

# Football in Vietnam

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# A quick history of Vietnamese football

*Origins of the domestic game, from the French colonial period to the development of football after Vietnam's economic reforms of the 1980s*



The Cong "Army" team in 1981  
Source: Soha.vn

Club football has existed in both Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City since the turn of the 20th Century with the ruling French colonialists instrumental in setting up club teams throughout the regions.

Cercle Sportif Saigonnais were one of the earliest teams to play football in Saigon, quickly followed by Stade Militaire, Tabert Club and Saigon Sport. Soon after the Vietnamese populace started to establish their own teams with Gia Dinh Sport in — what was then called — South Vietnam being the pre-eminent example of the colonial era.

Most football in the first half of the 20th century was very localised, with cities and provinces organising their own tournaments.

There was then a prolonged absence of football in the country due to World War II, and then the first Indochinese War (concluding in 1954), plus the Vietnam / American War that ensured football, or any sport for that matter, was rarely a priority in a country ravaged by various conflicts from 1939 to

1975. Although some clubs were established during these times, there was certainly no centralised competition.

Clubs started to become more organised and well-established in the north and south of Vietnam respectively, formed from existing groups and organisations in a period where the country was divided (1954-1975).

In the north they were often based on state-owned organisations; the Army, Hanoi Police, while in the south it was more about workplace teams with Saigon Port, Saigon Police and the General Railways team all established between 1950-1970.

But until reunification in 1976, these teams were limited to playing their geographical compatriots. The teams in North Vietnam and South Vietnam never played each other as the hostilities continued.

In 1986 the Vietnamese government took a dramatic shift in the way they organised the economy and society. The new Doi Moi (Renovation) policy heralded in massive economic

reforms enacted with the goal of creating a “socialist-orientated market economy”.

Essentially, Vietnam was open for business.

Foreign investment first arrived primarily via Russia and China, countries with similar political structures. But the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, and the effective dissolution of Comecon, meant that Vietnam had to move forward with further opening up of business to the wider world.

With a greater outward focus, eyes wandered abroad and football began to pique the interest of Vietnamese fans.

Since the Doi Moi reforms of

the 1980s, football in Vietnam slowly started to become more organised, less centralised, and the existing league (operating since 1980) continued to progress and become more structured.

During the 1990s there was a significant shift in the way the sport and clubs were organised. The traditional state-organisation and industry teams had to diversify and stand more on their own feet. In response, they became more geographically and community-based.

In 2000 the league finally became a fully professional football competition. Both big police football teams, Hanoi Police and Ho Chi Minh City Police, gradually dissolved. Hanoi Police players joined a new team Hanoi Hoa Phat, while the Ho Chi Minh Police team dissolved in 2002, with players joining various teams, largely throughout the south.

Without the backing of state resources, these new clubs required funding – and that was provided by private sector firms wanting to flex their new branding muscles via the V.League championship.

Construction giant Hoa Phat and other large construction and real estate companies emerged: T&T, Becamex, Thiep Nam (Southern Steel) and Hoang Anh Gia Lai (HAGL).

They all became early investors into V. League teams - with Becamex and HAGL still remaining as teams that play today.

Words by Scott Sommerville.

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**With a greater outward focus, eyes wandered abroad and football began to pique the interest of Vietnamese fans.**

# Vietnam's big five V.League clubs now



## HANOI FC

The capital club, five-time V.League winners and the recent dominant force in the league.

Star names: Many of the national team's best players play for Hanoi: Do Duy Manh, Doan Van Hau, Do Hung Dung, Nguyen Quang Hai and captain Nguyen Van Quyet.

Average attendance: 5,000-6,000.

Fan base: Its independent fan club often creates large scale tifos. One of the best clubs in terms of fan engagement on social media and their supporters are known as passionate.



## VIETTEL FC

Formerly The Cong (Army Team), Viettel are the "people's club" and one of the clubs in V.League with a storied history and a link to the past. Winners of the most recent title in 2020.

Average attendance: often gets gates of 4,000-5,000.

Fan base: Everybody's second team, a large fan base (358,793 followers on Facebook) with active daily fan engagement on the socials, despite them not having mastered the marketing game.

## HO CHI MINH CITY FC

A club based in the southern city of 12,000,000 people – massive potential but has fallen short for many years.

Fan base: Zero community engagement, no fan interaction and little effort made to take the club forward.



## BECAMEX BINH DUONG FC

Backed by the real estate conglomerate, Becamex. The former rich club of the V.League may have struggled in the past few years, but has won the title four times between 2007 and 2015.

Average attendance: 4,250

Fan base: An established team with a core set of fans just outside of Ho Chi Minh City.



## NAM DINH FC

One of the few clubs with a traceable history back to 1965 (under various guises), Nam Dinh dissolved in 2011 but returned to V.League 2 in 2014. Finally returned to the top flight in 2018.

Average attendance: Nam Dinh are the best supported team in the league – often selling out the Thien Truong Stadium. In 2020 they averaged 12,333 fans per game.

Fan base: When travelling to either Ho Chi Minh City or Hanoi they also boast a strong away following, with 2,000-3,000 showing up.



Illustrations: We Create Content

# The power of winning Vietnamese support

*Known for their passion and energy, fans in Vietnam will turn up for football clubs that get it right with their signings, online content and community management*

**B**uilding a community and fanbase has never been easy. While local teams were slow in building on their home-turf advantage, it now meant that overseas teams had, through no direct action of their own, a fanbase in Vietnam.

One foreign club to see this happening earlier than most was Arsenal, who signed a partnership with Hoang Anh Gia Lai, a relatively small and provincial team from the Central Highlands.

However, HAGL had something that most Vietnamese teams did not; a community.

They were a static, one-town team, they hadn't moved around, and changed sponsors – they were formed by a businessman who had grown up in Gia Lai. They were the “safe-bet” who were going to be around for a long time.

The academy that was set up in the form of a tie-in was a fantastic success, and many years later the junior national team would reap the rewards of the HAGL Academy.

The much-lauded Vietnam U23 team that reached the final of the 2018 AFC U23 Championship

contained 9 players from the academy, with 7 HAGL players being called up to the most recently senior squad in December 2020.

