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Sustainable Football Tourism: Building a Global Ecosystem for Eco-Conscious Fan Engagement and Local Development

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Master in International Management

Supervisor:
PhD Professor Renato Telo de Freitas Barbosa Pereira, Assistant Professor With Habilitation, Department of Marketing, Operations and General Management at Iscte Business School

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BUSINESS
SCHOOL

Department of Marketing, Operations and General Management

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Resumo

Esta dissertação desenvolve um plano de negócios aplicado para uma plataforma digital orientada a viagens para jogos internacionais de futebol, promovendo turismo mais sustentável e com maior impacto local. A solução integra: (i) encontros verificados entre adeptos por clube e destino, (ii) descoberta de locais e experiências potenciadas para fãs e (iii) um planeador de viagem assistido por IA que converte restrições dos jogos em itinerários viáveis e explicita ganhos entre preço, tempo e CO_2.

A metodologia combina pesquisa secundária (enquadramento do mercado e suporte a pressupostos operacionais e financeiros) com pesquisa primária para validar o encaixe problema-solução. Os dados primários resultam de um questionário online com 104 respostas válidas, focado em hábitos de coordenação, dificuldades de planeamento, preferências de sustentabilidade e sinais de adoção, incluindo disponibilidade para pagar. A análise é descritiva e serve para orientar decisões de produto e calibrar pressupostos conservadores.

Os resultados evidenciam alinhamento com a componente comunitária e confirmam fricções no planeamento, sobretudo a compatibilização de transportes com horários e a comparação de alojamento. A sustentabilidade surge como critério de decisão, em especial na mobilidade, mas a disposição para pagar um prémio por alojamento certificado é menos consensual, reforçando uma abordagem centrada na transparência.

Estes insights suportam uma implementação faseada (Portugal, Espanha e Reino Unido, seguida de expansão) e demonstrações financeiras de forma para avaliar a viabilidade num cenário base conservador.

Palavras-chave: Turismo desportivo; Plataformas digitais; Efeitos de rede; Marketplaces bilaterais; Planeamento de viagens com IA; Experiências baseadas na comunidade.

Classificação JEL:
M16: International Business Administration
L83: Sports; Gambling; Recreation; Tourism

Abstract

This dissertation develops an applied business plan for a digital platform that improves travel to international football matches while fostering more sustainable, locally beneficial tourism. The platform integrates (i) verified fan meetups by club and destination, (ii) curated discovery of fan-friendly venues and experiences, and (iii) an AI-assisted trip planner that turns match constraints into feasible itineraries and makes price-time-CO_2 trade-offs explicit.

The study combines secondary research, used to frame the market context and support operational and financial assumptions, with primary research to test problem-solution fit. Primary data were collected via an online questionnaire (n = 104) measuring behavioral proximity to match travel, coordination habits, planning pain points, sustainability preferences, and adoption indicators, including willingness to pay. Results are analyzed descriptively to guide design choices rather than to infer population-level parameters.

Findings show strong support for the community proposition, especially pre-match socializing and willingness to connect with other supporters. Respondents also report persistent frictions, notably difficulty aligning transport with match schedules and the time spent comparing accommodation options. Sustainability is relevant mainly as a decision lens (particularly mobility), while willingness to pay an explicit premium for green-certified accommodation is more mixed, supporting a transparency-first positioning rather than reliance on sustainability as a direct revenue driver.

These insights inform a phased rollout (Portugal launch, growth in Spain and the UK, and subsequent expansion) supported by pro forma financial statements, enabling an investor-oriented feasibility assessment under a conservative baseline scenario.

Keywords: Sports tourism; Digital platforms; Network effects; Two-sided marketplaces; AI trip planning; Community-based experiences.

JEL Classification:
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Source: Adapted from B2U Business-to-you. (n.d.). VRIO Framework explained with examples. Retrieved from https://www.business-to-you.com/vrio-framework/ 19

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1. Introduction

Football is far more than a sport; it is a global social fabric connecting millions of people across borders, languages, and cultures. Whether it's a Champions League night, a World Cup showdown, or a local derby, legions of fans set out - by plane, train, or automobile - seeking that shared rush of excitement and memories that last forever. Yet, often, these journeys are planned in a vacuum: fans hop between booking websites, hoping by chance to bump into like-minded supporters, and seldom find advice on how to travel more sustainably or give back to the places they visit. The result? A disjointed fan experience and a big opportunity lost for small businesses and communities, who could otherwise benefit from an enthusiastic, high-spending crowd.

Imagine instead a digital platform built around football's social heartbeat. Rather than launching the usual, high-priced tour packages, we start with a mobile community hub: supporters sign up, create profiles, join groups centered on their favorite clubs or national teams, set up meetups, and uncover fan-friendly bars, museums, and cultural events recommended by local partners. As engagement grows, this hub evolves into a two-sided marketplace. Local entrepreneurs offer match-day specials - think exclusive pub deals or guided stadium tours - to a verified base of fans, while an AI-driven trip planner suggests low-emission flights and eco-certified hotels tailored to each person's tastes. In doing so, we hope to turn solitary trips into communal, sustainable experiences - spurring economic benefits for host cities, trimming carbon footprints, and strengthening that shared passion that makes football so unique.

Building on the intersection between football tourism, digital platform dynamics, and sustainability-driven travel behavior, this dissertation develops an applied business plan for a community-first platform that integrates (i) fan coordination, (ii) local discovery and partner activation, and (iii) an AI-assisted trip planner that makes time-price-CO_2 trade-offs explicit. The work combines secondary research with primary data from an online questionnaire (104 valid responses) to validate the core problem-solution fit and to calibrate key modelling assumptions. The chapters that follow translate these insights into a structured market and strategic analysis (external and internal), a phased implementation plan, and a set of financial statements and investment metrics to evaluate feasibility under a conservative baseline scenario. The thesis therefore contributes not only a conceptual proposition, but also a

transparent execution and valuation logic suitable for decision-making by founders, partners, and early-stage investors.

2. Literature Review

For the literature review of this business plan, I chose to focus on several key points that intersect both football and sustainable tourism. Both topics will provide a theoretical foundation for my innovative business idea while demonstrating the academic significance of the project.

2.1 Sustainable Tourism and Eco-Friendly Travel

Tourism's recovery after the COVID-19 standstill has revived an old debate: can the industry grow without rekindling its full climate footprint? The UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) argues the sector is now at a "make-or-break" juncture, urging destinations to lock in lower-carbon habits adopted during the pandemic pause (UNWTO, 2022). Recent scholarship echoes that call, stressing that sustainability goals must migrate from glossy CSR pages to day-to-day operating decisions - flight choice, lodging standards, last-mile mobility (Gössling & Higham, 2021).

Accordingly, the literature converges on three mutually reinforcing levers. First, supply-side decarbonization: airlines investing in sustainable aviation fuel, hotels installing on-site renewables, and event venues adopting circular-waste schemes (López & Dolan, 2023). Second, demand-side nudges, where booking engines surface rail options ahead of short-haul flights or label properties with credible eco-certifications (Buckley, 2020). And third, community benefit mechanisms - direct-to-resident micro-payments or co-op ownership models - that anchor economic gains locally (Butler, 1999). The net effect, when well aligned, is a business architecture that keeps profitability and planetary boundaries in the same frame, a principle this thesis carries into the football-fan platform design.

2.2 Sports Tourism and Football Tourism

Sports travel rebounded faster than most leisure segments once borders reopened: pent-up demand and a backlog of rescheduled fixtures created what analysts dubbed a "revenge-tourism derby" in 2022 (Frawley & Schulenkorf, 2022). At the centre of that surge sits football, the world's most-watched sport and a proven magnet for destination branding. UEFA estimates that Champions League away fans alone injected €237 million into host-city economies during the 2022-23 knock-out rounds (UEFA, 2023).

But the literature also flags two structural headwinds. Concentration risk - where a handful of global cities dominate marquee fixtures - funnels visitors flow into already congested urban cores, amplifying price spikes and resident push-back (Higham & Hinch, 2019). And

value leakage, whereby ticketing platforms and hospitality chains headquartered elsewhere capture the lion's share of spending, leaving small vendors with scraps (Bausch & Skerritt, 2021).

Emerging studies suggest platform-mediated, community-based models can soften both issues. By dispersing fan gatherings across multiple neighborhoods, they relieve pressure on tourism "hot spots," while digital trust tools help micro-entrepreneurs - fan pubs, walking-tour guides, retro-kit resellers - tap into visitor demand at lower transaction cost (Jones, Pappalepore, & Petrillo, 2022). These findings reinforce the strategic choice made in this business plan to foreground locality and sustainability, rather than compete head-on with mass-market tour operators.

2.3 Digital Platforms & Network Effects

Digital platforms have changed the rules of market entry by replacing linear supply chains with two-sided or multi-sided arenas where users interact directly. At the heart of this model sit network effects: every new participant raises the platform's value for everyone already inside it, creating a self-reinforcing growth loop (Parker, Van Alstyne, & Choudary, 2016). In practice, as more football fans join a travel-meet-up app, the probability of finding like-minded supporters rises, which in turn entices additional users and, eventually, commercial partners such as bars or transport providers.

Rochet and Tirole's (2003) seminal work notes that platforms succeed when they minimize "chicken-and-egg" frictions between user groups. For sports tourism this means lowering the cost - cognitive or monetary - of organizing match-day gatherings while giving local businesses an easy way to target a pre-qualified audience. Hagiu and Wright (2015) add that controlling a critical mass of high-quality interactions, not just total user count, is what converts early traction into durable competitive advantage. Accordingly, design choices such as verified fan profiles, reputation scores for venues and sustainability badges do more than please regulators; they tighten multi-sided stickiness and deter copy-cat entrants.

Tourism research echoes these insights. Xiang and Du (2021) show that destination platforms with strong personalization engines and social features achieve higher repeat-visit intent precisely because network effects amplify personal relevance. Meanwhile, studies on the sharing economy reveal that prosocial values - such as environmental stewardship - can accelerate adoption when they are embedded in the platform story (Hamari, Sjöklint, & Ukkonen, 2016). For the business plan under development, this means that pairing football

passion with visible green credentials is not a CSR afterthought: it is a growth lever that nudges both sides of the market to join and stay.

The literature therefore positions network effects as both opportunity and responsibility. If orchestrated carefully, they can funnel traveler spending towards smaller local enterprises and greener transport modes. If ignored, they risk entrenching homogenous offers and high-carbon behaviors. Understanding this duality is essential for designing governance mechanisms - algorithms, community guidelines, revenue splits - that scale the platform without sacrificing its sustainable mission.

2.4 Sharing Economy Marketplaces

The rise of the sharing economy has redrawn the tourism map by letting travelers book beds, meals, and micro-experiences directly from residents rather than traditional intermediaries. Airbnb's explosive growth is the reference case, but similar peer-to-peer models now span everything from guided city jogs to pop-up food tours. At their core, these platforms unlock under-utilized assets - a spare room, a van, a fan-owned bar - and monetize them through digital trust mechanisms such as reviews, secure payments, and host-vetting (Guttentag, 2015).

Research suggests two dominant effects. First, sharing platforms democratizes market entry for small suppliers, boosting household income and diversifying what destinations can offer (Oskam & Boswijk, 2016). This is particularly relevant to sports tourism, were local pubs, grass-roots fan clubs, or even amateur stadiums can list match-day events that would otherwise remain invisible to visiting supporters. Second, they create measurable spill-overs - higher neighborhood footfall and ancillary spending - yet also spark concerns over housing pressure and regulatory grey zones (Cheng, 2016). For a sports-centric platform, striking a balance between economic upside and community acceptance means implementing host caps, transparent fee structures, and sustainability badges that signal responsible practice.

Zervas, Proserpio, and Byers (2017) further show that the success of sharing marketplaces depends on perceived authenticity: travelers place a premium on experiences curated by "people like me." When applied to football tourism, this translates into hosted watch-parties, supporter-led city walks, or museum tours narrated by local historians - all easily onboarded via app-based listing tools. Importantly, these micro-events generate lower environmental impact than large coach tours, aligning the model with the thesis's sustainability lens.

Taken together, the literature portrays sharing-economy marketplaces as fertile ground for community-driven, low-asset expansion. Embedding such functionality within the proposed football-fan platform can widen the inventory, cement network effects, and keep more spending in the host neighborhood - without heavy upfront infrastructure costs.

2.5 Fan Communities Online & Co-creation

Fans rarely consume sport in isolation; they seek belonging. Digital brand-communities provide that social glue, letting supporters exchange stories, inside jokes and travel tips around the clock. The stronger the perceived sense of community, the deeper the emotional investment and, ultimately, the greater the loyalty to both club and associated brands (Pons, Giroux, & Mourali, 2014). Online spaces therefore act as amplifiers: every new post, meme or highlight reel multiplies attachment, nudging fans to replicate the experience offline - whether that means buying a shirt or flying across Europe for an away match.

Motivation studies show three dominant triggers for sport-related online participation: information search, social interaction, and entertainment (Seo & Green, 2008). Each trigger maps neatly onto tourism behavior. Fans log in first to confirm fixtures and ticket drops, stay to chat with like-minded travelers, and end up planning collective itineraries that turn solitary trips into social adventures. When platforms layer in co-creation tools - polls, event builders, rating widgets - users shift from passive readers to active architects of the experience, supplying fresh content that keeps the community vibrant (Brodie, Ilic, Juric, & Hollebeek, 2013).

Sport-specific research underlines an extra dynamic: the interplay between fan identification (attachment to the team) and brand identification (attachment to the platform). When both are high, engagement rates soar and word-of-mouth spreads virally, lowering acquisition costs (Kunkel, Doyle, & Funk, 2017). For the business plan in question, this means that features such as verified supporter groups, club-themed badges and sustainability trophies can simultaneously reinforce tribal identity and platform stickiness.

