

FOOTBALL FANS AND SPORTS EVENTS: FC SHKËNDIJA-TETOVË

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Abstract

The main purpose of this research is to verify the actual situation of the fans in the Shkëndija Football Club from Tetova. A total of 315 male and female fans of different ages were included in the research, where 287 respondents are male and 28 are female. The research was carried out by means of the Questionnaire, which included 58 questions. Based on the opinions of the respondents, we can freely say that the answers in general as well as the free opinions expressed by the fans of KF Shkëndija are very important and worth analyzing in detail.

Based what we saw from the results and from the history of the club's establishment, the suspension of the club and its re-establishment, the establishment of the Balliste fan group, the announcement of the state champion for the first time, the arrival of FC Shkëndija before the threshold of extinction due to not having sponsors, and in the end the sponsorship of the club by Ecolog and the recent historical achievements of FC Shkëndija, we can conclude and recommend as follows:

- FC Shkëndija from Tetova is a serious club which in recent years is at the peak of historical achievements, therefore the organization of this club as well as its management should be done by professionals and not by groups of people who know how to form impenetrable clans. Therefore, the leadership of the club should be modified or built according to the needs of the club and not the needs of individuals.
- FC Shkëndija in order to have the primacy of a serious club with a world character needs a football Academy in which both athletes and coaches will be educated, trained and selected, and why not train the club's fans as well. Such a thing can only be done under the management and leadership of the Ecolog.
- FC Shkëndija needs to find ways to preserve the football talents that emerge from its own school, such a concern is often encountered by players, parents and football professionals who know best how to make that assessment.
- Indeed, as the fans stated in most cases, the treatment and care of FC Shkëndija towards the fans is not up to par and it must be improved for the benefit of both parties, since fans have existed, exist and will exist, but the club also needs the fans, the more educated and prepared they are, the better they will reflect on the club.

Key words: *KF Shkëndija Tetovo, Ballistët fans, Questionnaire.*

1. INTRODUCTION

When it comes to sports fans, many things come to mind, on the one hand the ardent love and support for sports clubs, while on the other hand the problems faced by fans both on and off the sports grounds. Therefore, questions are often asked about what we actually mean by sports fans. In this paper we will try to answer many questions.

Tifo (pronounced ['ti:fo]) is the phenomenon by which a fan of a sports team makes a visual display of a flag, sign or choreography in the stands of a stadium, mainly as part of an association football match.

Especially in football games a choreographed performance in which fans in a sports stadium raise a large flag or simultaneously hold signs that together form a large image (Wiki/Tifo).

Football fans are a group of people who, with or without choreographed cheering, encourage their team to achieve positive results. It is a heterogeneous group, part of the sports audience which represents an unstructured and unorganized social group (Turković, H. 2016). FC Shkëndija was established in 1979, in 1981 it was suspended for known reasons at that time regime of the Yugoslavian state at that time, while the re-establishment of the club was made 11 years later in 1992 (Shkëndija Football Club). For the details of this long period of time with joys and sorrows have been written in the history of FC Shkëndija, while through this paper we have tried to research the opinions of the fans of FC Shkëndija in Tetovo, or as the people say, to measure the pulse of the people of flame (History of FC Shkëndija).

The level of passion with which football teams are supported has from time to time caused problems, and clashes between fans can result in violence. Some violence occurs by people aiming to cause trouble, a phenomenon known as hooliganism. Other fans group together in hooligan firms, which are organised gangs that seek fights with other firms supporting rival clubs. Both are sometimes known as the "English Disease", (Association football culture).

Football fans are passionate, loyal and knowledgeable as ever (Know Your Audience: Football Fans).

Being a soccer fan is both a privilege and a burden. When you're winning, it's the best thing on Earth, and when you're not, it's the end of the world. Football is the most popular spectator sport on the planet, and for much of the world, the experience of being a fan is a tradition that has been passed down through the generations (How did we became soccer fans).

Over recent years, social media has changed the game for football fans. There is more content than ever to keep fans entertained, but more recently, we've seen a new form of interaction emerge, which is placing fans (and their opinions) at the epicentre of the game. A study conducted by Facebook after last year's World Cup, cited that there were 400 million football fans on Facebook alone, and a further 140 million on Instagram. Eleven million stories were produced on Instagram as fans around the world shared their favourite moments of the tournament online (How a fan engagement is changing the game of football).