This success off the field also created growth on the field: the V.League's most popular Youtube channel is Hoang Anh Gia Lai, with 327,000 subscribers. They have amassed 427,000 Facebook followers through little concerted marketing efforts.

## **Players carry the hopes of a nation on their shoulders - Vietnamese players abroad**

Vietnam is a staunchly nationalistic country (in the good sense), and Vietnamese supporters are no different. When a player or team represents the country, the support for them is incredible.

In June 2019 24-year-old striker Nguyen Cong Phuong nicknamed the “Vietnamese Messi” due to his short and stocky frame left HAGL for the tiny Belgian club, Sint-Truidense VV. In the days before his arrival, the Belgian club had a rather modest 3,200 Facebook followers. A day after the announcement that Cong Phuong was joining the team, their followers increased ten-fold, overnight the club had become

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**Overnight the club had become one of the best-followed clubs in the league.**



Doan Van Hau at SC Heerenveen in the Netherlands. Source: Dan Tri

one the best-followed clubs in the Belgian league.

Similarly, a few months after Cong Phuong left these shores, young fresh-faced left back, Doan Van Hau left Hanoi FC for SC

Heerenveen in the Netherlands, earning USD\$22,000 a month (the minimum required by the league for foreign imports). The year previously, SC Heerenveen had finished 8th in the Eredivisie, qualifying for the European competition play-offs. Within hours of the announcement, Heerenveen's social media numbers exploded with fans from Vietnam. The club's Facebook page saw an increase of 20%, from 70k to 100k), within 5 days that had increased to 230,000 followers. Van Hau's personal Facebook page increased to 1.3m followers.

Unfortunately, neither player made an impact on the pitch, with both returning to the V.League. However, given Van Hau's young age and obvious ability there is a good chance that he could have a

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**Within hours of the announcement, Heerenveen's social media exploded.**

similar impact at any other club in Europe.

With Vietnam soccer fans being more connected than ever, and more supportive of local players, you could envisage a foreign club attracting 500k followers through the correct signing of the Vietnamese player.

On TV, Heerenveen games were being shown live every week, despite Van Hau getting few opportunities to make an appearance. Van Hau's only appearance for SC Heerenveen has been watched more than four million times on Youtube.

### **Domestic support grows for foreign teams**

Hoi CDV Barcelona tai VN - Cules in VietNam is the premier support group in Vietnam for fans of the Spanish giants, FC Barcelona. The Facebook page has 351,000 followers and arranges watch along parties, competitions and promotes support of the team throughout the country.

Each Premier League team in the country has a variety of different online supporters groups, there

are around 60 Manchester United FC supporter groups on Facebook alone, most with followers varying between 5,000 and 650,000.

These are pages set up by fans, to talk about the team, with very limited funds or organisation.

Offline, clubs are starting to realise the potential of the Vietnamese football fans. At the end of 2020, FC Barcelona verified the first Vietnam supporter group within Vietnam and that followed other teams such as Liverpool, Real Madrid, Chelsea and Manchester United, who have done similar. The supporter groups arrange mass viewing parties, where up-to 1,000 fans will congregate to watch the games together, with some fans using the opportunity to sell merchandise and increase traffic through their social media channels.

Vietnam is developing at an incredible speed, just 15 years ago even in the big cities of Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City there were few malls and very few chain restaurants or trendy coffee shops. Now, Ho Chi Minh City has over 20 malls, McDonalds,

Starbucks, ride-sharing apps and food delivery on your phone: however, football has remained largely stayed static. The facilities are old, crumbling and desperate for a lick of paint – amenities, stores and merchandise are non-existent; football has fallen behind society in Vietnam and offers nothing in terms of a fan experience or engagement.

This is one of the reasons Vietnamese fans attach themselves so much to clubs like Liverpool. Liverpool has an official supporters club, it has a Facebook page just for Vietnamese fans to absorb, it sends former players to the country to take part in events: European clubs are able to help to build the communities for loyalty and engagement.

The quality of European football is likely to exceed domestic football for a long, long time, which means Vietnamese football fans will always prefer to watch the Bundesliga, La Liga or the Premier League – they will prefer to consume the content, buy the shirts and support the well established teams.

This, taken together with the continued failure of Vietnamese club teams to adapt, to become more engaging and community-focused, will keep pushing the "regular" football fan to seek the more polished product: the teams with great online content and engaging events.

*Words by Scott Sommerville.*



**Clubs are starting to realise the potential of Vietnamese football fans.**

# It's time we talked about the V.League

Despite progress, the V.League is yet to truly capture the energy of its fans, commercial partners and a newly-emerging cohort of Vietnamese coaches, sports management and marketing professionals. In this roundtable, we get honest about the highs and lows of Vietnam's domestic football scene

## Joining the conversation...



**Richard Harcus**  
CEO of HARCUS  
Consultancy Group



**Dzung Le**  
Author, technical  
coordinator at PVF  
football Academy,  
CEO at Pho Hien FC



**Stevie Nguyen**  
Head of Marketing,  
Next Media



**Poul-Henrik Worm**  
Saigon FC fan and  
long term Ho Chi  
Minh City resident

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This discussion was brought together in partnership with HARCUS Consultancy Group, a football consultancy company based in HCM City and Singapore. Find out more about Richard Harcus on Page 16 of this whitepaper.

**V**ietnamese fans love to follow the national team and foreign football, but do not turn out in the same numbers for V.League teams. Why?

**Dzung Le:** The focus on the Vietnam national team is like in the Olympic Games. Normally you don't really care about archery but when the athlete representing your country is competing, hell yes you'll want

to know what happens and will be happy when they win. Football is the most popular sport in Vietnam so it gets more attention, and the way people react to successes is great, but most people don't consider themselves to be true football fans.

**Stevie Nguyen:** V.League fans tend to love the club where they were born but it isn't the same as the passion they have for the

national team. Most of the teams have experienced many ups and downs, unstable performance both on and off the pitch. They lack history and tradition. And typically, changing the main sponsor can lead to changes in the team's structure, gameplay, and players. The identity and values developed by the team before can disappear completely. The organisation, expertise, communication, and facilities still need to be improved for the leagues to truly become a top entertainment choice.