Finally, open-innovation scholars remind us that co-creation is not a free-for-all; communities thrive when roles are clear and contributions are recognized (Füller, Hutter, & Hautz, 2011). Designing tiered reputation systems - e.g., “local host”, “green ambassador”, “match-day scout” - both incentivizes quality content and surfaces trustworthy recommendations for first-time travelers. In effect, the community becomes a self-sustaining engine of itinerary ideas, peer review and social proof, perfectly aligned with the platform’s sustainable-tourism mission.

2.6 Sustainable Business Models & AI Trip Planning

Sustainable business models in tourism aim to keep profitability and purpose in the same lane. Firms that adopt them weave environmental stewardship and social equity into core strategy rather than treating them as add-ons. Typical tactics include reducing energy use, favoring suppliers with smaller carbon footprints, and creating revenue loops that channel money back to local communities - moves that underpin long-term resilience and brand trust (Bramwell & Lane, 1993). On the income side, three lines dominate recent literature: (i) eco-tourism bundles that package low-impact flights with certified "green" hotels; (ii) community-based tourism, where host residents own part of the value chain; and (iii) loyalty programs that reward pro-environment choices, nudging travelers toward rail, direct flights, or plant-based catering (Butler, 1999).

Artificial intelligence is increasingly recognized as an enabling technology for advancing sustainability objectives across sectors (Vinuesa et al., 2020). Personalization at this scale does two things: it removes friction for travelers who already care about their footprint, and it gently pushes the rest toward greener choices they might not have considered (Song & Chen, 2025). Machine-learning models can also forecast visitor flows and re-route tourists to off-peak times - spreading economic benefits while easing pressure on infrastructure (Núñez et al., 2024). Recent studies show that AI-powered platforms cut total trip emissions by up to 11 percent when "green-first" filters are pre-selected (Seagoing Green, 2024), and that travelers' trust in the algorithm rises when recommendations are explained in plain language (Xiang et al., 2023).

In short, AI does not magically make tourism sustainable, but it dramatically lowers the cognitive and financial cost of acting sustainably. When embedded in a community-driven sport-tourism platform, the technology can recommend the lowest-carbon route to an away match, highlight stadiums running on renewables and even match fans to local businesses that meet specified ESG criteria - turning abstract good intentions into everyday decisions.

2.7 Impact on Local Communities

Match-day travel brings an emotional buzz that can spill well beyond the stadium gates. Studies on host neighborhoods consistently show that visiting fans inject short-run spending into cafés, corner shops and transport networks, while reinforcing local pride in club identity and place-based traditions (Gibson, Kaplanidou, & Thapa, 2018). When supporters swap stories with

residents or join grassroots watch-parties, football becomes a form of cultural exchange rather than a one-way spectacle.

Yet the same inflow can strain resources. Weekend spikes in accommodation demand push up rents, congest public transport and stretch municipal services - effects documented in Premier-League cities and small World-Cup towns alike (Higham & Hinch, 2019). Economic gains also tend to leak out: ticket revenue flows to governing bodies, and global brands capture much of the merchandising spend, leaving micro-entrepreneurs with thin margins (Bausch & Skerritt, 2021). If unmanaged, overtourism fosters resentment, eroding the social license that makes sport events welcome in the first place.

Scholars therefore argue for community-based governance models. Waitt (2017) finds that when residents co-design fan zones or curate walking tours, they both share in profits and shape visitor behavior towards more respectful patterns. Jones et al. (2022) add that platforms which foreground local businesses - rather than treating them as afterthoughts - distribute tourism dividends more evenly and reduce feelings of cultural intrusion. For the proposed digital ecosystem, these insights translate into concrete design choices: capped host fees, visibility algorithms that prioritize small vendors, and reputation badges for low-impact events. Such mechanisms can channel supporter enthusiasm into sustained, inclusive growth rather than transient booms followed by social fatigue.

3. Methodology

This dissertation applies an applied, business-plan-oriented methodology to evaluate the feasibility of a digital platform that combines travel planning, community coordination, and local fan events linked to international football matches. The approach integrates secondary research - used to frame the market context and establish relevant benchmarks - with primary research designed to test the behavioral assumptions that underpin product-market fit and monetization choices. Because the purpose is to inform strategic design decisions and modelling inputs, rather than to estimate population parameters with statistical precision, the research design is exploratory and validation-oriented, emphasizing actionable insight and triangulation across sources.

Two complementary data streams informed the analysis. First, secondary sources were used to situate the venture within broader industry dynamics, refine the target segment, and substantiate the financial and operational assumptions applied throughout the business plan. Second, primary data were collected via an online questionnaire to assess whether the proposed concept resonates with potential users and to surface key friction points in the current football travel-planning journey. Survey findings are treated primarily in a descriptive manner, serving as practical evidence to justify design priorities and to calibrate the quantitative assumptions used in the subsequent operational and financial chapters.

Primary data were collected through a self-administered online questionnaire, compiling 104 valid responses. The instrument was designed to capture: (i) respondents' behavioral proximity to the use case, (ii) habits and pain points related to social coordination, (iii) sustainability-related preferences, and (iv) signals of adoption intent and willingness to pay. The full questionnaire is included in the Appendix to support transparency and replicability.

Most attitudinal items were measured using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Totally Disagree) to 5 (Totally Agree). This structure facilitates consistent comparison across constructs and allows results to be reported as response distributions, providing a clear and interpretable indication of the intensity of agreement.

The questionnaire employed a non-probabilistic convenience/self-selection sampling approach, disseminated through channels likely to reach football supporters and potential match travelers. This strategy is suitable for early-stage concept validation, where the objective is to test resonance and surface behavioral patterns, but it necessarily limits statistical generalizability. Accordingly, the findings are interpreted as directional evidence - indicative of

interest, perceived friction, and adoption intent - rather than as representative estimates of the broader population.

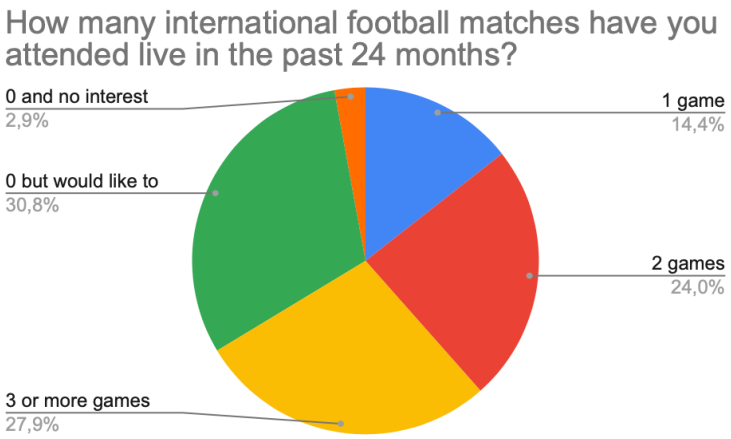


Figure 1- International football match attendance and interest

This opening question (Figure 1) gauges whether respondents already participate in international football travel and, equally important, whether there is latent interest among those who have not yet done so. The main indicator is self-reported attendance at an international match within the past 24 months. This is complemented by response options that separate: (i) respondents with no recent attendance who nevertheless indicate willingness to attend, and (ii) respondents who report neither attendance nor interest. This distinction allows the analysis to frame an early demand funnel comprising both experienced match travelers and an "aspirational" segment with future intent. This chart supports the argument that the concept is relevant not only to current travelers, but also to potential users who demonstrate curiosity and openness toward travelling for international fixtures.

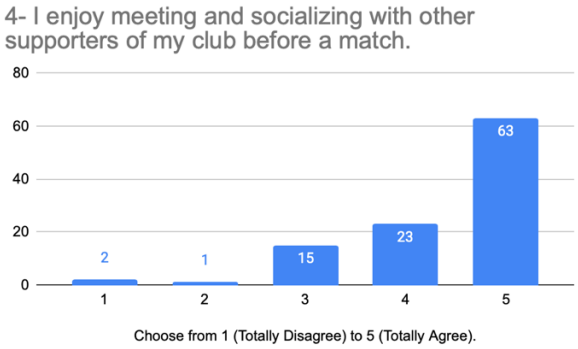


Figure 2- Pre-match social motivation: agreement with meeting and socializing with other supporters

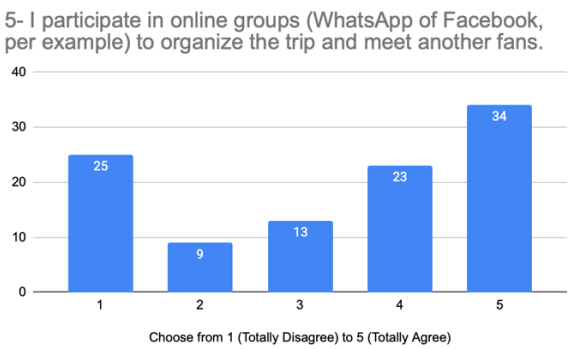


Figure 3- Participation in online groups to organize trips and meet fans

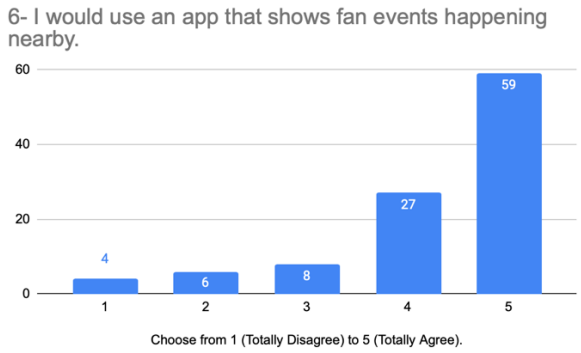


Figure 4- Intention to use an app that shows events

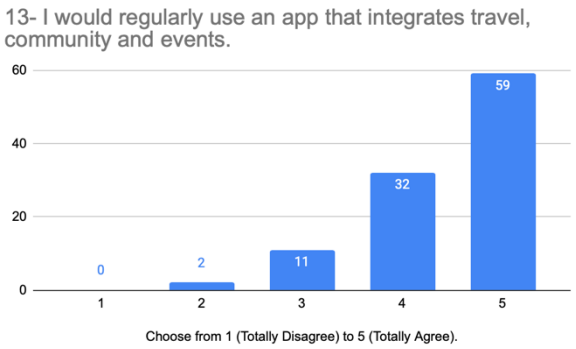


Figure 5- Intention to use an app that integrates travel community and events

This group of questions (Figures 2, 3, 4 and 5) assesses whether the platform's community layer aligns with respondents' existing motivations and coordination routines. Overall, the results indicate that pre-match socializing is a strong and broadly shared driver within the target segment. Most respondents report high agreement with meeting and socializing with other supporters before a match, suggesting that community interaction is not a peripheral "add-on", but a core element of the match-travel experience the platform aims to strengthen.

At the same time, the findings point to fragmented coordination practices. While a meaningful share of respondents already relies on informal digital groups (e.g., WhatsApp or Facebook) to organize trips and connect with other fans, a non-trivial proportion do not. This distinction is important for implementation: it supports positioning the app as a tool that reduces coordination burden and lowers barriers to participation, particularly for supporters who value the social dimension but lack an established group or do not engage regularly in online fan communities. Methodologically, the survey therefore validates demand for community features while signaling that adoption should not depend on pre-existing group infrastructure.

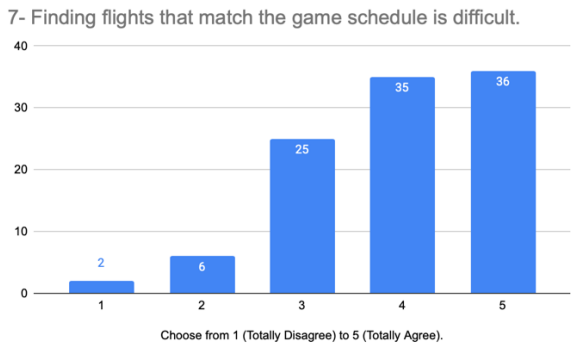


Figure 6- Difficulty to find flights that match the game schedule

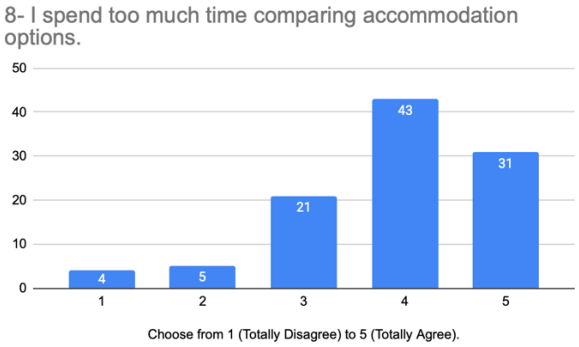


Figure 7- Time spent comparing accommodation options

Responses to Questions 7 and 8 (Figures 6 and 7) provide direct support for a planning-effort gap, which justifies positioning an AI-enabled trip planner as a core feature rather than a secondary add-on. A clear majority of respondents report that aligning flights with match schedules is difficult, suggesting that the challenge is not simply a lack of information but an organizational problem: users must reconcile fixed kick-off times with constrained transport availability, often under time pressure. In this context, an AI-assisted planner can add practical value by automating search, filtering options around non-negotiable constraints (e.g., kick-off time, airport proximity, and feasible return windows), and presenting a short set of workable itineraries instead of requiring extensive manual comparison across multiple sites.