2. THE PURPOSE AND METHODOLOGY OF WORK

The main purpose of this research is to verify the actual situation of the fans in the Shkëndija Football Club from Tetova.

2.1 Sample of entities

A total of 315 male and female fans of different ages were included in the research, where 287 respondents are male and 28 are female. The research was carried out by means of a questionnaire, various questions about fans are included, while the number of questions that are provided for the questionnaire is 58.

2.2 Sample variables

The sample of variables consists of: Gender, Age, Social networks and media, as well as general Fan Questions.

2.3 Questionnaire

The questionnaire is composed of 58 questions. The most important questions are: Age, gender, general questions for fans as well as the free expression of opinion of the respondents.

The questionnaire was completed within the eight months of May - December 2021. It should be emphasized that a percentage of the respondents were inside the country and access was easier, while another part was outside the country at the time the survey was conducted. The survey was conducted only with those people who are known as fans and who declare themselves as such. Since I belong to that group, it was very easy for me to identify the fans of FC Shkëndija. The questionnaire was mainly formulated by The Fan Behavior Questionnaire (Measuring sports fans' involvement – The Fan Behavior Questionnaire) also from Football club fan engagement with supporters (surveymonkey.co.uk/r/5HHQRP3), Sports fans survey (surveymonkey.com/r/INTRTSHBS) and Football fan survey 1 (surveymonkey.com /r/fansurvey01) and some questions that are current and specific for the time and our country.

2.4 Data processing

For the processing of the data from the questionnaires, was used the frequency method, where the results were presented by means of percentages. The questions presented have several alternatives with which the respondents have the opportunity to circle one or more answers, depending on the request that is presented in each question in particular. In order to have a more accurate overview of the results, they are described by percentage.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The engagement of the fans of the Shkëndija Football Club from Tetova, RNM.

In **the age and gender** questions of the respondents, 91% were declared male, 9% female, while the age most present in the stadium is 25-34 years old with 45% and 15-24 years old with 34%.

Regarding questions about **social networks**, 86% use Facebook, while 76% follow the club. 84% of fans follow the news on the club's website and media channel. 75% of the respondents think that the daily experience of matches on social networks is allowed, while 84% think that the networks give them an additional connection with the club, where 83% follow interviews or publications on the network, while 81% like the same. In the questions **before, during and after the match**, 100% answered that they do not buy season tickets, they feel good when the team wins and participates in at least 2 matches in the season,

while away matches are followed by 58% of the fans, while friendly matches are followed by 66% theirs and 29% answered that at least 2 of their family members are part of the match, and 76% follow the summer and winter markets. The atmosphere in the stadium is exciting, 84% answered yes, 55% stated that the place where they sit corresponds to the ticket they buy, even though the equipment is dirt, where 75% stated that the exit from the stadium is not so clean. well, where 45% have declared that they leave easily, also for the stadium staff, only 41% say that they solve problems when they show up.

Talking to others about the club was declared by 85%, while 83% say that getting involved with the fans is the most exciting thing, although only 67% do it when sitting with groups of fans. The entertainment during the match is pleasant, affirmed by 67% of the fans, only 47% say that the quality of the matches is attractive and 89% can use the mobile phone without a problem. We will explain what the fans are able to do below, 91% feel euphoria after the victory, 86% know the songs for the club, 83% know the names of the starting players and watch the match until the end even if the team loses, 80% do cheer for the club regardless of the performance but also get angry for the team's loss, 64% shout in the crowd showing displeasure for the club and 54% do not agree with the policies of the club's leadership, they also insult the coaches and players when the team loses, 41% feel depression and 33% go through stress. 77% wear club props where 19% have 4 props, 29% lose sleep and 24% said those who write the name of the team on vehicles, while 10% answered those who paint their faces or have tattoos and those who use narcotics and 17% answered those who use alcoholic beverages.

As for feelings, 38% have declared that they last the whole day, 26% spend 1 hour during the day for the club and visit the club's official website 2 times a day.