**Dzung Le:** Most of the improvements made by the

[local] clubs are coming from just a few, and there are plenty of teams that really just exist to fulfill a political mission or that have no real reason to care about developing themselves at all. Even in some of the biggest clubs, the impetus to improve comes primarily from some sort of "feeling for the sport" or "a love for football", which aren't things that can properly help in the long run, not without good commercial and social responsibility targets.

**Richard Marcus:** Fans are also used to watching a higher standard of football on TV. They're more likely to support Chelsea than they are Nam Dinh. Many fans I've spoken to don't feel close to the clubs in their city. There is a clear division between the clubs and the communities they're supposed to represent. Clubs come out of a community, you don't try to enforce a community around a club. In Vietnam, many clubs are created, then they try to create a community around them. They do it poorly and the model is upside down, back to front. It's not a model that has ever worked in football.

**Poul-Henrik Worm:** I believe the league format itself is unattractive. A 'normal' 26-game season means that not only is there better football on television, there's also a lot more of it. The small number of games in the V. League also makes for several long breaks during the season and it's difficult to maintain enthusiasm for a team who is not playing for the next two months while your Premier League heroes have two matches a week.

**How about the matchday**



**Typically a change in sponsor can lead to changes in the team's structure, gameplay and players.**

**experiences in Vietnam?  
Is there anything we can learn  
from clubs abroad in terms of  
match day experiences?**

**Stevie Nguyen:** I've visited several stadiums to watch V.League matches. Fans here are very passionate. I believe their love is no different to fans anywhere else in the world. They cheer on their team during the match, and cultivate an extremely impressive atmosphere in the stadium, especially in Thien Truong, Hang Day or Thanh Hoa stadium. But issues with transport infrastructure and facilities like entrances, stands and restrooms still definitely need to be improved. Right now they prevent the match day experience from being entirely enjoyable.

**Dzung Le:** There are improvements made at some stadiums such as Hanoi's Hang Day, HCM City's Thong Nhat, Cam Pha's Quang Ninh, PVF and recently Hai Phong's Lach Tray. The quality of turfing is becoming better as a trend. But maintenance continues to be a huge problem that clubs aren't really paying enough money or attention to address. A lot of stadiums are fairly old now and need major renovations. It can be chaotic to attend a local game when basic services like food, beverages and parking aren't well coordinated.

**Richard Harcus:** For me the match day is on a level to what we would call a junior match in Scotland. There's no need for the amount of police presence. Most stadiums don't have roofs so you get wet when it rains, it's not a place to bring children. Most stadiums are dirty, neglected

and really not fit for purpose. The toilets are terrible for men, so I don't even want to think of what it's like for women. And what if I want to buy a club scarf? You would think these clubs didn't need money. The way they take the fanbase for granted is unforgivable. Fans in Vietnam deserve better, but in many cases they simply don't know what "better" is, as they don't know what a real football experience is like. Those that think the understanding and passion is the same as Europe simply don't understand football fans, or ever experienced a real matchday.

**Poul-Henrik Worm:** Fans in leagues around Europe are made to feel like they are - or at least can be - part of the whole experience. Before and during the game, teams often involve the stadium speaker in energising the fans, for example when announcing the starting lineups and goal scorers, and at half-time there's more entertainment and competitions like musical performances, penalty shoot-outs or prize raffles with numbers in the matchday programmes. None of this exists in Vietnam, but the biggest lesson to learn is that European clubs put in the effort to find out what the fans actually want from the matchday experience.

**Since the conception of the VPF, do you think the fans know why it was introduced, and has it succeeded in its fundamental purpose?**

**Richard Harcus:** Of course the creation of the VPF was to mediate between the clubs and the league and stop there being a monopoly-led group. This was supposed to rid the league of

corruption and bias. Ask the fans if they think it has worked. I'm far from convinced. I'm going to say your average fan will say no. A few years ago maybe they would be more aware, but I think that many fans are so apathetic now that they may have forgotten, don't know and sadly some no longer care.

**Stevie Nguyen:** VPF has made positive developments to the V.League since its inception: there's been more professional organisation, more general communication, and more financial prosperity. Their efforts contribute to making the leagues more attractive and add to football's success here. However, they can't change the whole face of national football. This mission belongs to the whole of Vietnamese football, consisting of the football community, clubs, enterprises, players, coaches and managers.

**Dzung Le:** VPF was an initiative to bring in transparency over the management of the league, mostly regarding TV rights deals and attempting to address the quality of referees. VPF was considered to be a revolution bringing power to the clubs, so in that sense it's still a problem when there are teams that don't really care - in the last crucial decision of what to do with the rest of the 2021 season two weeks ago, six clubs that hold over 20% of company shares didn't even give in their opinion. On the other hand, VPF has attempted to improve the general image of the leagues, albeit gradually.

**Poul-Henrik Worm:** Thinking back to watching Danish football in the early 90's, the organisation

there was really not that much better. These things take time, and I do believe that VFF is on the right track, even if it's frustratingly slow.

**Do you think the VFF does enough for education of clubs, coaches, fan engagement and safety?**

**Richard Harcus:** Absolutely not. Cambodian football is far better run in that respect, as is Thai football and Malaysian football. Vietnam seems to think that because the current national team is doing well that "all is rosie in the garden". It's not, and using a "sign wave success model" only covers over cracks and allows people to be distracted by a fallacy.

**Stevie Nguyen:** From my perspective, VFF is focusing more and more on these matters. The proof is that Vietnamese football is improving day by day, from clubs right up to the national team. But there's still a lack of strict rules and principles, a lack of solidarity to help coordinate all the clubs closely.

**Dzung Le:** For me, not enough. As a person who went to the AFC 'C' Coaching Course to gain certification, and as a football manager, I feel that the level of knowledge leaves a lot to be desired. For example, even some of the technical information in the course was outdated. The coaches are hungry for knowledge but the efforts from VFF are still poor, and yes, coached is still a problem. There's no overall strategy to improve the level of coaching. It's also quite difficult for people outside of football clubs to attend basic level courses, so new ideas and

new faces don't appear often.

**Richard Harcus:** The lack of a simple coaches database means that the VFF hemorrhages money. But more concerning, it means coaches can coach players with little-to-no qualifications, or qualifications that do not match the higher level players they are working with. From a safety point of view, many of these coaches are not first aid trained and have had no background checks done to work with young people. This is a deep rooted problem that should be addressed, it's not even difficult to fix and it would bring revenue to the VFF, which could then be fed into grassroots organisations, which in turn would better the level of football in the league and of course the national team too. It's something I'm hugely passionate about; I would love to sit down with the VFF and create a coach education program that could really be the envy of the ASEAN region.