A comparable pattern appears in accommodation decisions, where respondents indicate that they spend excessive time comparing alternatives. This reinforces the rationale for a planner that reduces cognitive load by ranking options against user-defined priorities - such as price, distance to the stadium or fan zones, cancellation flexibility, and sustainability cues - while making the underlying trade-offs explicit. Taken together, these items isolate a recurring friction point in the user journey: time-intensive planning. This strengthens the argument that the platform's differentiation rests not only on community and events, but also on decision support that translates complex travel constraints into actionable recommendations.

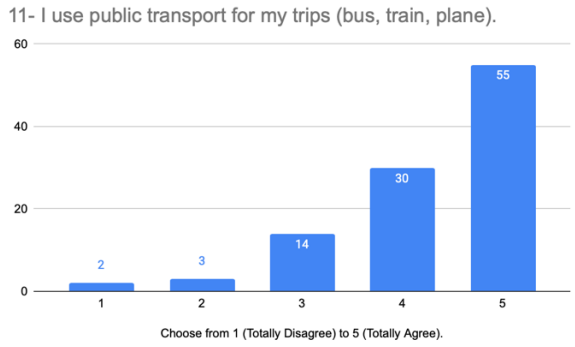


Figure 8- Use of public transportation

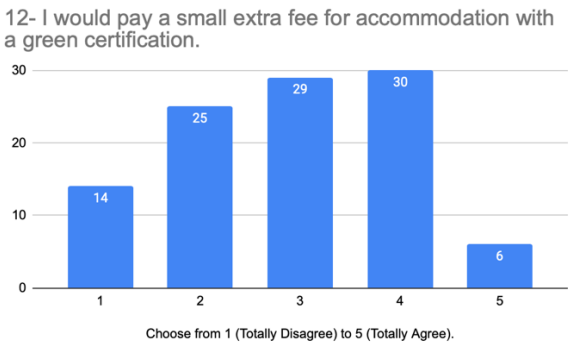


Figure 9- Likelihood to pay an extra for green certification accommodations

Responses to Questions 11 and 12 (Figures 8 and 9) suggest that sustainability matters to the target segment, but more as a guided orientation in decision-making than as a clear willingness to pay a meaningful price premium. A large share of respondents report using public transport modes during their trips, indicating that lower-impact mobility is already embedded in common behavior and that presenting travel options through a sustainability lens is unlikely to feel misaligned with how supporters currently travel. By contrast, willingness to pay extra for accommodation with green certification appears more mixed. Many respondents select mid-

scale options, and relatively few express strong agreement with paying an additional fee. Taken together, these findings support integrating sustainability primarily through transparent information and trade-off support - for example, surfacing certified options and CO_2-related cues - while keeping monetization assumptions cautious and avoiding an approach that depends on sustainability alone as a primary revenue driver.

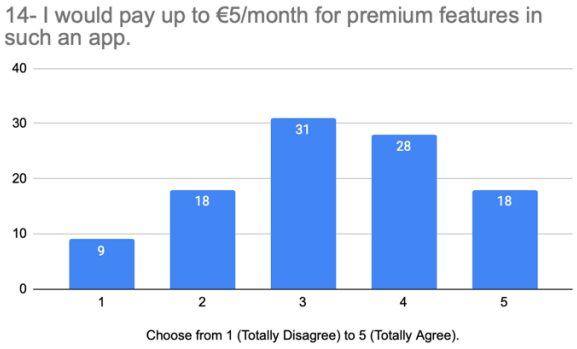


Figure 10- Intetion to become a Premium User

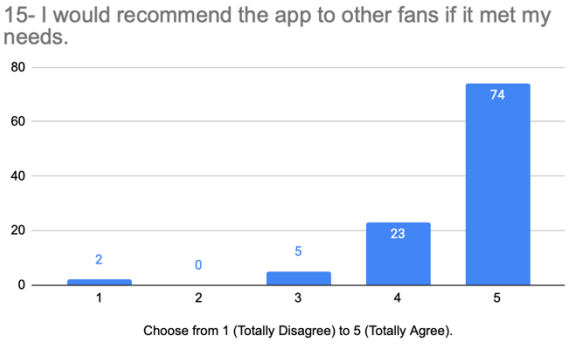


Figure 11- Probability of recommending the app if it meets expectations and needs

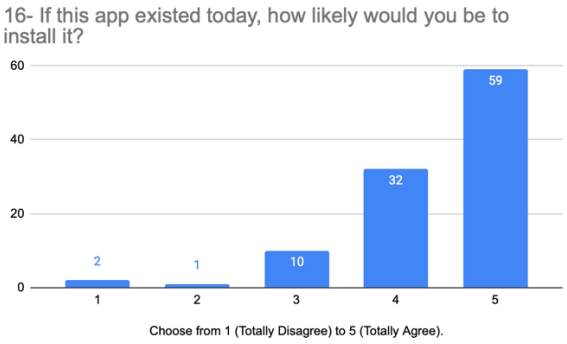


Figure 12- Likelihood to install the app

This final group of questions (Figures 10, 11 and 12) brings together the strongest indicators of potential product-market fit and monetization feasibility. Overall, responses point to a consistently positive orientation toward the proposed concept. Participants report high willingness to use an app that surfaces nearby fan events and, more broadly, strong agreement with the idea of regularly using a platform that integrates travel planning, community coordination, and local experiences. This is further supported by a high stated likelihood of installing the app if it were available and a strong propensity to recommend it to other supporters once it proves useful. Taken together, these indicators provide methodological support for the proposition that the concept addresses a genuine user need and may benefit from referral dynamics once trust and perceived utility are established.

At the same time, willingness to pay for Premium features (up to approximately €5 per month) is more cautious than general usage intention. This gap is methodologically important because it aligns with a freemium adoption pathway: broad interest in using the platform, with monetization concentrated among a smaller subset of users who perceive sufficient incremental value to justify payment. For the business plan, this supports conservative assumptions regarding Premium conversion and frames subscription revenue as a later scaling lever - dependent on demonstrated value - rather than as the main driver of early-stage financial viability.

Given the exploratory aims of the thesis, the questionnaire offers evidence on perceived usefulness and stated intention, but it does not capture observed behavior. Self-reported intentions are vulnerable to hypothetical bias, and the convenience-based sampling approach may over-represent highly engaged supporters or digitally active respondents. Accordingly, the survey results are treated as directional validation and are interpreted alongside secondary sources and operational feasibility constraints.

For this reason, the thesis does not extrapolate survey percentages directly into market sizing. Instead, the findings are used to justify design priorities and to calibrate modelling inputs conservatively - particularly when parameterizing adoption and monetization assumptions in the financial plan.

4. External Analysis

When developing an innovative business plan, conducting a thorough external analysis is crucial to understanding the market environment, identifying opportunities and threats, and positioning the business for success. An external analysis helps to assess the factors that could impact the business from outside the organization, including market trends, industry dynamics, regulatory landscapes, and competitor activities. This type of analysis also informs strategic decision-making, allowing the business to anticipate challenges and capitalize on favorable conditions. To structure the external analysis effectively, PESTEL framework is beneficial.

4.1 PESTEL

PESTEL (Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Environmental, and Legal) analysis is useful for examining macro-environmental factors that may influence business. In the context of sustainable football tourism, this framework can help identify regulations related to sustainability, economic trends affecting travel demand, and social factors such as consumer interest in eco-conscious travel. Additionally, environmental considerations (e.g., carbon footprint concerns) and technological advancements (e.g., green travel apps) are essential components to evaluate when building an eco-focused tourism platform.

4.1.1 Political Factors

The ease of international travel, influenced by visa policies and travel restrictions, is a critical factor for football tourism. Changes in visa regulations can either facilitate or impede fan travel, particularly during major events like the FIFA World Cup or UEFA Champions League. Political instability or diplomatic conflicts may also affect travel patterns, requiring tourism operators to adapt their strategies.

National and regional policies that support sports tourism development can provide essential funding and incentives for sustainable projects. Countries seeking to position themselves as football tourism hubs may promote initiatives that align with sustainable tourism objectives. For instance, the UK government has invested in infrastructure to support sports tourism, creating opportunities for sustainable travel businesses (VisitBritain, 2021).

Political stability and security are critical considerations for international football tourism. Destinations experiencing political unrest or safety concerns may see a decline in tourist arrivals, affecting overall revenue and increasing operational risks (Bramwell & Lane,

1993). For instance, countries with strong political stability and established sports tourism policies, such as Spain and Germany, are more likely to attract football tourists.

4.1.2 Economic Factors

Football tourism can be a lucrative segment, especially during major events such as the FIFA World Cup, UEFA Champions League, or national leagues. The economic impact of football tourism is evident in host cities, where visitors spend money on accommodation, transport, dining, and merchandise. However, economic downturns or recessions can significantly reduce discretionary spending on travel, affecting overall demand.

The purchasing power of target markets directly affects the viability of a sustainable tourism platform. Fans with higher disposable income may be more inclined to pay a premium for sustainable travel options, such as eco-friendly accommodations or carbon-neutral transportation. Conversely, in regions with lower income levels, affordability may become a barrier, requiring tailored pricing strategies.

Sustainable football tourism has the potential to create jobs in host communities, from tour guides and event coordinators to sustainable travel consultants. This economic impact can foster local economic development, particularly in underserved regions. However, it is essential to ensure that employment opportunities are equitable and inclusive, preventing economic disparity.

4.1.3 Social Factors

Football trips are less about ticking boxes and more about experiences - especially for younger fans. Many prioritize meeting people, authentic local moments and content they can share, not just getting from A to B. Short, weekend “match-city” breaks are particularly popular because they keep costs and time manageable while packing the fixture with social energy. That popularity creates demand for easy ways to find fellow supporters, join meetups and locate welcoming local spots.

Identity and values also shape choices. A meaningful share of Gen Z and millennial supporters say fairness and environmental responsibility matter, but their real-world choices are sensitive to convenience and price. Practical nudges - like showing lower-emission travel routes by default, tagging eco-certified hotels, and surfacing clear cost comparisons - can help bridge the gap between concern and action. Community tools (user reviews, reputation badges, host

verification) provide social reassurance, making it easier for first-time travelers to attend meetups or try greener options without the fear of being left out.

Safety, inclusion and accessibility are persistent concerns. Fans want reliable information about neighborhood safety after dark, returning transport from stadiums, and basic codes of conduct for gatherings. Women, LGBTQI+ supporters and travelers with disabilities tend to place extra value on verified, accessible spaces and concrete logistics (step-free access, accessible seating, family-friendly venues). Platforms that visibly commit to inclusivity - and let users filter by accessibility features - expand the pool of comfortable participants.

Finally, cultural curiosity drives many visits. Fans often seek local stories - stadium history walks, club museums, pubs that keep match-day rituals alive - rather than conventional tourist attractions. Offering at least English and Portuguese and a few short etiquette tips reduces friction and helps visitors show respect for local norms, which in turn improves how communities receive visiting supporters.

4.1.4 Technological Factors

The rise of digital platforms offers an opportunity to streamline travel planning for football fans. Mobile apps and online booking systems can integrate sustainable options such as carbon-offset flights, eco-certified accommodations, and green transport services. By centralizing these options on a single platform, fans can make environmentally conscious travel decisions more conveniently.

Data analytics can play a crucial role in understanding fan preferences and optimizing the platform’s offerings. By analyzing travel patterns, spending behavior, and sustainability preferences, the platform can offer personalized recommendations for eco-friendly travel packages, local experiences, and sustainable football tourism activities.

Social media platforms are powerful tools for promoting sustainable travel practices. Educational campaigns on sustainable tourism, digital storytelling of eco-conscious football tourism experiences, and collaborations with football clubs to promote green initiatives can increase platform visibility and attract travelers.

4.1.5 Environmental Factors

The travel sector is a significant contributor to carbon emissions, with transportation being a primary factor. Football tourism typically involves extensive travel, whether through flights, buses, or private vehicles, resulting in a substantial carbon footprint (UNWTO, 2020). This can

present both a challenge and an opportunity for the platform. By integrating carbon offset programs and promoting eco-friendly transport options, the business can align itself with growing consumer demand for low-impact travel while mitigating negative environmental impacts.

Large-scale football events generate considerable waste, from single-use plastics in stadiums to increased water and energy consumption. Managing these resources sustainably is not only a regulatory expectation but also a branding opportunity for the platform. Implementing waste reduction measures, promoting recycling, and partnering with green-certified accommodations can enhance the platform's appeal to eco-conscious travelers (European Commission, 2019).

Climate change poses significant risks to tourism infrastructure, with extreme weather events potentially disrupting travel plans and impacting football events. Understanding the vulnerability of key football destinations to climate risks will be vital in shaping the platform's operational strategy. Additionally, promoting lesser-known destinations with more climate-resilient infrastructure could reduce environmental strain while diversifying revenue streams.

4.1.6 Legal Factors

As sustainability becomes a global priority, governments are increasingly imposing strict environmental regulations on the tourism sector. The European Union's Green Deal, for example, outlines ambitious goals for carbon reduction, waste management, and sustainable development, impacting how tourism businesses operate (European Commission, 2019). The platform must comply with these regulations by adopting eco-friendly practices, obtaining green certifications, and adhering to carbon emission caps. Non-compliance could result in financial penalties or restrictions on business operations (UNWTO, 2020).

Since the platform will collect and process personal data from users, adherence to data protection laws is essential. The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in the European Union sets strict guidelines for data collection, storage, and usage. Ensuring transparency in data handling, implementing secure data storage systems, and providing users with clear privacy policies will be crucial to avoid legal liabilities and maintain consumer trust.