Regarding rival clubs and fans, 53% stated that they laugh at them, 51% change their behavior, 42% feel envy, 38% fight, 15% use violence or threats, 13% sometimes regret what they have done, and 26% have been reprimanded by competent bodies for behavior. In the last question, **the free opinion of the fans** was expressed, where the majority expressed dissatisfaction with the leadership of the club and want the club to be led by professionals, while some others demand that the stadium of the club be regulated together with the auxiliary areas as well as giving priority to the academy of the club and to work much with them.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The questionnaire that was used in this research is standardized and composed of 58 questions. 315 respondents of both gender and of different ages took part in the research (287 men and 28 women participated). Based on the opinions of the respondents, we can say that the answers in general as well as the free opinions expressed by the citizens of Tetova or otherwise by the fans of FC Shkëndija are very important and worth analyzing in detail. If the question is asked why the opinions of the fans about the club they prefer are important, of course the answer would be that they love that club the most and spend years supporting it both in good times and when the club has its own difficulties. If we start from the fact that watching a football club from the inside when you are part of the staff or the playing team and watching from the outside is not the same, it justifies the need to listen to the opinions of the fans that follow every move of the favorite club. Many things that are seen from the outside cannot be seen from the inside, so the criticisms that are given by the viewers in this case the ardent fans are worth considering improving the current state of the club.

The statements of the fan leaders are also very important, they describe the journey from the foundation of FC Shkëndija fans, the difficulties they had with the state system at that time, as well as the persistence and determination for the initiative taken by the initiating council to establish the group of "Ballistët" fans. (K. Osmani period 1992-1999). In another case, another fan leader tells about the difficulties and dangers experienced by FC Shkëndija fans both during the match and after the match, the threats and insults in the national aspect, but with great pride they claim that they have never surrendered on the contrary, they have stood tall. (V. Asani period 2004-2007). Another leader of FC Shkëndija proudly states that they are proud to call themselves Ballists. They further prove that even though they have been oppressed and criticized by the state system all the time, the fans of FC Shkëndija have proven that they are of European and world culture and that they have proven that they are one of the best fans in the Albanian lands (Sh. Meta period 2010-2014). In the following, the leader and author of this paper tells about the experiences of FC Shkëndija and the announcement of the state champion for the first time, as well as the difficulties that FC Shkëndija experienced after that when it was left without a sponsor and was on the verge of extinction, but at that time the leadership of the fans took in the management of the club seeing the reason that only a serious sponsor can revive the club. This leader addresses Mr. Lazim Destani to take FC Shkëndija under his claws and with the support of the club's fans from all over the world they achieved the goal that FC Shkëndija is supported and led by a serious sponsor Mr. Lazim D. and all this resulted in the culmination of FC Shkëndija in the last decade (E. Ameti period 2007-2014). Another leader of recent years, after expressing his great pleasure to be the leader of the fans, he also mentions the responsibility he has as the leader of the FC Shkëndija fan group. This leader of the fan group has almost the same opinions as those of previous years. He mentions the attitude of the state police and the oppression they do towards the fans of FC Shkëndija, but he also affirms the firm attitude of the leaders and the fans in general to support their favorite club (I. Luma period 2014- 2018). And the statement of a recent leader who was also a final year student at the Faculty of Physical Education at the University of Tetova: He said to be a Ballist means to sacrifice for the group and protect the group. Also, he showed that as the leader of the group of fans, during this difficult period of the global pandemic COVID19 or Corona Virus, he encountered many organizational difficulties, which meant that they were not able to organize in the stadiums even though it was the year when Shkëndija was declared champion. Well, in the last match when Shkëndija accepted the title with great pride, the leader shows that they broke the rules and entered the stadium steps to celebrate the title even though we were aware that there will be legal proceedings against them (V. Vehabi period 2018-2022).

For the importance of FC Shkëndija as well as the Fans or as they are otherwise called the Ballists, there is also the organization of the 30th anniversary of the club's fans, where the journey of the club's establishment, the achievements so far, the difficulties and challenges in particular periods were presented, as well as the thanks for the founders of the fan group called Ballists and the support and cooperation with the leadership of the favorite football club Shkëndija from Tetova. I want to emphasize that the ideas, conversations, questions and tasks presented to me by the lecturers and supporters of this research were of a different nature from those that dominated in my head as an ardent fan, so they were more discipline-oriented; education; security; entertainment; protection from various diversions such as various narcotics, alcohol, etc.; respect and no offense; following football and not doing politics in the stadium; extending a hand to fans of opposing clubs and not beating them; positioning as the 12th player of the team and not causing interruption of the game and punishment of the club; civic behavior during the journey to the

stadium and after it; controlling emotions both during winning and losing the game; respect on social media by posting polite and non-offensive texts, giving the opportunity in the stands to follow the game as a family...