**How do you see Vietnamese clubs developing commercially in the future, as brands?**

**Stevie Nguyen:** Individually, I see that clubs in Vietnam are more and more interested in brand development, in building strong relationships with fans and expanding commercially. Take Hoang Anh Gia Lai Football Club; they developed their official Facebook page, regularly update the team's image, and invest in quality content. They also regularly organise community activities for their fans. The clubs' efforts have attracted more fans to the game and earned the league a larger viewership on television. Unfortunately this remains a lonely effort from a

small number of clubs.

**Richard Harcus:** I hope that as younger Vietnamese people get more involved in their own game, they will force change. They are a digital generation who've been brought up on a relatively successful national team. Many are educated overseas in sports management universities and they are returning to Vietnam with new and fresh ideas. They won't allow Vietnamese football to continue in the darkness it is now. I believe that when one team changes, the rest will follow. Embrace digital tickets, fan database and true fan engagement. Embrace match day experiences, non executive board members, embrace

transparency, openness and honesty. I mean, ask yourself, if you're a company, why would you commercially invest in the current system? What is your return on investment? And who ensures sponsorship promises are delivered? At the moment, this simply doesn't happen and brands are throwing their money away.

#### **What are the obstacles and what are the opportunities for the clubs?**

**Stevie Nguyen:** According to a Statista survey among sports fans in 2018, 78% of the respondents chose football as their sport of interest. The potential of the sports marketing industry in Vietnam is rising.

subsidy era, especially in the Northern and Central regions, people were poor and the government made policies based on a provide-as-a-basic-need basis. Football existed in the same sense - rather than a service that you could buy tickets to, it was entertainment provided for free or cheaply to the public organised by a funded organisation. This led to a logic that still exists in the minds of football clubs, fans and governance. The teams serve, so the fans don't want to pay a lot. Governance and management don't really feel a huge pressure to generate commercial revenue, and popularly there is an unwritten rule that football's cost can only be covered either by the budget of the province or city, or from the deep purse of some rich company. These obstacles mean that there is a huge opportunity in itself: I think clubs that really put in the effort will be able to exploit the market's untapped potential.

**Richard Harcus:** The obstacles are the old guard at so many clubs, who are completely opposed to change. The opposition to being able to delegate tasks and trust qualified people to carry out these tasks. There are too many people doing too many jobs that they're not qualified to do. You have coaches acting as agents, you have head coaches discussing commercial sponsorships. There seems to be very little hierarchy, organisation or trust. Stadium ownership is also of course a huge obstacle for several clubs. How can you market a stadium that is not yours? It will never truly be your home. Opportunities, however, are endless. That's what breaks my heart the most. The V.League



**Clubs that really put in the effort will be able to exploit the market's untapped potential.**

Businesses realise football is an effective way to promote themselves to fans. More and more organisations are interested in sponsoring football teams. But the infrastructure of many teams has not yet met this rising potential.

**Dzung Le:** In the 70s and 80s

could be the best league in ASEAN. If it was, the national team would be even stronger and Vietnam could be up there with Japan and Korea.

**Poul-Henrik Worm:** I have no doubt that the potential for clubs in Vietnam is absolutely massive. The main obstacle, apart from competition from televised European football, seems to be a lack of realisation among the clubs that a football club's business foundation lies in its fans, and that their brand therefore needs to be developed and nurtured collaboratively with consumers.

**Should it be compulsory that every club in Vietnam has a women's team and an academy set up?**

**Stevie Nguyen:** It's necessary for clubs to have women's teams and especially academies. In many developed countries, all clubs in the highest leagues have women's teams. In the Lyon team, the men and women team have the same investment and

benefits. There is no difference or discrimination. It's going to be a future model for football, which is one of the best ways to communicate positive social messages. However this also depends on the philosophy and requirements of the clubs. The establishment of each team needs to be carefully calculated and implemented methodically to be effective.

**Poul-Henrik Worm:** Given that a youth setup is a requirement for participation in the AFC club tournaments, it would seem logical for the V. League to require its teams to have academies connected. While women's teams should be strongly encouraged, making it mandatory would pose an unreasonable burden on many clubs who can barely make ends meet for their men's teams at the moment.

**Dzung Le:** Academies, of course! But a women's team? I think maybe not yet. You can't impose it onto a male football team that's not even sustaining itself yet.

**Richard Harcus:** Absolutely. Academies are the lifeblood of a club. Academies are there to educate coaches as much as they are the players. Academies better the team and the league and the national team. Players can be developed to play to a club's methodology and born and raised in a club's ethos. If you look at Benfica in Portugal, they made around 200 million Euros in one season - they have the best academy in the world and they have a superb business model. Which club in Vietnam is a conveyor belt of talent? We simply can't look to HAGL and say it's up to them to develop talent. It's every club's duty to the country to develop talent. Women's football is growing across the world and Vietnam, despite all we have mentioned, still manages to punch way above its weight. Can you imagine how good Vietnam's women's team could be if it was properly funded?

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**Can you imagine how good Vietnam's women's team could be if it was properly funded?**

# Vietnam's long distance love affair with foreign football

*While domestic clubs have struggled to develop a thriving football culture, the passion people have for the Vietnam national team has been channelled into ardent support for foreign football leagues and experiences*

**F**or Asian fans that do not have an innate connection to a club, their immediate desire is a need to be entertained — and preferably slather themselves in the reflected glory of a successful football club.

Most 25-35 year-olds in Vietnam support Manchester United, because in the late 90s and early 00s, when the English Premier League was first shown on free-to-TV in Vietnam, they were winning and winning - in a very entertaining fashion.

## **Vietnamese football fans love star players**

However, winning is just one factor. There is another thing Vietnamese football supports love: icons.

As much as it may pain traditionalists, it is not unusual to ask some football fans which team they support and be told “whoever Ronaldo plays for”

– and by this they mean, they supported Real Madrid and then happily switched to Juventus.

The iconography of individual superstars may spawn from some more deep-rooted cultural phenomenon, but whatever the reason, it is alive and well.