5. Internal Analysis

5.1 VRIO Framework

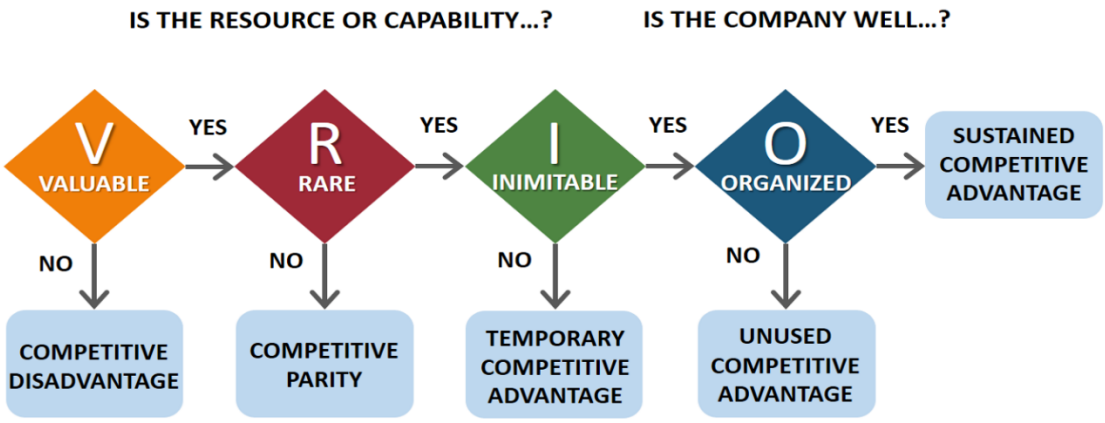


Figure 13- VRIO Framework decision diagram

Source: Adapted from B2U Business-to-you. (n.d.). VRIO Framework explained with examples. Retrieved from https://www.business-to-you.com/vrio-framework/

The VRIO framework (Figure 13) is a useful tool for understanding how a company's internal resources can support long-term success. By looking at whether a resource is valuable, rare, hard to imitate, and well supported by the organization, managers can better assess what gives the firm a real competitive edge. This approach moves beyond simply listing what a company owns - it encourages deeper thinking about which assets truly matter in a competitive context.

Barney (1991), one of the main contributors to this framework, emphasizes that sustained competitive advantage arises only when all four dimensions are met. The idea is not just to identify strengths, but to understand how those strengths interact with the company's structure and strategy.

Resource/Capability	Valuable	Rare	Costly to Imitate	Organized to Capture Value	Competitive Implication
Local network effects (city clusters of fans & venues)	✓	✓	✓	✓	Sustainable Competitive Advantage
Reputation & safety system (verification, badges, moderation)	✓	✓	✓	✓	Sustainable Competitive Advantage
Strategic Partnerships (clubs, agencies, hotels)	✓	✓	✗	✓	Temporary Advantage
Integrated Digital Platform	✓	✗	✗	✓	Competitive Parity
Team Know-how & Expertise	✓	✓	✓	✓	Sustainable Competitive Advantage
Cultural & Sports Experience Curation	✓	✓	✗	✓	Temporary advantage; depends on partnerships

Figure 14- Resources/Capabilities Table

The framework (Figure 14) suggests that defensibility is unlikely to stem from the integrated platform's codebase, which is relatively easy for competitors to replicate and therefore offers limited differentiation. Instead, sustainable advantage is expected to arise from three interlocking assets: (i) local network effects, reflected in city-level density of verified supporters and partner venues; (ii) a reputation and safety infrastructure, including identity verification, trust badges, moderation protocols, and accessibility signals; and (iii) organizational know-how to execute repeatable city launches. Together, these capabilities appear highly valuable and - once scaled - either rare or costly to imitate, assuming the venture is structured to appropriate the resulting value.

Strategic partnerships can create a temporary - and in some cases durable - edge, but only when the terms are structurally difficult for rivals to match. That typically requires exclusivity or preferred access (e.g., first-look inventory, priority allocations, or lower commissions). Likewise, curated cultural and sports experiences are clearly valuable, yet they

remain easy to replicate unless they are anchored in unique suppliers, exclusive rights, or proprietary content that cannot be reassembled quickly by competitors.

Progress should be monitored through leading indicators that reflect the underlying moats: active users per city, number of verified venues, meet-ups created, completion/attendance rates, safety incidents (target: zero), and the share of itineraries selecting lower-carbon options. Tracking these metrics makes it possible to verify not only growth, but whether the identified sources of advantage are being converted into sustained competitive positioning.

5.2 SWOT Analysis

This section integrates the venture's internal capabilities and constraints (strengths and weaknesses) with external conditions and uncertainties (opportunities and threats) in order to assess strategic fit and implementation feasibility. The analysis is especially relevant for a two-sided platform that combines travel planning, community coordination, and local partner discovery, where early progress depends on reaching sufficient city-level density while sustaining trust, safety, and service reliability as the system scales. The SWOT therefore complements the business plan's phased approach by identifying which advantages can be leveraged immediately and which risks require explicit mitigation before geographic expansion.

Strengths:

- Integrated customer journey**:** The platform brings travel planning, community coordination, and local discovery into a single workflow, reducing the fragmentation users typically face when moving between OTAs, informal social groups, and generic local listings.
- Potential for city-level network effects: By concentrating users and verified supply within specific destinations, the platform can create compounding value: more users attract more venues, and a richer venue layer attracts more users. Once local critical mass is reached, switching costs increase and the experience becomes difficult to replicate without comparable density.
- Decision-support value through AI-enabled planning: By translating rigid constraints (kick-off times, transport windows, proximity, budget, and sustainability preferences) into feasible itineraries, the planner addresses a concrete friction point: the time and cognitive effort required to coordinate travel around fixed match schedules.

- Scalable, asset-light operating model: Growth does not require proportional physical investment if onboarding, verification, and governance procedures are standardized and progressively supported by tooling and automation.

Weaknesses:

- Early-stage “empty marketplace” risk: The value proposition is fragile if initial cities lack sufficient verified venues and credible meetups, which can reduce retention and weaken partner motivation to participate.
- Defensibility depends on execution rather than features: While the integrated experience is valuable, much of the surface functionality can be imitated. Sustainable advantage relies more on density, governance quality, and durable partner relationships.
- Monetization uncertainty in early years: High usage intent does not automatically translate into willingness to pay. Premium conversion and partner-paid visibility are likely to become meaningful only once trust and perceived utility are established.
- Seasonality and fixture dependence: Usage may peak around match weekends and decline between fixtures unless the product creates recurring utility (e.g., ongoing community content, evergreen destination discovery, or repeat planning use cases).

Opportunities:

- 2030 FIFA World Cup travel tailwind: A platform established in key corridors ahead of 2030 may benefit from increased match-related mobility, accelerating both user acquisition and partner demand.
- Growth in sports tourism and experience-led travel: Supporters increasingly seek social and cultural experiences around fixtures, which aligns with an integrated travel-plus-community proposition.
- Expansion of partner categories and revenue mix: The venture can broaden beyond bars and pubs into museums, tours, mobility providers, and accommodation - improving user value while diversifying monetization.
- Institutional emphasis on sustainability: Regulatory and consumer pressure for greater transparency can strengthen sustainability cues as a trust signal and a differentiator, even if willingness to pay a premium remains limited.

Threats:

- Incumbent response and bundling: OTAs, ticketing platforms, and social networks can replicate parts of the proposition (fan filters, group planning, local recommendations) and leverage their existing distribution and scale.
- Trust shocks with disproportionate impact: A small number of safety incidents, scams, or low-quality meetups can cause outsized reputational harm, especially in cross-border travel contexts.
- Regulatory complexity across markets: Expansion increases exposure to data protection, consumer rights, and contractual compliance; weak operationalisation of compliance can generate financial and reputational risk.
- Macroeconomic volatility affecting discretionary travel: Demand for travel is sensitive to inflation, transport price volatility, and geopolitical disruption, which can constrain growth and reduce booking volumes.

The SWOT suggests that durable advantage is most plausibly created through the interaction of city-level density and credible governance, rather than through product features alone. This reinforces the rationale for a phased rollout with explicit gates: geographic expansion should proceed only once minimum standards of partner coverage, user engagement, and trust performance are demonstrated in each initial market.

At the same time, the analysis highlights a structural tension: the mechanisms that strengthen defensibility - verification, moderation, and quality controls - also increase operational workload and can slow onboarding, particularly during rapid expansion. The business plan should therefore treat the 2030 World Cup as a potential accelerator rather than a dependency, ensuring the base case remains viable without event-driven uplift. This requires explicit mitigations, including standardized launch playbooks, scalable trust-and-safety tooling, compliance-by-design, and conservative monetization assumptions in the early years.

6. Competitive Analysis

This venture sits at the intersection of community platforms and travel coordination for football supporters. From a job-to-be-done perspective, fans look for solutions that help them connect with other supporters before and during away fixtures, secure transport and accommodation within narrow kick-off windows, feel safe and welcome in local settings, and reduce friction, cost, and - particularly among younger cohorts - environmental impact. Existing offers address fragments of these needs but rarely combine them into a coherent journey. That integration gap defines the opportunity the project targets.

There are two competitor groups that sit closest to the proposed platform, fan-trip agencies and sports tour operators, and grassroots fan communities. Fan-trip agencies and sports tour operators (e.g., Champions Travel, Sportsbreaks) bundle tickets, hotels, and transfers into fixed packages. Their strengths are reliability and established relationships with clubs. Their limitations are low flexibility, relatively high mark-ups, minimal community functionality, and weak sustainability signaling. Grassroots fan communities (club forums, Discord/Reddit groups, WhatsApp communities) excel at social connection and informal meetups. However, they typically lack verified venue discovery, safety standards, and integrated booking; information quality is uneven and coordination costs are high.

Beyond these, several substitutes shape decisions even when they are not explicitly "football" products. Online travel agencies and metasearch tools (e.g., Booking, Expedia, Skyscanner, Trainline) offer convenience and broad inventory, but no supporter layer and only lightweight sustainability cues. Ticket marketplaces (Viagogo, StubHub) address match access but add fees and do not coordinate travel or local experiences. Club or stadium apps provide fixtures and content (and occasionally ticketing) yet rarely extend into travel planning or fan-to-fan discovery. Generic meet-up tools (Facebook Events, Meetup) support coordination, but usually lack verification, inclusivity/accessibility filters, or sustainability guidance.

Relative to tour operators, the platform emphasizes flexibility (modular itineraries, dynamic choice) and ongoing community value rather than one-off packaged trips. Relative to online travel agencies, they add supporter-specific discoveries and more transparent sustainability trade-offs without sacrificing booking convenience. Relative to forums, it reduces coordination overhead and risk by introducing verified hosts, clear meet-up norms, and practical logistics. Relative to ticket marketplaces, it expands in value beyond match access and offers a partner model that is more valuable for local businesses.

Online travel agencies may add “fan” filters or surface supporter events; the counter is depth and credibility - verified communities, a visible safety layer, and selective exclusivity where it meaningfully increases switching costs. Ticket marketplaces may cross-sell accommodation; the counter is differentiated local supply, lower effective fees for small venues, and community-led discovery that ticket sites do not naturally provide. Informal fan groups will remain active; the counter is to become the easiest place to find trusted meetups and inclusive, accessible spaces - especially for first-time travelers.

Early advantage depends on executing a city-by-city density playbook (e.g. Lisbon, Barcelona and Manchester as pilots): recruit a critical mass of venues and supporter groups, seed events around fixture calendars, and use referrals to accelerate adoption. To demonstrate traction and defensibility, track leading indicators such as active users per city, verified venues, meet-ups created and attendance, repeat participation, supplier churn, average take-rate, and the share of itineraries selecting lower-carbon options. If these measures move in the right direction, the platform can credibly occupy the high-community/high-integration space that incumbents currently leave open.

7. Goals

The overarching goal is to launch a trusted, community-first platform that improves the travel experience of football supporters. The platform consolidates three elements in a single environment: (i) discovery and coordination of fan meetups by club and city, supported by verification, reputation signals, and inclusivity/accessibility tags; (ii) curated, fan-friendly local supply (e.g., pubs, small hotels, tours, museums) with transparent commercial terms for participating businesses; and (iii) an AI-assisted trip planner that makes trade-offs across price, time, and CO_2 footprint explicit - covering rail, flight, and bus options alongside eco-certified accommodation - so users can choose with confidence and minimal friction.

The ambition is for the app to be perceived as the most reliable place to plan, connect, and "live the match" across the full journey: before travel (planning and coordination), during the stay (finding people and trusted venues), and after the fixture (sharing experiences and managing the return). Trust is the organizing principle - through verified profiles, clear community standards, and visible moderation - because it reduces perceived risk for travelling supporters, supports city-level network effects, and creates durable value for local partners.

The initial launch would leverage Portugal's supporter base to test and refine a repeatable city-launch playbook, before expanding into nearby, higher-traffic markets such as Spain and the UK. This sequencing also aims to build brand awareness and partnership depth ahead of the 2030 FIFA World Cup, which represents a timely opportunity to consolidate communities and strategic relationships.

The strategy and implementation plan - including city selection criteria, acquisition channels, incentives, governance mechanisms, and success metrics - are detailed in the chapters that follow.

8. Strategy Development

8.1 Positioning & Target Segments

The venture is positioned as a trusted, community-first platform for travelling football supporters: the place to plan, connect, and experience match trips. The product integrates verified fan meet-ups and fan-friendly local venues with an AI-assisted trip planner that surfaces trade-offs between price, travel time, and CO_2 footprint. Unlike online travel agencies, which optimize booking convenience but lack community, and informal fan forums, which enable connection without verification or travel integration, the platform consolidates trust mechanisms (identity/venue verification, reputation signals, and inclusivity/accessibility tags) and eco-aware itinerary guidance within a single application.