Today, the national dress can only be seen in two cases, the one in cultural and artistic societies during dances and the fans' dress in the stadium, and it can be considered a positive action. On the other hand, the negative side is that the very name Ballistët, Komiti, Vojvodi arouses hatred towards others and the sincere character of the fans is replaced by the national or nationalist one and with this the insults, beatings etc. at the national level begin. Therefore, we think that it would be good to ban such nicknames or designations that arouse hatred between peoples and to keep the name itself, e.g. Fan of FC Shkëndija, and so on. The fan experiences changes depending on the various factors that surround it. Among other things, we will mention only one phenomenon that is considered a novelty in the fandom of some European countries, specifically we will only mention the case of two Scandinavian football clubs who make an agreement to face each other outside the football field and divide the scores mainly by fighting but it was based on rules such as the number of fans being equal, not using aids, the one who falls during the fight is not beaten more and other rules that are illogical for the entire population, but reasonable for the fans. So, the reason why we dealt with this issue is precisely the education of the fans in a healthy spirit that will be beneficial both for the sport and for society in general.

Based on the fan base and the characteristics it possesses, as well as based on the views of pedagogues about this social phenomenon that has existed, exists and will exist in the future, we can conclude that for the benefit of football clubs as in locally as well as nationally and why not internationally, fan education in a positive spirit would be beneficial not only to sports, but also to society in general. Let the sports grounds or fields be places where not only the fans but also the public in general will have fun and be emotionally drained, not forgetting that children of both sexes, men and women, parents together with children, the elderly, etc., participate there. or in other words, let sports stadiums be places where everyone will go without guessing and without fear of being offended, insulted, beaten, oppressed etc.

As we mentioned above, Ballistët support the name Shkëndija in volleyball and futsal, but in North Macedonia there are ultras groups where they support football, volleyball, futsal, basketball, handball, while other group and individual sports are generally of interest of fans is weak. In North Macedonia, there are approximately 29 ultras groups, of which 6 groups are ethnic Albanians, including the Tetovo Ballists, the Skopje Shvercerat, the Kumanovo Illyrians, the Gostivar Kastriots, the Debar Sokols and the Struga Patriots, as well as 23 Macedonian groups, Komiti Skopje, Chkembari Bitolla, Majmuni Prilep, Ajduci Strumica, Gemixhi Veles, Fallanga Shtip, Fantomi Gevgelia, Lavovi Skopje, Ribari Ohrid, Sejmeni Kochani, Kalinkari Valandovo, Aramii Delchevo, Bagabonti Probishtip, Krateri Kratovo, Ulavi Vinica, Vojvodi Tetovo, Vinari Negotino, Lozari Kavadarci, Pirati Skopje, Kumani Kumanovo, Family Aerodrom Skopje, City Park Boys Skopje and Patkari Struga. It is worth noting that the Balliste fan group also has its subgroups outside the city and Ohri Casuals from Ohrid, Ballistet Veles and Ballistet Preshevo (Serbia).

And in the end, after what we saw above as from the history of the establishment of the club, the suspension of the club and the re-establishment of the club, the establishment of the Ballistet fan group, the announcement of the state champion for the first time, the arrival of FC Shkëndija before the threshold of extinction due to of not having sponsors, and in the end the sponsorship of the club by Ecolog and the historical achievements of FC Shkëndija in the last decade, we can conclude and recommend as follows:

- FC Shkëndija from Tetova is a serious club which in recent years is at the peak of historical achievements, therefore the organization of this club as well as its management should be done by professionals and not by groups of people who know how to form impenetrable clans. Therefore, the leadership of the club should be modified or built according to the needs of the club and not the needs of individuals.

- FC Shkëndija to have the primacy of a serious club with world character needs a football Academy in which both athletes and coaches will be educated, trained and selected, and why not train the club's fans as well. Such a thing can only be done under the management and leadership of the giant Ecolog led by Mr. Lazim Destani.

-FC Shkëndija needs to find ways to preserve the football talents that emerge from its own school, such a concern is often encountered by players, parents and football professionals who know best how to make that assessment.

- Indeed, as the fans stated in most cases, the treatment and care of FC Shkëndija towards the fans is not up to par and it must be improved for the benefit of both parties, since fans have exist, exist and will exist always, but the club also needs the fans, the more educated and prepared they are, the better they will reflect on the club.

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