Beckham, Messi, Ronaldo, Quang Hai and Haaland are larger than life icons, and often in Vietnam, the superstar trumps the super-team.

Take Vietnamese football writer Truong. For a long time he supported ‘Manchester United and David Beckham’.

”My memory is watching Man Utd in the early '00s... the team would win every week... my parents bought my cheap replica shirt with ‘Beckham-7’ on the back – from that moment, I was hooked,” he says.

All it took for Truong to become a

life-long fan of a team 6,000 miles away was a fake replica shirt that cost a couple of dollars.

### Key factors in the popularity of foreign football

Talk to Vietnamese people and they will tell you above all else that it's the quality of European football that's the main reason for the interest in the Premier League, Bundesliga or La Liga.

The skills, aggression and pace of these leagues are the big draw, and they're consistently looking to consume more football content.

Spanish, Italian and German football is popular here but the English Premier League is still the top attraction due to the speed and intensity.

In addition, the Premier League is more balanced than the other top European leagues – Vietnamese fans like the fact that going into a game, although there is a favourite, there is also a chance of an upset – and at least – the underdog team will still attempt to compete.

In Vietnam, there still hangs a dark cloud over V. League matches due to historical incidents of match-fixing in the local professional leagues.

In contrast, everybody in Vietnam believes without doubt, that none of the Top 5 European leagues are fixed – it's a fair competition, and the viewer isn't being duped.

"I've been watching Ho Chi Minh City all my life," says Ho Chi Minh City season ticket holder Khanh. "But deep down I'm not 100% sure what is going on behind

the scenes... we have four clubs owned by the same owner, but nobody dares talk publicly about this."

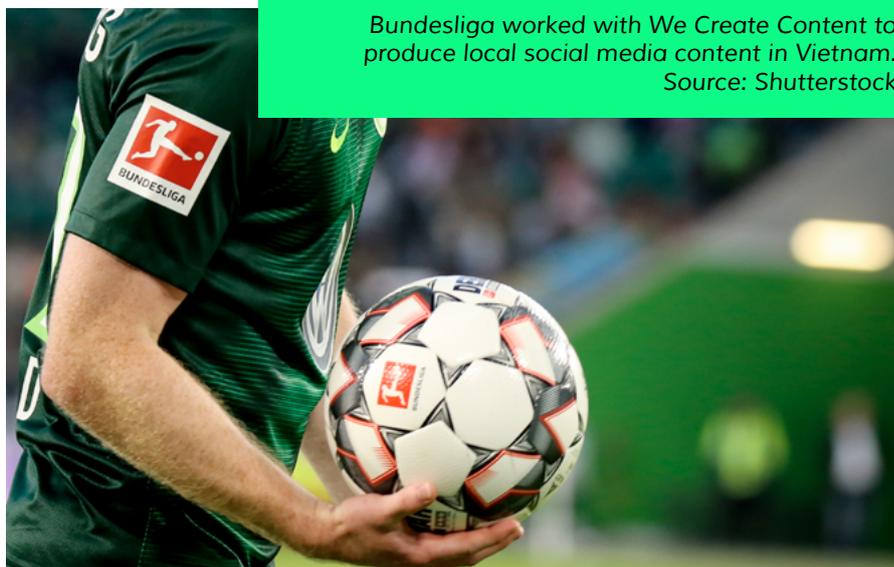
The monopolisation is a key reason for fans to have a lukewarm relationship with the local game. The EPL, and other leagues are, by contrast, seen as transparent and open. Each club fights its own fight, no matter who the owners are.

In 2006, all of the English Premier League games were shown on Vietnam free-to-air TV, including the big games of Man Utd, Liverpool and Chelsea. However, since cable provider K+ got involved, they drove the price up from \$3.90 in 2008-2010 to \$38 for the 2013-2016 period – this massive increase exiled the game

spill over into the streets. Lower league English football – primarily the Championship; and other European leagues – can also still be found on free-to-air channels, which provides some access points for brand awareness.

### Opportunities for foreign football clubs

The K+ cable deal did open up opportunities for other leagues. Germany's Bundesliga arrived and started to produce some great content – not only live games, but fantastic review packages, highlights shows and localised social media. Yet they have struggled with the enduring brand presence of English clubs. However, smaller leagues and less fashionable clubs should not despair.



Bundesliga worked with We Create Content to produce local social media content in Vietnam. Source: Shutterstock

from free-to-air to cable – which meant a lot of viewers suddenly had access taken away.

While this impacted the more casual football fan, it actually drove behavioural change. Most coffee shops have K+ and this has led to popular communal watching of matches, which can

Just as Vietnamese fans can follow foreign icons, the same can be said for domestic players offered a big break abroad.

"Vietnam is still very under-developed in terms of football, and our footballers going overseas," adds Khanh. "A few

have tried, and each time it happens the support we have for the Vietnamese players increases... Vietnamese people want him to succeed, but we also want to be seen to be supporting him and his team.

"We want overseas football fans to see how passionate we are – we want to show them that we are also real football fans," he says.

This sense of national pride provides fertile soil for clubs to exploit on a commercial basis.

In 2018, after local superstar Doan Van Hau joined Heerenveen, we saw the Dutch Eredivisie being shown on TV and suddenly, hundreds of football fans were wearing replica (read: fake) Heerenveen

shirts.

Vietnamese football fans love to see their players succeeding overseas – or at least being given a chance.

Many have tried, but unfortunately failed in the past. Along with Doan Van Hau, Nguyen Cong Phuong spent almost a year in Belgium and only played a solitary game, while back in 2009 national football team hero Le Cong Vinh travelled to Portugal to play for Leixoes on a 3-month loan deal, but again he returned to Vietnam without much joy.

The biggest success has been Russian-born Vietnamese goalkeeper Dang Van Lam, who had a successful spell at Muangthong United in Thailand

and in 2021 signed for Japanese team Cerezo Osaka.

The trouble with most of the players mentioned is that they probably weren't good enough to play in Europe at the time. However, the gap is getting smaller all the time; Doan Van Hau is still only 21, and is clearly an exceptional player, and one that could create a huge buzz were he to sign for a mid-level team in Spain, Germany or Italy. It would be a PR coup for a team such as Granada, Celta Vigo or Stuttgart or Koln – the player would be good enough to play 10-15 games and would undoubtedly generate interest on social media, TV, and merchandise.