Differentiation is designed to be immediately legible to users: supporters can discover verified gatherings by club and city; identify pubs, tours, and small hotels that explicitly welcome away fans; and compare transport and accommodation options with transparent sustainability indicators rather than generic labels. For local businesses, the platform offers lower, clearly stated commissions and more targeted match-weekend footfall, supporting a two-sided value loop that generalist marketplaces do not explicitly optimize.

Target segments are defined primarily by behavior. The initial target is Portugal-based away travelers (approximately 18-35) taking short-haul European trips and seeking low-friction planning, safe social connection, and credible "green" options when time and price constraints allow. A second segment comprises expatriate supporters in host cities (e.g., Spain and the UK) who can act as local anchors by organizing meetups and recommending trusted venues. A third segment includes fan-friendly local businesses aiming to capture predictable match-day demand under fair fee structures, supported by reputation and trust tools.

Geographically, the rollout begins in Portugal to validate city-level density and the trust model, before expanding to higher-traffic markets such as Spain and the UK. This sequencing also builds awareness ahead of the 2030 FIFA World Cup. With Portugal among the host countries, the tournament represents a strategic window to scale brand, partnerships, and communities; the seasons leading up to 2030 will be used to seed verified supply and ambassador groups along key travel corridors, so the platform is top-of-mind when demand increases.

8.2 Go-To-Market Strategy

We begin with Portuguese supporters as the initial user base, aiming to make the app the default place to plan international trips and coordinate club- and city-based meetups. This choice leverages dense supporter networks to drive word-of-mouth and helps keep early acquisition costs manageable. Activation channels include organized supporter groups, club podcasts, Discord, Reddit and WhatsApp communities, and partnerships with official fan branches. Expansion then follows the international calendars of Portuguese clubs: each away fixture becomes a structured entry window into a new destination city. Operationally, every new city launch targets 5-10 verified local partners - fan-friendly pubs, small hotels, tours or museums, and (where relevant) transfer operators - so that visiting supporters encounter a minimum viable set of trusted places and events from day one.

The model scales city by city. For each away trip, the platform launches a club-themed event board, seeds one or two meet-ups with local ambassadors, and highlights partner venues inside the app under low, transparent commissions and clear community rules. In effect, fixture weeks become short “growth sprints” designed to build density and trust quickly, while generating a repeatable playbook for subsequent launches.

Once the approach is validated in Portugal, the same logic is replicated with Spanish and UK supporters. In Spain, activation is organized by club (e.g., Barcelona, Real Madrid, Atlético, Sevilla, Betis), again using European and domestic away schedules to prioritize entry cities. Each launch targets the same baseline of 5-10 verified partners and 1-2 ambassador-led meetups anchored around match weekends. In the UK, the approach is mirrored for clubs with strong international draw (e.g., Liverpool, Manchester City and Manchester United, Arsenal, Chelsea, Tottenham, Newcastle), with rapid onboarding of anchor partners near stadiums alongside heritage tours and credible “green” accommodation options.

By aligning launches with the natural flow of fixtures, the venture reduces the risk of entering cities without demand and accelerates local network effects - first among Portuguese fans travelling abroad and then across Spanish and British communities. This phased rollout strengthens brand presence along major European routes and builds awareness ahead of the 2030 FIFA World Cup, increasing the likelihood that the platform is top-of-mind when demand peaks.

8.4 Monetization and Business-Plan Strategy

The venture follows a freemium consumer model paired with a hybrid B2B monetization approach for local partners. Core community functionality and basic trip planning remain free and are supported by advertising. A Premium tier removes ads and unlocks concrete benefits - partner discounts and advanced planning utilities (e.g., saved itineraries and alerts). Pricing is set initially at €4.99/month.

For modelling purposes, a prudent starting assumption is that freemium conversion concentrates in the 2-5% range, which research and industry evidence frequently cite as a typical benchmark for digital freemium products. Conversion is treated as a tunable outcome rather than a fixed constant and can be improved through onboarding quality, well-timed paywalls, and clear Premium value signals - particularly "money-back-to-the-user" indicators such as discounts redeemed.

On the supply side, the platform combines:

- a low, transparent commission on bookable services (target ~10%);
- lightweight listing/visibility fees (e.g., a "verified" badge, featured placement, and event boosts).

The rationale is twofold. First, a ~10% commission is positioned below commonly cited online travel agencies commission ranges - often reported in a 10-25% band, with ~15% frequently referenced as a typical average for Booking.com - making the offer more attractive to small venues while still funding trust & safety and city activation. Second, modest visibility fees mirror how event and marketplace platforms monetize beyond per-transaction take rates, allowing partners to pay for incremental demand rather than permanently higher commissions.

For paid meetups and guided experiences, pricing can follow a mixed-fee logic (service fee plus payment processing). Eventbrite publishes country-specific ticketing fee schedules (percentage plus a fixed per-ticket component), which serve as a credible external reference when calibrating the platform's own pricing or negotiating bundled arrangements with organizers.

Where accommodation partners are included, Airbnb's published service-fee documentation indicates a shift toward a single host-only fee for many hosts, with a new single rate of 15.5% referenced in Airbnb's own help materials (and a separate rate for Brazil). Against this backdrop, maintaining an effective take-rate of ~10% strengthens the platform's "fair fees

for locals" positioning - especially in non-accommodation categories (tours, museums, transfers) and, where feasible, for small lodging partners.

9. Implementation Plans

The rollout is organized into three phases: LP (Launch Portugal), GP (Growth in Spain/UK), and EP (Expansion with World Cup positioning).

LP focuses on Portuguese supporters in Lisbon and Porto, aligning acquisition pushes with the away-fixture calendars of Sporting, Benfica, and FC Porto. Each city launch follows a simple, repeatable playbook: open club-specific communities and an event board, secure a minimum bundle of verified partners (fan-friendly pubs, small hotels, and tours/museums), and run fixture-week activations through ambassadors and partner QR codes. The purpose of LP is to validate local density, trust, and product-market fit in a controlled home market before scaling.

GP extends the same playbook into Spain and the UK, activating large club communities and using away calendars to pick entry windows. For every new destination, the target is to onboard 5-10 verified partners within the first weeks, seed one to two meetups around match weekend, and publish a short, practical city guide to keep engagement alive between fixtures. This phase is where partner onboarding and community moderation become standardized, and the trip planner becomes meaningfully more useful (clear price/time comparisons, saved itineraries, and alerts). The objective is to turn fixture weeks into repeatable growth sprints and build cross-border brand presence along major European routes.

EP broadens into additional countries while deliberately building awareness ahead of the 2030 FIFA World Cup. The focus shifts from opening many new cities to deepening verified supply and community activity in priority host corridors, so the platform is already familiar when demand rises. Partnerships with venues and supporter associations scale, and premium experiences (e.g., bundled museum visits, local guides, transfers, and lodging) are piloted where city density and trust signals justify them.

The growth assumptions used in the plan are stated transparently. Downloads are driven by the fixture calendar and the size of club audiences: the model assumes a conservative pilot in the first semester, followed by step-changes as Spain/UK audiences are added and campaigns run more frequently.

Overall, this three-phase sequence - LP to validate at home, GP to scale across Spain/UK, and EP to widen geographically while leveraging World Cup visibility - keeps

execution structured and measurable. For clarity, the semester-by-semester table of downloads, active users, premium users, and active venues is presented below (Figure 15) to support tracking and comparison.

Phase	Year	Semester	Downloads	Active Users	Premium Users	Active Venues
LP	1st	1st	3 500	800	-	10
		2nd	9 100	1 820	36	30
GP	2nd	1st	31 850	6 370	127	75
		2nd	74 875	14 975	300	100
	3rd	1st	112 313	33 694	1011	200
		2nd	168 469	50 541	1516	245
EP	4th	1st	294 820	88 446	2653	350
		2nd	515 936	154 781	4643	540
	5th	1st	1 289 839	386 952	11609	750
		2nd	3 224 597	967 379	29021	900

Figure 15- Implementation Plan - Expected Downloads, Active users, Premium Users and Active Venues

9.1 Marketing Plan

Our go-to-market strategy prioritizes seeded communities and network diffusion over mass advertising. Early-stage adoption in community products is often driven by interpersonal transmission: diffusion theory suggests uptake accelerates once credible “opinion leaders” activate their immediate networks (Rogers, 2003; Goldenberg, Libai, & Muller, 2001). Evidence from digital settings similarly shows that referrals and peer advocacy can generate more durable increases in sign-ups and retention than paid reach (Trusov, Bucklin, & Pauwels, 2009), and that referred customers can exhibit higher value than otherwise comparable non-referred cohorts (Schmitt, Skiera, & Van den Bulte, 2011). In practical terms, this motivates a fixture-timed seeding approach - ambassadors per club and city - and referral flows embedded directly into meet-up creation and participation.

Influence in fan subcultures tends to travel through two-step flows, where creators or community leaders shape the behavior of their followers, especially when content is native to the group’s norms and rituals (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955; Aral & Walker, 2012). Rather than relying on broad celebrity exposure, we focus on micro- and mid-tier creators who are closely tied to football communities; prior work suggests these tiers often deliver stronger relevance and engagement than mega-influencers (Evans, Phua, Lim, & Jun, 2017; De Veirman, Cauberghe, & Hudders, 2017; Ki, Cuevas, Chong, & Lim, 2020). Seeding is designed to maximize diffusion rather than simple reach: targeting well-connected individuals who bridge groups - without concentrating only in highly clustered networks - can increase overall cascade

size (Hinz, Skiera, Barrot, & Becker, 2011; Watts & Dodds, 2007). This logic underpins the venture's planned ambassador councils by club and city.

To convert attention into installation and first actions, the product emphasizes trust cues and social proof. Reputation systems and verification mechanisms reduce perceived risk in peer-to-peer interactions and can increase participation (Resnick & Zeckhauser, 2002; Bolton, Katok, & Ockenfels, 2004). In travel contexts, electronic word-of-mouth-reviews, posts, and recommendations - shapes venue and destination choice (Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2006; Vermeulen & Seegers, 2009), while perceived information quality and support are linked to trust in tourism platforms (Filieri, 2015). Accordingly, our acquisition and onboarding surfaces foreground verified venues, inclusivity/accessibility tags, and visible moderation, with conversion defined not only as an install but as a first "commitment action" (e.g., RSVP to a meet-up, save a venue, follow a club/city board).

Messaging adopts a non-moralizing sustainability frame: users are shown explicit price/time/CO_2 trade-offs rather than pressured to choose a "correct" option, consistent with research on the attitude-behavior gap in green consumption (Thøgersen, 2009; White, Habib, & Hardisty, 2019). At the platform level, growth is intentionally concentrated city-by-city to exploit local network effects: as density increases, the service becomes more valuable for both supporters and venues (Katz & Shapiro, 1985; Parker, Van Alstyne, & Choudary, 2016). This supports the staged rollout: LP (Portugal - community seeding and referrals), GP (Spain/UK-creator integrations and supporter-group partnerships), and EP (broader corridors with institutional partners such as clubs, federations, and cultural venues to reinforce trust and extend reach).

Measurement follows these mechanisms. We track: (i) diffusion and seeding performance (cascade size per ambassador; proportion of new users acquired via referral), (ii) creator efficiency (engagement-to-install and cost per activated user), (iii) trust outcomes (share of interactions involving verified venues; dispute or incident rate), and (iv) sustainability adoption (share of lower-CO_2 itineraries selected when time and price are comparable). These metrics link directly to the growth assumptions used later - downloads, active users, Premium share, and active venues - and enable disciplined iteration of creator selection, referral design, and activation spend.

9.2 Operations Plan

The operations strategy is structured as a disciplined city-by-city rollout, guided by a repeatable launch playbook and a single scorecard applied consistently across locations. In LP, the priority is to ship a stable MVP, test product-market fit and establish the core operating procedures - event creation and vetting, venue verification, incident handling, and baseline analytics. In GP, the same approach is replicated and adapted for Spain and the UK, increasing launch throughput while standardizing partner onboarding and community moderation. In EP, operations extend into additional corridors, with greater emphasis on reliability and governance: multi-language capability, strengthened privacy and safety controls, and improved observability to support scale and the World Cup runway.

LP aims to deliver a stable MVP, validate product-market fit, and formalize the city launch playbook. The team develops operational runbooks for: (i) event creation and vetting; (ii) venue verification (KYC, photo evidence, accessibility checklist); and (iii) incident handling with a 24/7 escalation path. On the product side, priorities are reliability across the consumer app, partner back office, and moderation console, with analytics instrumented from day one (D1/D7/D30 activation funnel, RSVPs, and venue saves).

Trust and safety measures include verified ambassadors, “verified venue” badges, clear community guidelines, and practical match-night logistics (including late-night transport information).

GP replicates the playbook while increasing throughput. Country Leads (ES/UK) coordinate 3-5 pods per country, standardize partner contracts (transparent commission, event rules, code of conduct), and deploy onboarding kits (templates, QR assets, and operating guides). The platform evolves toward multi-tenant operations: a self-serve partner portal (listings, calendars, analytics), a verification pipeline (document checks plus manual review), and an AI-assisted trip planner that makes price/time/CO_2 trade-offs explicit, including saved itineraries and alerts.

EP scales to 45-60 cities, deepens verified supply, and hardens platform reliability. A light regional operations layer disseminates best practices, and dedicated playbooks are introduced for premium experiences (e.g., stadium-museum bundles, guides, transfers, and lodging). The product becomes fully multi-language and reliability-oriented, with improved observability (logs/metrics/traces), automated abuse and spam detection, rate limiting for event spikes, cloud autoscaling, and semi-annual disaster recovery drills.

Sustainability operations emphasize transparency and auditability: clear CO_2 data sources and assumptions, a maintained "green hotels" registry, and quarterly audits of trip-planner recommendations against baseline alternatives.

