%
	Lebanon	21.7%	88.3%
	Oman	67.7%	32.3%

Qatar	90%	10%
KSA	60.7%	39.3%
UAE	96.4%	3.6%
Turkey	1%	99%
Total	2133	100.0

Table 4: Expatriate Status of MENA study respondents
Source: Josoor Institute

To gain insights into the clubs which are most popular in the respective MENA countries, the most popular clubs for each country are listed in Table 5, which shows the percentage of first choice votes they received from the respondents for that country.

Local Team	Country	% of Country Sample
Bahrain	Al Ahly	21.4%
Bahrain	Muharraq	21.4%
Egypt	Al Ahly Egypt	65.6%
Egypt	Ismaily	2.3%
Jordan	Al Wehdat	38.9%
Jordan	Al Faisaly	24.4%
Jordan	Zamalek	22.6%
KSA	Al Hilal	22.6%
KSA	Al Ahly	21.9%
KSA	Al Itihad	13.2%

KSA	Al Nassr	11.8%
Kuwait	Al Ahly	27.3%
Kuwait	Qadsia	20.0%
Kuwait	Al Araby	7.3%
Lebanon	Nejmeh	25.0%
Lebanon	Ansar/Medina	21.2%
Oman	Al Ahly	12.9%
Qatar	Al Rayyan	29.1%
Qatar	Al Sadd	27.3%
Qatar	Zamalek	12.7%
Turkey	Galatasaray	31.2%
Turkey	Fenerbahce	30.4%
Turkey	Besiktas	15.6%
UAE	Al Ahli Dubai	16.8%
UAE	Al Ain	7.6%
UAE	Al Wasl	5.7%
UAE	UAE	4.1%

Table 5: Favourite Local Club or National Team [2]
Source: Josoor Institute

In some MENA countries, support is centred around a dominant team, for example in Egypt, but in others it is much more evenly spread, for example in Turkey. In Qatar, the highest-ranking locally supported teams are Al Rayyan (29.1% of the Qatar sample) and then Al Sadd (27.3% of the Qatar sample).

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[2] As respondents use the name Al Ahly for Al Ahly Egypt, Al Ahli Saudi and sometimes for Al Shabbab Al Ahly Dubai, the assumption has been made that Egyptian respondents mean Al Ahly Egypt, KSA respondents mean Al Ahly Saudi and UAE respondents mean Al Shabbab Al Ahly. Some assumptions have also had to be made for other country responses where this is not clearly specified.

One phenomenon which arises in the MENA region is that support for some clubs is often more regional than specifically local. Whereas intense rivalry in regions such as Europe can sometimes limit support for other teams, within MENA favourite local teams have been defined by respondents as being from across the MENA region. Table 6 shows the most popular MENA football teams adding favourite local team scores across countries.

You stop, look again at your guide questions and start writing…

Rank	Country	Team	% of Country Sample
1	Egypt	Al Ahly Egypt	248
2	KSA	Al Hilal	125
3	Turkey	Galatasaray	120
4	Jordan	Zamalek	117
5	Turkey	Fenerbahce	117
6	Jordan	Al Wehdat	101
7	KSA	Al Ahly Saudi	100
8	UAE	Al Shabbab	99
9	KSA	Al Nassr	78
10	KSA	Al Itihad	66
11	Turkey	Besiktas	60
12	Jordan	Al Faisaly	50

13	UAE	Al Ain	44
14	UAE	Al Wasl	33
15	UAE	UAE	23
16	Qatar	Al Rayyan	20
17	Lebanon	Nejmeh	16
18	Qatar	Al Sadd	15
19	Lebanon	Ansar/Medina	14
20	Kuwait	Qadsia	11

Table 6: MENA football fans' favourite Local Club or National Team
Source: Josoor Institute

4. **Additional activities and resources (cont'd)**

   Using the headings derived from the Josoor Institute MENA Football fan research (See Long Case Study), apply these to fans of a club or league of your choice to identify those which are most important in this context.

5. Within each of the headings of the Josoor MENA fan research, discuss with students which elements of social, emotional appeal, links with place etc are relevant in their context.

6. Using the Model in the Digital (Resource 4) above, apply this to discuss the role of digital in creating fan engagement. Does this provide: a) social

connection b) emotional connection c) does it link despite geography etc.

7. Choose one of the favourite international teams and one of the favourite local teams selected by MENA fans. Using independent research from the internet, compare and contrast these clubs in terms of their location, capacity of stadia, website and broader fan activities using secondary data:

What challenges and opportunities can you identify for each club?

   a. In what way do these teams face similar challenges and opportunities to each other in terms of fan engagement?

   b. In what ways are they different to each other in what might be effective fan engagement strategies.

Additional resources

1. Deloitte Report on Fan Engagement in MENA:

   https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/xe/Documents/About-Deloitte/mepovdocuments/mepovissue24/a-challenging-tackle_mepov24.pdf

2. Website with case studies of fan engagement activities:

   https://fanexperienceco.com/

3. FIFA Fan Movement initiative:

   https://www.fanmovement.com/

4. Role of Digital in fan engagement:

   https://other.media/best-in-class-sports-fan-engagement/