Football in Vietnam is becoming more accessible by the day; whilst around 2013-2017 football was moving from free-to-air to paid subscription services, a lot of fans were left behind.

However, it is now possible to access games on a pay-per-view basis, or on your phone/laptop: you don't need a cable box at home and access is literally at your fingertips.

#### Vietnamese football fan culture

Because there's not really a typical football fan culture in Vietnam (with regards to the local game), it means support groups have created their own activities, events and parties.

Huge Facebook groups have been created where like-minded fans trade not only opinions but also arrange meet-ups, create their own merchandise and essentially run non-official fan clubs.



**Football in Vietnam is becoming more accessible by the day.**



Chelsea Vietnamese fans celebrating 13 years anniversary of Official Supporters Club in Vietnam  
Source: Official Chelsea Supporters Club Vietnam

A member of the Ho Chi Minh City supporters group expresses their frustration feeling 'detached from our local clubs'.

"We have no real merchandise, there's no fan engagement with our V. League team, but when I go to my Real Madrid watching party, we are the club and we have a sense of being the organisers, we control the direction, we create the t-shirts and scarfs," he says.

Some clubs have established official fan pages, with the numbers increasing all the time; FC Barcelona, Real Madrid and Liverpool all have official pages sharing official club information in Vietnamese.

Vietnam's constant development has led to the creation of an ever-growing middle class. Even in 2020, during the Covid-19 pandemic, Vietnam's economy grew 2.9%, one of the best performing economies in the

Club / page	Followers
ManUtd Viet Nam	688,000
FC Barcelona Vietnam	624,000
Real Madrid	177,000
Liverpool FC in Vietnam	149,000

world. Modernisation in respect of technology, internet access and infrastructure has seen the younger generation in Vietnam have similar opportunities to any western country. 70.3% of the population have internet access, with that number in the high 90s for the urban centres of Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, while average salaries for 27-32 year-olds is up to US \$17,439 per annum, with that number increasing to \$23,435 for 33-38 year-olds.

Vietnamese fans have decades of fanatical support for the world game, and through the early days

of the mid-1990s World Cup all-nighters, to multi-screen home viewing and café and bar watch-alongs, millions of fans now crave recognition, integration and community as a way of expressing their football pride.

Words by Scott Sommerville.

# All you need to know: in numbers

*In this exclusive research, learn about how football fans consume content, their interests and hunger for deeper cultural alignment with clubs, industry trends and the opportunities around official merchandise*



**THE METHOD**  
Research & Survey

Image source: Dan Tri

We Create Content and The Method Research surveyed more than 500 football fans online in Vietnam's largest two cities, Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City

# Main takeaways



**#1**

The Premier League is the most watched football competition in Vietnam. We can note that 79% of the Vietnamese surveyed that are following football are watching the Champions League.



**45%**

of those surveyed use TV the most to follow football content. It is followed by the phone which is used the most by 39% of the respondents.



**76%**

of Vietnamese football fans are following more than four football games a week.



**87%**

of the respondents are interested in official club merchandising, highlighting the popularity in Vietnam of genuine products relating to their favourite clubs.



**52%**

More than half the respondents would be ready to access exclusive content and merchandising for Vietnamese people from their favorite international club. We can deduce here an attachment from Vietnamese football fans to the clubs they follow.



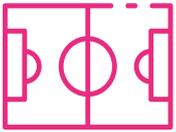
**44%**

of respondents have them or their household paying a membership fee to watch football games. 44% are also part of an official football fan group.



**88%**

of Vietnamese fans surveyed say they are not placing bets on football games.



The match results and game analysis are the favorite types of football content on social media for the respondents surveyed.



**84%**

of respondents would get vaccinated if it was mandatory to go see a sports event.



**88%**

of the respondents would like to see more football content specific for Vietnamese from international clubs. In addition, 90% believe international clubs should make more effort to reach and connect with the Vietnamese fans.

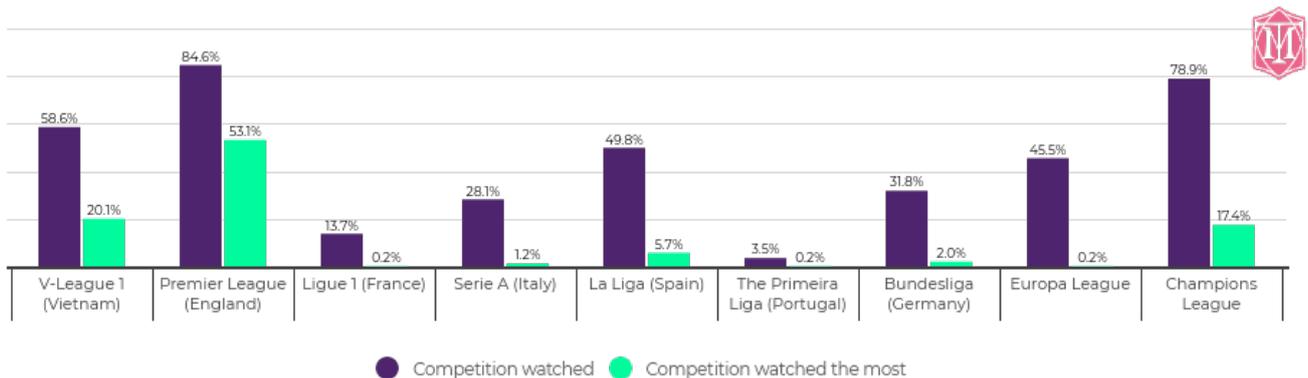


**12%**

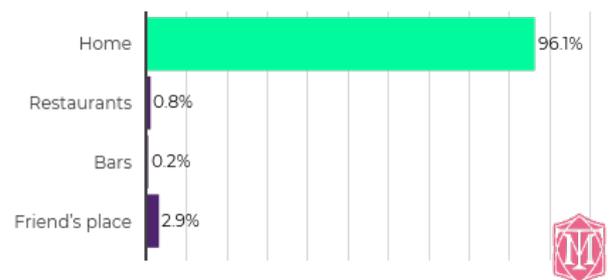
of the respondents are watching less football since the COVID-19 outbreak. Football wins!