Customer support combines in-app chat and email, a self-serve knowledge base, and tiered escalation (P1 safety, P2 payments, P3 content). Data & AI priorities focus on the fan-event-venue graph and routing/CO_2 models, implemented with privacy-by-design (data minimization, purpose limitation) and basic explainability.

Governance runs through a monthly country-level Ops Review (scorecard plus corrective actions) and a quarterly Go/Adjust forum that approves new city launches against objective gates covering density, safety performance, partner health, and unit economics.

9.3 Organizational Plan

During the LP phase, the venture will operate with a lean core team (Figure 16) focused on delivering a stable MVP, onboarding the first partners, and supporting early users. The structure is deliberately simple and cost-conscious, while ensuring coverage of the essential functions needed at launch. The team comprises a full-time Founder/General Manager, a full-time Full-Stack/Mobile Developer, a full-time UX/UI Designer, and a part-time Client Support agent. This configuration is intended to provide end-to-end capability across product delivery, engineering execution, user experience design, and first-line user support without introducing unnecessary managerial layers.

Roles and responsibilities:

- Founder: overall delivery and budget control; partner outreach with flagship venues; release planning; compliance and basic vendor management.
- Developer: mobile app and back-end services; integrations (authentication, notifications, analytics); release pipeline and incident response.
- UX/UI Designer: user flows for onboarding, event creation, and venue pages; design system and store assets (ASO); rapid usability tests to de-risk the MVP.
- Client Support (Part-time): in-app/email triage, FAQ/knowledge base, feedback capture; SLA: first response < 12 hours in LP.

The team will operate on a two-week release cadence, supported by a single shared backlog and a lightweight QA checklist that prioritizes stability in the core user journey. Coordination

routines are intentionally minimal: a short daily stand-up, a weekly demo/review to validate progress against the sprint goals, and a weekly risk check focused on bugs, incidents, and partner onboarding blockers. Decision rights are explicit to reduce ambiguity and accelerate execution: the Founder retains go/no-go authority and budget control; the Developer makes technical decisions within agreed scope and constraints; the Designer owns usability and interface decisions; and the Support role manages user communications within an agreed playbook. LP is considered complete once the exit criteria defined in the Operations Plan are met, including a stable MVP in production, verified partners live, and the absence of safety incidents during the pilot period.

Launch Phase		
Role	**Nº of employees**	**Monthly Salary**
Founder	1	1 000 €
Developer	1	1 500 €
UX/UI Designer	1	1 200 €
Client Support*	1	750 €
Total	4	4 450 €

* Part-time

Figure 16- Launch Phase employee scheme

During the Growth Phase (GP), the venture moves from a lean launch setup to an organizational structure (Figure 17) capable of supporting replication across multiple cities and countries while preserving service quality, partner reliability, and user trust. The model remains deliberately lightweight, yet it introduces country-level coordination and additional specialist capacity in product management and data/AI to sustain shorter rollout cycles and a wider operational footprint. Consistent with the cost discipline established in LP, headcount is planned at 10 employees, with an estimated monthly payroll of €11,100. This scale-up is intentionally selective, concentrating resources on functions that directly enable growth execution and operational stability.

This configuration is designed to mitigate the central execution risks that emerge at scale: (i) maintaining consistent standards across cities and jurisdictions; (ii) sustaining timely partner onboarding and verification as volume increases; and (iii) avoiding a proportional rise in support and moderation workload as the user base expands. Organizationally, GP adopts a hub-and-spoke logic: a small central hub provides product direction, platform delivery, analytics capability, and governance, while country-level leadership ensures local rollout, partner acquisition, and community operations remain aligned with the operating playbook.

Roles and responsibilities:

- Founder: Provides overall strategic direction and budget oversight, priorities the expansion roadmap, and governs key partnerships. The Founder also retains responsibility for compliance and risk management and acts as the final decision-maker for escalations and go/no-go decisions on new city launches.
- Product Lead: Owns the product roadmap and experimentation agenda, translating operational requirements into scalable platform capabilities. This role defines requirements for onboarding, partner tooling, and moderation workflows, holds KPI ownership for activation and retention, and ensures alignment between product delivery and cross-country operational needs.
- Developer: Builds and maintains the mobile application and supporting back-end services, including integrations for authentication, notifications, analytics, and payment flows. The Developer is responsible for reliability, incident response, and the delivery of operational tooling that reduces manual workload (e.g., self-serve partner updates and structured reporting flows).
- UX/UI Designer: Designs end-to-end journeys across discovery, event participation, and partner pages, with an emphasis on reducing friction in core user flows. Responsibilities include usability testing, iterative refinement of key screens, and stewardship of a lightweight design system to preserve interface consistency as features and markets expand.
- Client Support (2 part-time FTE): Provide first-line support for users and partners via in-app and email channels, tackling requests and escalating issues using defined categories (payments, safety, content, account). The team maintains the FAQ and knowledge base, captures structured feedback, and feeds operational insights back into product improvements and process fixes.
- Data & AI Engineer: Ensures robust instrumentation and data quality, maintains operational dashboards and city scorecards, and supports the deployment of AI-enabled features where appropriate (e.g., recommendation and trip-planning logic). This role also monitors model performance and implements basic guardrails to reduce erroneous, biased, or unsafe outputs.
- Country Leads (3 FTE): Own rollout execution and performance at the country and city level, including partner acquisition and account management. They enforce operational standards (verification, event quality controls, incident handling), coordinate local

calendars and campaigns, report performance through the city scorecard, and escalate operational risks to the central team when necessary.

Growth Phase		
Role	**Nº of employees**	**Monthly Salary**
Founder	1	1 100 €
Product Lead	1	1 200 €
Developer	1	1 600 €
UX/UI Designer	1	1 200 €
Client Support*	2	1 500 €
Data & AI Engineer	1	1 500 €
Country Lead	3	3 000 €
Total	10	11 100 €

* Part-time

Figure 17- Growth Phase employee scheme

During the Expansion Phase (EP), the venture moves from controlled growth to repeatable scaling across multiple markets, which requires stronger operational governance, broader commercial capacity, and a more robust platform. As shown in the table below (Figure 18), the proposed organization increases to 22 employees, with an estimated monthly payroll of €29,300. This structure is designed to: (i) support concurrent operations across a larger set of cities and regions; (ii) lower the marginal operational cost of growth by strengthening platform, tooling, and support capacity; and (iii) formalize compliance and risk controls as the user base, partner network, and regulatory exposure expand.

Importantly, the EP headcount plan concentrates on the functions that most often become binding constraints at scale - engineering throughput, partner acquisition and account management, customer support capacity, and explicit risk/compliance ownership - rather than relying primarily on additional local execution roles.

New roles and responsibilities:

- Support Lead: Support operations management; Service Level Agreement (SLA) definition and monitoring; knowledge base and internal playbooks; triage design and escalation protocols; quality assurance for support interactions and feedback loops into product/ops.
- Regional Lead: Ownership of regional execution and performance; coordination of city operations within the region; enforcement of verification and service standards;

reporting against KPIs and escalation of operational risks; alignment of local execution with central playbooks.

- Business Developer: Partner acquisition strategy and pipeline management; negotiation and contracting with venues and service providers; account management for key partners; commercial performance tracking (conversion, churn, partner satisfaction).
- Finance & Administration: Budget tracking, payroll and vendor management; partner payment processes and reconciliations; financial reporting to support decision-making and cost control.
- People Ops / HR: Recruitment and onboarding; performance processes; policy standardization; support to managers in scaling teams across markets while maintaining consistent culture and operating practices.
- Risk & Compliance Manager: Governance of compliance requirements across jurisdictions; management of verification standards and audit routines; incident governance and documentation; alignment with privacy and safety obligations; coordination with operations and product to ensure compliance-by-design.

The EP operating model is designed to combine rapid execution with stronger governance, ensuring consistency as operations expand across regions. It runs on a standardized cadence that links platform delivery to operational outcomes: product and engineering work in iterative cycles, while regional leadership and support operations track a shared scorecard to identify early signals of degradation in partner quality, user experience, and safety performance.

Decision rights are kept explicit to preserve speed while reducing risk. Product priorities are set centrally, regional teams execute within agreed playbooks, and risk/compliance retains formal authority over escalations and audit requirements. In this way, expansion remains both repeatable and auditable - allowing the venture to increase geographic coverage without eroding trust, service reliability, or cost discipline.

Expansion Phase		
Role	**Nº of employees**	**Monthly Salary**
Founder	1	1 300 €
Product Lead	1	1 400 €
Engineer	4	6 400 €
UX/UI Designer	1	1 200 €
Support Lead	1	1 200 €
Support Agents	3	3 000 €
Data & AI Engineer	2	3 200 €
Regional Lead	3	3 000 €
Business Developer	3	3 600 €
Finance & Admin	1	1 300 €
People Ops / HR	1	1 200 €
Risk & Compliance Manager	1	1 400 €
Total	22	28 200 €

Figure 18- Expansion Phase employee scheme

9.4 Financial Plan

This financial plan converts the operational rollout (LP, GP, EP) into a five-year projection covering 2026-2030. Year 1 (2026) corresponds to LP, Years 2-3 (2027-2028) to GP, and Years 4-5 (2029-2030) to EP. Revenues are built bottom-up from forecast Active Users, Premium Users, and Active Venues, and are paired with a cost structure consistent with the staged organizational scaling described earlier. All figures are expressed in nominal euros and remain deliberately conservative in the early years, while allowing for step-ups as awareness and trust accumulate - particularly in the run-up to the 2030 FIFA World Cup, hosted by Portugal, Spain, and Morocco.

The model relies on four revenue streams: (i) in-app advertising from non-premium users, (ii) Premium subscriptions, (iii) commissions on bookable transactions, and (iv) paid promotional placements/visibility for venues. This hybrid mix reflects the platform's monetization logic: early user adoption is subsidized through advertising, while partner monetization combines performance-based fees (commission) with optional demand amplification (visibility).

Advertising income is modelled using a conservative €0.05 per active user per month (ARPMAU). This parameter is derived by combining published eCPM benchmarks with a deliberately low ad-load assumption. For benchmarks, Appodeal's Q4 2024 eCPM report (as reproduced by MAF) reports UK interstitial (iOS) eCPM of approximately $10.38 and UK banner (iOS) eCPM of approximately $0.44. User activity is anchored in CleverTap's

DAU/MAU interpretation, where 20% DAU/MAU corresponds to ~6 active days per month. Assuming ~20 banner impressions per active day and ~0.3 interstitials per active day, the implied revenue is approximately (0.44×20/1000)+(10.38×0.3/1000) ≈ $0.012 per active day, or ≈ $0.07 per month at ~6 active days. The model then rounds down to €0.05 to reflect real-world dilution from fill rates, user-mix differences, seasonality, and currency effects.

Premium revenue is based on a subscription price of €4.99 per month, applied to the projected number of Premium Users and accrued across each semester (i.e., six months of revenue per semester). This pricing is consistent with the monetization positioning of Premium as an ad-free tier that adds planning utilities and partner benefits.

Commission revenue is calculated as an average ~10% take rate on GMV for bookable services, consistent with the strategic choice to remain below commonly cited OTA commission ranges and maintain an attractive partner value proposition. Demand assumptions are anchored in the primary survey results, where at least half of respondents report strong intent to use the app for discovering local activities and events during trips (as specified in the concept validation criteria).

Two booking categories are considered:

- Restaurants + events + museums (tickets/visits, per person): Years 1-3 assume that 8% of regular users book, on average, one booking per person per semester, with an average ticket value of €25. In Years 4-5, conversion rises to 15%, reflecting higher trust, greater supply density, and stronger brand recognition.
- Accommodation (per reservation): From Year 1 (second semester), the model assumes 3% of users book accommodation with an average value of €100 per reservation, increasing to 5% in Years 2-3 and 10% in Years 4-5 as the platform scales and trust deepens. The €100 assumption is conservative when interpreted as a room-night proxy: Portugal's official statistics report an ADR of €97.4 in 2024 for tourist accommodation, supporting the order of magnitude.

Paid visibility revenue is estimated from the projected number of active venues and the assumed share that benefits primarily from additional exposure (e.g., bars, cafés, terraces, and pubs), where the platform's value is driven mainly by incremental footfall rather than direct bookings. In Years 1-2, the model assumes that 80% of active venues fall into this exposure-led category and purchase a €25/month promotional placement for four months per semester. In Year 3, this share declines to 60% as a larger portion of supply becomes directly bookable,

while the monthly price increases to €30 (again for four months per semester). In Year 4, the same 60% share is priced at €35/month, and in Year 5 at €45/month, reflecting stronger bargaining power and higher partner ROI as local user density and engagement increase - particularly as the platform scales into the 2030 tournament runway.

Staff costs are estimated on a fully loaded basis rather than using nominal monthly salaries alone. In Portugal, compensation is commonly paid across 14 salary instalments per year (including holiday and Christmas allowances), which is reflected in the annualization of wage costs. Total employer cost is then calculated by uplifting gross wages by: (i) employer social security contributions of 23.75%, and (ii) a provision for mandatory occupational accident insurance, modelled at approximately 1% of annual wage cost (noting that the premium varies by role and risk classification). This methodology reduces the risk of systematically understating labor costs and allows the cost base to remain comparable across phases as headcount scales.

Marketing spend is intentionally front-loaded and rises materially in the later years to reflect the strategic requirement to build awareness, accelerate adoption, and reinforce trust in a marketplace setting. Higher outlays in the outer years are consistent with the execution intensity described in the Marketing Plan - multi-channel campaigns, city launch activations, partner co-marketing, and performance marketing - and reflect the assumption that growth will not be purely organic. In particular, sustained paid acquisition and activation are expected to be necessary to capture heightened travel attention as 2030 approaches.