# Market overview

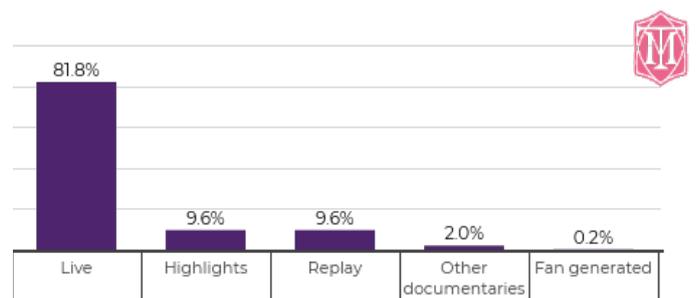
What football competitions do you watch and which one do you watch the most?



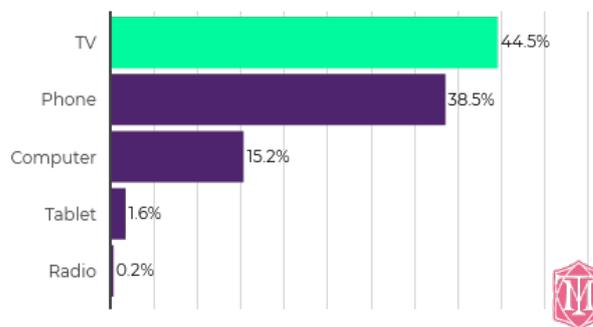
Where do you usually watch football the most?



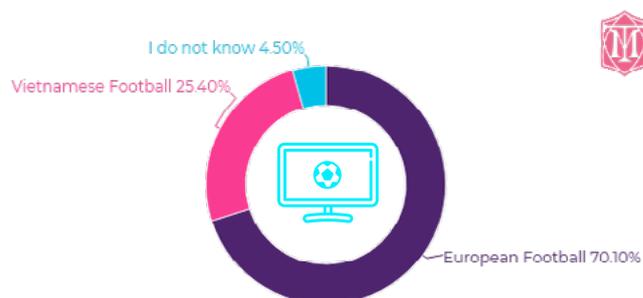
What type of football content do you watch the most?



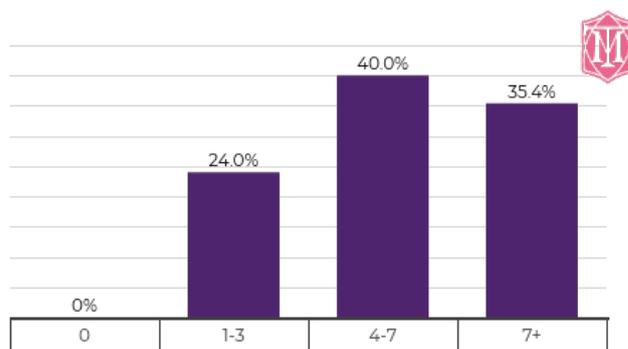
On what device do you follow football content the most?



Do you prefer to follow European or Vietnamese Football?

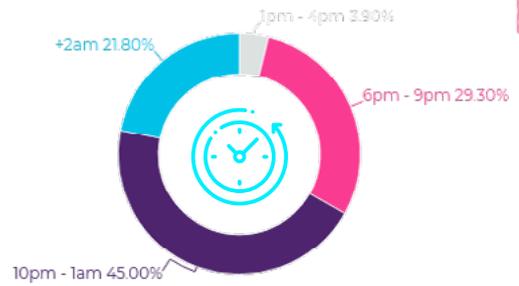


How many games are you watching on average in a month?

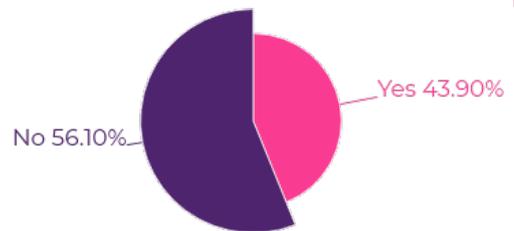




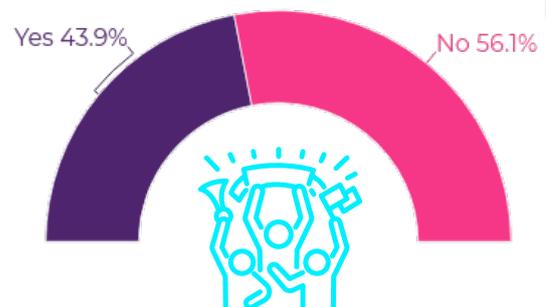
At what time are the games you watch the most?



Are you or your household paying a membership or a subscription fee to watch football?

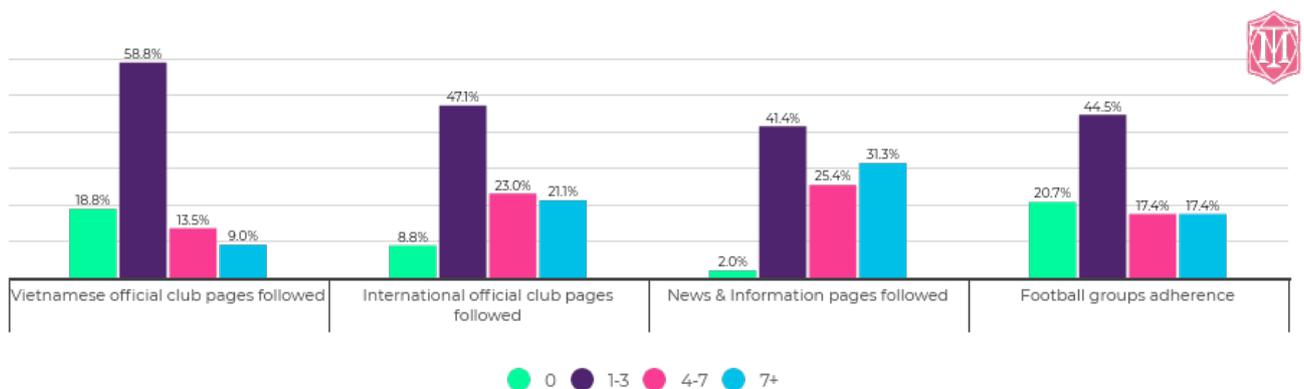


Are you part of an official football fan group?