Platform and product costs are modelled as the sum of: (i) fixed annual platform/tooling costs and (ii) variable costs that scale with usage.

- Fixed Costs (Stepwise): The model uses annual fixed levels of €30k, €54k, and €90k, reflecting step-changes in infrastructure and tooling as the platform evolves from early production to multi-market scale (e.g., expanded monitoring and logging, security hardening, data pipelines, QA environments, and more robust SaaS tooling). The stepwise specification reflects the practical reality that platform overhead tends to rise in discrete jumps rather than linearly.
- Variable costs (usage-linked): Variable platform costs are set at €0.01 per active user per month, capturing incremental cloud consumption (compute, storage, data transfer, and database activity) as well as usage-based third-party services. This assumption is deliberately conservative relative to basic request-level

pricing examples - such as AWS Lambda at $0.20 per one million requests and Amazon API Gateway REST pricing at $3.50 per one million requests - and acknowledges that push notifications can be delivered with no direct marginal cost via Firebase Cloud Messaging. The €0.01 parameter therefore acts as a practical buffer that also covers ancillary usage-based tooling and helps avoid understating costs at higher scale.

Here is a table (Figure 19) that shows all the expected revenues and costs:

Revenue Streams	**2026**	**2027**	**2028**	**2029**	**2030**	**Total**	**Avg. Per Year**
In-app advertising	775 €	6 275 €	24 512 €	70 779 €	394 110 €	496 452 €	99 290 €
Premium users	1 078 €	12 784 €	75 658 €	218 442 €	1 216 462 €	1 524 425 €	304 885 €
Comission on bookable transactions	1 070 €	14 942 €	58 964 €	334 437 €	1 862 205 €	2 271 617 €	454 323 €
Promotional placements and paid visibility	3 200 €	14 000 €	32 040 €	74 760 €	178 200 €	302 200 €	60 440 €
TOTAL	6 123 €	48 001 €	191 175 €	698 418 €	3 650 977 €	4 594 694 €	918 939 €
Cost Structure	**2026**	**2027**	**2028**	**2029**	**2030**	**Total**	**Avg. Per Year**
Salaries Benefits & Wages	77 867 €	194 231 €	194 231 €	493 451 €	493 451 €	1 453 230 €	290 646 €
Marketing Investment	10 000 €	35 000 €	50 000 €	75 000 €	150 000 €	320 000 €	64 000 €
Platform & Product Costs	30 157 €	31 281 €	35 054 €	68 594 €	171 260 €	336 345 €	67 269 €
TOTAL	118 024 €	260 511 €	279 285 €	637 044 €	814 710 €	2 109 575 €	421 915 €

Figure 19- Revenue Streams and Cost Structure

10. Implementation Issues

Like most ventures starting from scratch, the proposed platform is expected to encounter execution friction, particularly because it combines two demanding components: community coordination and a two-sided marketplace for local supply. Two-sided models are especially exposed to early "chicken-and-egg" (Rochet, J.-C., & Tirole, J., 2003) dynamics, since participation on each side depends on credible signals that the other side is already active. In this context, implementation risk is less about the technical build of the app itself and more about sequencing the operational steps that create trust and perceived liquidity - securing verified venues, seeding credible meetups, and running a reliable onboarding process - so that early users obtain immediate value rather than facing an "empty city" experience.

In the LP phase, the most material operational risk is failing to reach sufficient local density in the first cities, which would undermine both user retention and partner willingness to remain active. Even if downloads spike around fixture weeks, the value proposition is only validated when users repeatedly find relevant meetups and a minimum viable bundle of fan-friendly, verified venues and experiences. A related risk is that early traction may be inflated by curiosity rather than by meaningful "commitment actions" that signal intent and predict repeat usage - such as RSVPs (attendance confirmation), saving venues, or following club/city boards. If the app generates installs without these behaviors, the venture may overstate product-market fit while still lacking the network effects required for sustained growth.

A second LP challenge concerns partner adoption, especially among small venues that may be cautious about joining a new platform, uncertain about whether it will generate meaningful incremental footfall, or reluctant to take on additional operational effort (for example, updating listings, responding to booking requests, or honoring discounts). This risk is intensified by the plan's positioning around "fair fees for locals" and a trust-led operating model. If verification steps and operating standards are perceived as overly demanding, partners may postpone onboarding; yet if standards are relaxed simply to reduce friction, the platform's trust and safety proposition may be diluted. The resulting tension is structural rather than incidental: the venture needs sufficient governance to protect users and maintain credibility, while keeping onboarding lightweight enough to build supply quickly at the point where supply is most critical to making the platform useful.

A third LP issue relates to user learning curves and the calibration of trust. The concept asks users to coordinate with people they do not know (meetups) and to rely on platform signals

- such as verified venues, inclusivity/accessibility tags, and visible moderation - to judge whether participation feels safe and worthwhile. This creates a behavioral hurdle that does not exist in "pure" booking products: if safety norms are unclear, or if event quality is uncertain, users may browse but avoid taking part. Implementation risk is therefore closely tied to operational design (clear community standards, visible enforcement, and well-defined escalation pathways), not only to interface design.

In addition, the product's emphasis on sustainability cues and AI-assisted recommendations introduces a credibility risk. Early adopters may treat occasional errors or recommendations that feel opaque - as evidence that the platform as a whole is unreliable. For this reason, transparency is not merely an ethical preference; it is a practical mitigation against early trust decay. Explicit price/time/CO_2 trade-offs and privacy-by-design principles reduce the likelihood that users interpret the planner as a "black box" or perceive the platform's claims as superficial.

As the venture moves into GP and EP, implementation challenges shift from early adoption dynamics to cross-border replication and governance at scale. First, operational complexity increases as expansion reaches Spain and the UK. Language, social norms around going out, expectations about meetups, and venue behavior vary by market. Second, scaling increases trust-and-safety exposure. Higher user volumes and more user-generated content typically raise the incidence of spam, manipulation, harassment, and event misuse. In travel contexts - and for underrepresented groups - a small number of negative episodes can cause disproportionate reputational harm. While the operating plan anticipates verification pipelines, incident handling, and tiered escalation, the core implementation challenge is execution discipline: enforcing rules consistently across markets while avoiding overly restrictive controls that deter participation.

Regulatory exposure also intensifies with cross-border growth, especially in data protection and consumer rights. Within the EU, GDPR imposes strict requirements on personal data processing and user rights, and these become operationally heavier as the platform expands identity verification, moderation logs, and analytics. In this sense, privacy-by-design and data minimization are not only compliance objectives; they function as risk controls that limit the potential impact of incidents and reduce the operational "blast radius" of data-related failures.

Third, EP introduces a timing opportunity - and a corresponding risk - linked to the 2030 FIFA World Cup. If the platform is already established across priority host corridors, the

increase in football travel attention may act as a meaningful growth accelerator. The strategic risk is over-reliance on the event: if forecasts implicitly assume that a major tournament will "solve" adoption, the venture may underinvest in the slower, cumulative work of building city-level density, trusted supply, and validated unit economics. In practice, the World Cup is best treated as a tailwind that amplifies an already functioning model, rather than as a substitute for operational readiness.

Finally, there is an ethical and brand-positioning issue embedded in the venue mix. Because many fan-friendly venues are bars and pubs, growth may become associated with alcohol consumption and late-night mobility. Even if the platform does not promote alcohol explicitly, the association can create reputational sensitivities and may require safeguards - such as inclusive venue standards, visible codes of conduct, and practical match-night logistics. This is not merely a communications concern; it connects directly to safety outcomes and to the platform's ambition to be a trusted place to plan and connect.

Mitigation is therefore framed as a continuous risk-management discipline, focused on identifying, treating, monitoring, and communicating risk throughout the rollout. In practical terms, the main mitigations include: (i) phase gates that prevent geographic expansion until density and trust KPIs are met; (ii) a standardized launch playbook with minimum verified supply targets, consistent moderation rules, and clear escalation procedures; (iii) trust-first onboarding that nudges early users toward commitment actions (e.g., RSVP, venue saves) rather than passive browsing; (iv) privacy-by-design and data minimization to reduce regulatory and reputational exposure under GDPR; and (v) explicit scenario planning that treats the 2030 World Cup as an accelerator, while keeping the base case viable without it.

11. Financial Analysis

The financial statements presented in this chapter are projections for the period 2026-2030, expressed in euros (€). Their purpose is to translate the business model and the operational scaling plan into a coherent and internally consistent set of financial statements - namely an Income Statement (Figure 20), Cash Flow Statement (Figure 21), and Balance Sheet (Figure 22) - suitable for investment appraisal.

All figures are reported on an annual basis and should be interpreted as a baseline scenario rather than a forecast with statistical certainty, given the level of uncertainty inherent to early-stage platform ventures. Unless stated otherwise, inflation is not modelled explicitly; accordingly, values are presented in nominal terms.

INCOME STATEMENT					
Value in Euros (€)	**2026**	**2027**	**2028**	**2029**	**2030**
Revenue from services	6 123	48 001	191 175	698 418	3 650 977
Costs of Goods Sold	(128)	(804)	(3 231)	(8 796)	(41 840)
Gross Profit	**5 995**	**47 198**	**187 944**	**689 622**	**3 609 137**
Advertising & Promotion	(10 000)	(35 000)	(50 000)	(75 000)	(150 000)
Salaries, Benefits & Wages	(77 867)	(194 231)	(194 231)	(493 451)	(493 451)
Other Expenses	(30 157)	(31 281)	(35 054)	(68 594)	(171 260)
EBITDA	**(111 901)**	**(212 510)**	**(88 110)**	**61 374**	**2 836 267**
Depreciation & Amortization	(1 733)	(4 333)	(4 333)	(9 533)	(9 533)
EBIT	**(113 635)**	**(216 843)**	**(92 443)**	**51 840**	**2 826 733**
Interest Expense	-	-	-	-	-
Earnings Before Taxes	**(113 635)**	**(216 843)**	**(92 443)**	**51 840**	**2 826 733**
Income Taxes	-	-	-	-	(491 130)
Net Income	**(113 635)**	**(216 843)**	**(92 443)**	**51 840**	**2 335 603**

Figure 20- Income Statement

The platform generates revenue through four distinct mechanisms outlined in the Financial Plan: (i) in-app advertising, which monetizes the non-premium user base; (ii) Premium subscriptions, providing recurring revenue; (iii) commissions on bookable transactions, where a percentage fee is applied to eligible bookings made through the platform; and (iv) promotional placements and paid visibility for venues, sold as monthly packages to participating venues. This hybrid revenue structure is characteristic of two-sided marketplace models, where value is captured from multiple stakeholder groups: audiences through advertising, users through subscriptions, and venues through visibility and transaction fees.

Cost of Goods Sold (COGS) is estimated at 3% of revenue from Premium subscriptions and promotional placements, reflecting the direct variable costs associated with these transactions. These revenue streams are primarily collected through card-based online payments, which incur payment processing fees including gateway charges, chargeback handling, and other transaction costs. The 3% assumption is deliberately conservative: published pricing for European payment processors typically combines a percentage fee with a fixed per-transaction charge, which can result in significant effective costs, particularly for smaller transactions, even before accounting for additional payment-related overheads.

Depreciation is included to reflect the accounting treatment of IT equipment (primarily laptops) as capitalized assets rather than immediate operating expenses. In line with standard accounting practice under IFRS for Property, Plant, and Equipment, depreciation is calculated using the straight-line method over an assumed three-year useful life, with no residual value.

A 20% corporate income tax rate is applied to be consistent with Portuguese statutory framework introduced under the State Budget law, recognizing that additional layers of taxes such as municipal/state surtaxes and tax incentives can alter the effective rate.

As a result of the scale reached by 2030, the net income in the last year of the projection is €2,335,603. This reflects the expansion of the revenue while keeping the structure of costs stable throughout the years.

CASH FLOW STATEMENT					
Value in Euros (€)	**2026**	**2027**	**2028**	**2029**	**2030**
Operating Cash Flow					
Net Income	(113 635)	(216 843)	(92 443)	51 840	2 335 603
Depreciation & Amortization	1 733	4 333	4 333	9 533	9 533
Cash from Operations	**(111 901)**	**(212 510)**	**(88 110)**	**61 374**	**2 345 136**
Investing Cash Flow					
Property & Equipment	(5 200)	(7 800)	-	(33 800)	(7 800)
Cash from Investing	**(5 200)**	**(7 800)**	**0**	**(33 800)**	**(7 800)**
Financing Cash Flow					
Issuance of Debt	100 000	200 000	100 000	(30 000)	(370 000)
Issuance of Equity	60 000				
Cash from Financing	**160 000**	**200 000**	**100 000**	**(30 000)**	**(370 000)**
Net Variation in Cash	42 899	(20 310)	11 890	(2 426)	1 967 336
Opening Cash Balance	0	42 899	22 589	34 479	32 052
Closing Cash Balance	**42 899**	**22 589**	**34 479**	**32 052**	**1 999 389**

Figure 21- Cash Flow Statement

The Cash Flow Statement (Figure 21) distinguishes operating performance from investing and financing decisions. Property & Equipment represents cash investment in core IT equipment (laptops) treated as capital expenditure. Instead of expensing the full purchase cost at the time of acquisition, the model records these payments as investing cash outflows and capitalizes the assets on the Balance Sheet. The Income Statement then reflects the cost through a non-cash depreciation charge. This treatment is consistent with the matching principle: assets that generate benefits over multiple periods are recognized over their useful life, which improves the interpretability of operating profitability during the scale-up phase.

Financing cash flows reflect the staged funding plan used to bridge early operating deficits while the platform builds scale. The model assumes €60,000 of equity and €400,000 of debt raised over the scaling period, followed by debt repayment once operating cash generation becomes structurally positive. This structure makes explicit (i) why external capital is required to fund negative operating cash flow during early adoption, and (ii) how repayment capacity emerges once revenue becomes material and operating leverage improves. One important modelling simplification - worth stating clearly in the thesis - is that interest expense is not recognized in the Income Statement. This isolates operating viability, but it would be optimistic if the debt were priced at commercial rates, as interest would reduce net income and slow cash accumulation.

By the end of 2030, the projections show a Closing Cash Balance of €1,999,389 reflecting strong operating cash generation at maturity and the repayment of outstanding debt within the forecast horizon.

BALANCE SHEET					
Value in Euros (€)	**2026**	**2027**	**2028**	**2029**	**2030**
Assets					
Current Assets:					
Cash	42 899	22 589	34 479	32 052	1 999 389
Account Receiveble					
Total Current Assets	**42 899**	**22 589**	**34 479**	**32 052**	**1 999 389**
Property & Equipment	3 467	6 933	2 600	26 867	25 133
Goodwill					
Total Assets	**46 365**	**29 522**	**37 079**	**58 919**	**2 024 522**
Liabilities					
Current Liabilities	-	-	-	-	-
Accounts Payable	-	-	-	-	-
Total Current Liabilities	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**	**0**
Long-term Debt	100 000	300 000	400 000	370 000	0
Total Liabilities	**100 000**	**300 000**	**400 000**	**370 000**	**0**
Shareholder's Equity					
Equity Capital	60 000	60 000	60 000	60 000	60 000
Retained Earnings	(113 635)	(330 478)	(422 921)	(371 081)	1 964 522
Total Shareholder's Equity	(53 635)	(270 478)	(362 921)	(311 081)	2 024 522
Total L+E	46 365	29 522	37 079	58 919	2 024 522

Figure 22- Balance Sheet

To preserve transparency and avoid introducing speculative operating details, the Balance Sheet (Figure 22) adopts a simplified working-capital structure in which Accounts Receivable and short-term operating liabilities (notably Accounts Payable) are not treated as material balances. In effect, the model assumes relatively immediate cash conversion for platform revenues and limited timing differences arising from supplier payment terms. However, it should be treated as a modelling limitation: in practice, platforms often face settlement lags, refunds and chargebacks, and partner payout schedules that can create working-capital movements and influence liquidity.

Shareholders' Equity reaches €2,024,522 in 2030, reflecting the initial equity injection and accumulated retained earnings over the forecast horizon. Conceptually, this represents the residual claim after liabilities are settled and therefore serves as a book-value proxy for end-of-horizon residual value under a transparent "no exit multiple" approach. Rather than imposing a terminal value based on revenue or EBITDA multiples, the model anchors the horizon value in the Balance Sheet position.

Investment Metrics	
ROI - Annualized	34,5%
ROI - Simple	340%
NPV	591 053,40 €
IRR	57%
Payback Period	4,24

Figure 23- Investment Metrics

Investment attractiveness is summarized using Simple ROI, annualized ROI, NPV, IRR, and payback period, calculated at project level based on the cumulative invested capital required to fund the venture through build and scale-up. The model reports a Simple ROI of 340%, using total invested capital of €460,000 (equity plus debt deployed over the period) and an end-of-horizon residual value proxied by total equity in 2030. Under this framing, ROI reflects the value remaining once the venture reaches maturity and liabilities have been repaid, relative to the capital required to finance the scaling path.

For discounted valuation, the model reports an NPV (Annex B) of approximately €591,000, computed using a 20% discount rate. The 20% rate is used as a high hurdle rate consistent with the elevated risk profile of early-stage ventures, including execution risk, adoption uncertainty, and potential competitive response. In the valuation literature on young firms, required returns demanded by investors are often materially higher than public-market costs of capital, and applying a high hurdle rate is a common way to reflect survival risk and parameter uncertainty in early-stage settings, according to KPMG. (2021).

The model's IRR of 57% represents the discount rate that sets NPV to zero for the same cash-flow series, providing an intuitive "break-even" required return benchmark commonly used in investment appraisal. Finally, the payback period of 4.24 years indicates that cumulative (undiscounted) cash flows recover the invested capital slightly after the fourth year.

12. Conclusion

This dissertation developed and assessed an applied business plan for a digital platform positioned at the intersection of sports-driven travel, community coordination, and sustainable tourism. The core problem is not a lack of demand - international match travel is a high-intent behavior - but the persistent fragmentation of the journey. Planning is typically spread across generic travel tools, informal coordination groups, and unverified local recommendations, generating avoidable inefficiencies: substantial time spent reconciling fixed match constraints with transport availability, variable information quality about fan-friendly places, and limited mechanisms to translate fan mobility into predictable, locally distributed value. In response, the proposed venture integrates three components into a single workflow: (i) verified meetups organized by club and destination, (ii) discovery of fan-friendly local venues and experiences, and (iii) an A-assisted trip planner that reduces search friction while making price-time-CO_2 trade-offs explicit.

Beyond proposing a product concept, the dissertation's contribution lies in translating relevant theory into a coherent execution and governance logic appropriate for a two-sided marketplace. The literature review framed the opportunity through complementary lenses - sustainable tourism and community benefit mechanisms; sports tourism and the specificities of football fan travel; platform economics and network effects; and co-creation dynamics in online fan communities. This synthesis matters because defensibility is unlikely to rest on easily replicable features alone. Instead, advantage is expected to emerge from the quality and density of a city-level ecosystem, in which trust mechanisms, moderation, and partner standards function as strategic assets rather than as ancillary operational tasks.

Empirically, the dissertation adds value by grounding key assumptions in primary data and using these insights to calibrate a conservative baseline. The survey (n = 104) supports the relevance of the community layer: pre-match socializing and willingness to connect with other supporters emerge as strong drivers. It also identifies clear planning frictions that justify the trip-planner component, particularly the difficulty of aligning transport with match schedules and the time invested in comparing accommodation alternatives. Sustainability appears primarily as a decision lens rather than as a reliable willingness to pay a premium. Respondents show greater comfort with lower-impact mobility choices than with paying extra for certified accommodation. Strategically, this pattern supports a transparency-first positioning in which sustainability is embedded into decision support and choice architecture, rather than treated as moral messaging or a standalone monetization pillar.

From a strategic and operational perspective, the work demonstrates that feasibility is best approached as a sequencing problem. Two-sided platforms face early "empty marketplace" risk, and in travel contexts tolerance for trust failures is low. The proposed LP-GP-EP rollout is therefore not simply a growth narrative but a risk-management mechanism: establishing minimum viable liquidity and stable operations in Portugal before replicating the playbook across Spain and the UK, and only then expanding into broader corridors once verification, incident handling, partner onboarding, and support processes are demonstrably repeatable. The internal analyses (VRIO and SWOT) reinforce that sustainable advantage is most plausibly created through the interaction of (i) local network effects, (ii) a credible reputation and safety system, and (iii) organizational know-how to execute repeatable city launches - capabilities that become increasingly costly to imitate as the platform scales.

The investor-oriented component strengthens this contribution by translating the rollout into financial statements and explicit investment metrics under a conservative baseline. The financial model operationalizes a hybrid revenue architecture - advertising, subscriptions, commissions, and paid visibility - consistent with how marketplace businesses monetize across maturity stages. Under the stated assumptions, the baseline indicates positive attractiveness through metrics such as NPV, IRR, and payback, while maintaining cautious early-year monetization and enforcing operational gates. At the same time, the dissertation is explicit about modelling simplifications that should be treated as sensitivity drivers in future iterations (for example, settlement lags, refund dynamics, and the treatment of financing costs). This transparency strengthens the plan's auditability and improves its usefulness as a decision tool rather than a deterministic forecast.

A relevant contextual accelerator is the 2030 FIFA World Cup, hosted by Morocco alongside Portugal and Spain. However, the central argument is that event-driven demand cannot substitute for product-market fit, governance readiness, or operational resilience. Major tournaments amplify what already works; they do not correct weak trust systems, inadequate partner coverage, or fragile support capacity. The pre-2030 period should therefore be treated as the decisive window to (i) prove the city-launch playbook, (ii) build verified supply density in priority corridors, and (iii) harden trust-and-safety operations so that demand spikes can be absorbed without degrading user experience or reputational credibility.

Overall, the dissertation supports a clear conclusion: the opportunity is not simply to "build an app," but to create a scalable mechanism that converts high-intent football travel into

repeatable, trusted, and locally beneficial experiences, while making sustainability operational through transparent trade-offs, low-impact options, and community-driven discovery. The venture's long-term value creation logic is cumulative: each successful city launch strengthens network effects, improves recommendation quality through richer interaction data, increases partner returns, and raises switching costs. The practical implication is sequential: disciplined execution and governance first, defensible density second, and growth consequently.

Finally, the dissertation clarifies a future research and development agenda. Empirically, the survey provides directional validation but should be complemented by behavioral evidence from an MVP pilot, including activation and retention metrics, RSVP and attendance rates, incident rates, and partner conversion and churn. Methodologically, further work could refine segmentation (e.g., first-time away travelers versus frequent travelers), test willingness to pay using experiments rather than stated preference and validate sustainability impacts using more granular mobility and emissions datasets. Strategically, subsequent iterations should prioritize measurable trust outcomes and partner value creation - not installs alone - because in cross-border social travel contexts, credibility is the binding constraint that determines whether network effects compound or stall.

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Annex A: Survey Questions and Answers (PT and ENG)

Football Travel Experiences – Fan Survey

Help us design a platform that makes it easier for supporters to meet up and travel more sustainably. This anonymous questionnaire takes less than 5 minutes to complete.

1- Which gender do you identify with? *

- Male
- Female
- Other
- Prefer not to say

2- What is your age? *

- Under 18
- 18-24 years old
- 25-30 years old
- 31-39 years old
- >39 years old

3- How many international football matches have you attended live in the past 24 months? *

- 1 game
- 2 games
- 3 or more games
- I didn't watched any game but I would like to
- I didn't watched any game and I have no interest in watching

4- I enjoy meeting and socializing with other supporters of my club before a match. *
Choose from 1 (Totally Disagree) to 5 (Totally Agree).

	1	2	3	4	5	
Totally Disagree	○	○	○	○	○	Totally Agree

5- I participate in online groups (WhatsApp of Facebook, per example) to organize the trip and meet another fans. *
Choose from 1 (Totally Disagree) to 5 (Totally Agree).

	1	2	3	4	5	
Totally Disagree	○	○	○	○	○	Totally Agree

6- I would use an app that shows fan events happening nearby. *
Choose from 1 (Totally Disagree) to 5 (Totally Agree).

	1	2	3	4	5	
Totally Disagree	○	○	○	○	○	Totally Agree

7- Finding flights that match the game schedule is difficult. *
Choose from 1 (Totally Disagree) to 5 (Totally Agree).

	1	2	3	4	5	
Totally Disagree	○	○	○	○	○	Totally Agree

8- I spend too much time comparing accommodation options. *
Choose from 1 (Totally Disagree) to 5 (Totally Agree).

	1	2	3	4	5	
Totally Disagree	○	○	○	○	○	Totally Agree

9- Traveling between airport, hotel and stadium is complicated. *
Choose from 1 (Totally Disagree) to 5 (Totally Agree).

	1	2	3	4	5	
Totally Disagree	○	○	○	○	○	Totally Agree

10- I usually travel as part of a group. *
Choose from 1 (Totally Disagree) to 5 (Totally Agree).

	1	2	3	4	5	
Totally Disagree	○	○	○	○	○	Totally Agree

11- I use public transport for my trips (bus, train, plane). *
Choose from 1 (Totally Disagree) to 5 (Totally Agree).

	1	2	3	4	5	
Totally Disagree	○	○	○	○	○	Totally Agree

12- I would pay a small extra fee for accommodation with a green certification. *
Choose from 1 (Totally Disagree) to 5 (Totally Agree).

	1	2	3	4	5	
Totally Disagree	○	○	○	○	○	Totally Agree

13- I would regularly use an app that integrates travel, community and events. *
Choose from 1 (Totally Disagree) to 5 (Totally Agree).

	1	2	3	4	5	
Totally Disagree	○	○	○	○	○	Totally Agree

14- I would pay up to €5/month for premium features in such an app. *
Choose from 1 (Totally Disagree) to 5 (Totally Agree).

	1	2	3	4	5	
Totally Disagree	○	○	○	○	○	Totally Agree

15- I would recommend the app to other fans if it met my needs. *
Choose from 1 (Totally Disagree) to 5 (Totally Agree).

	1	2	3	4	5	
Totally Disagree	○	○	○	○	○	Totally Agree

16- If this app existed today, how likely would you be to install it? *

Choose from 1 (Not Likely) to 5 (Very Likely).

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not Likely	○	○	○	○	○	Very Likely

17- What has been the biggest problem you have faced when traveling to watch a match?

Texto de resposta longa

18- Which feature would you consider essential in an app for traveling fans?

Texto de resposta longa

Annex B: NPV Table

NPV **Value in Euros (€)**						
Initial Investment	(60 000)					
Discount Rate	20%					
		2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Net Income		(113 635)	(216 843)	(92 443)	51 840	2 335 603
Depreciation & Amortization		1 733	4 333	4 333	9 533	9 533
Cash from Investment		(5 200)	(7 800)	0	(33 800)	(7 800)
Cash Flow		(117 101)	(220 310)	(88 110)	27 574	2 337 336
Present Value		(157 585)	(152 993)	(50 990)	13 298	939 323

NPV	591 053,40 €