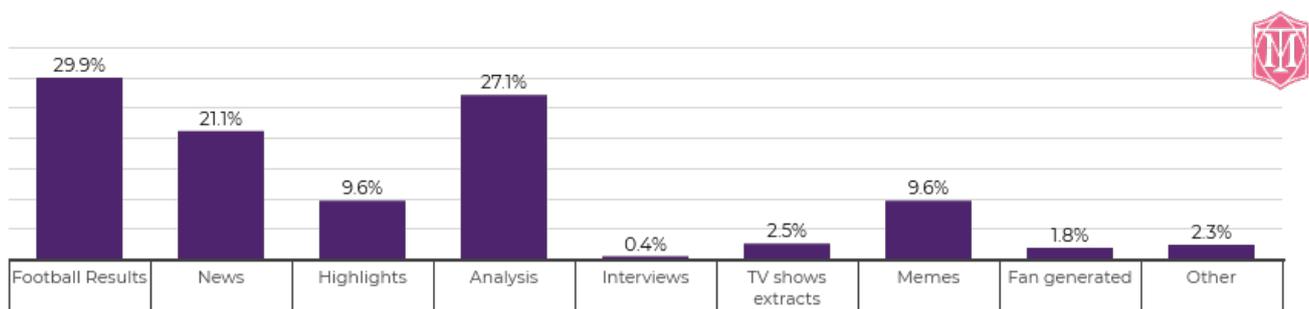


# Digital presence of international football in Vietnam

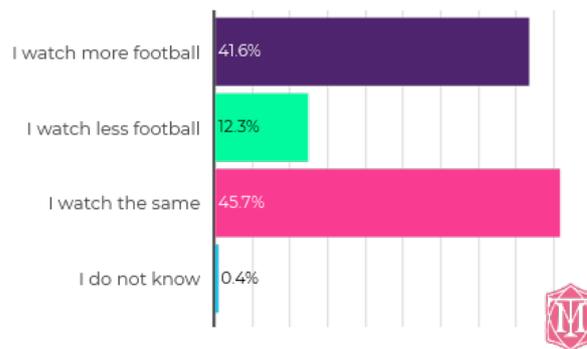
How many pages and groups related to football are you following on social media?



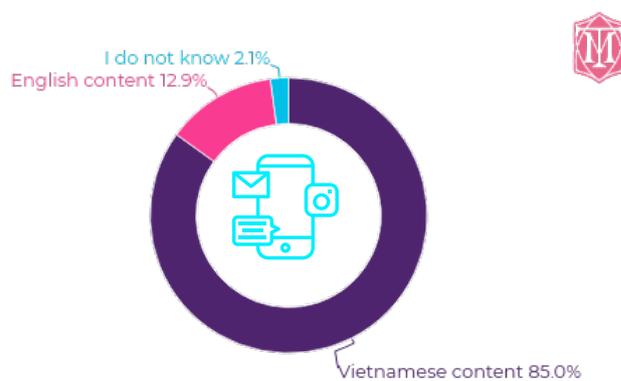
What is your favorite type of football content on social media?



Since the COVID-19 outbreak, do you watch more or less football content in general?

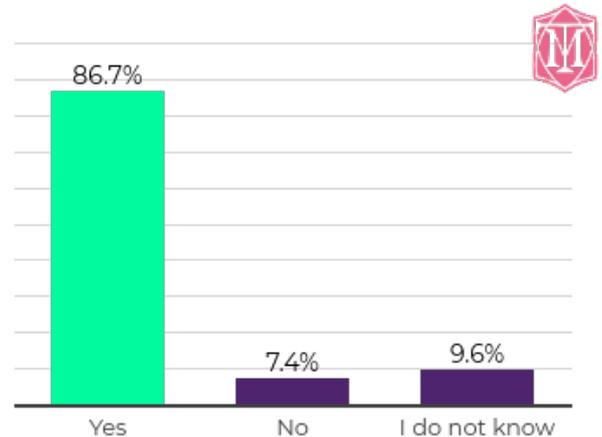


Do you prefer to follow football content in Vietnamese or English on social media?



# Merchandising and cultural alignment

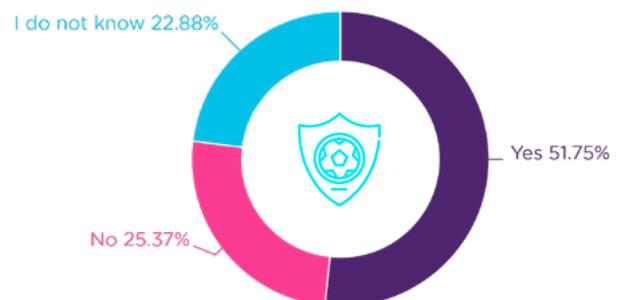
Are you interested in official club merchandising?



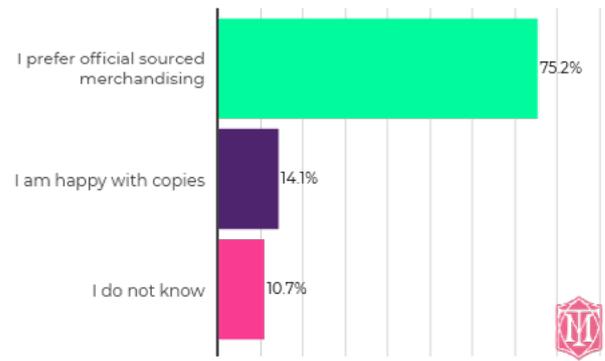
Do you own official (authentic) merchandising?



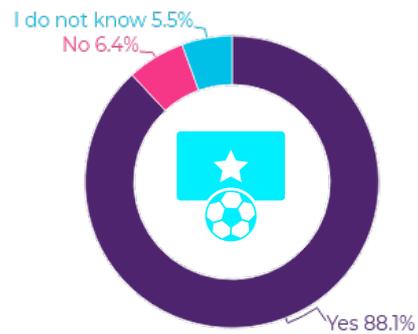
Would you be ready to pay for a membership to access exclusive content and merchandising for Vietnamese people from your favorite international club?



Do you personally prefer official sourced merchandising or are you satisfied with copies?



Would you like to see more football content specific for Vietnamese from International clubs?



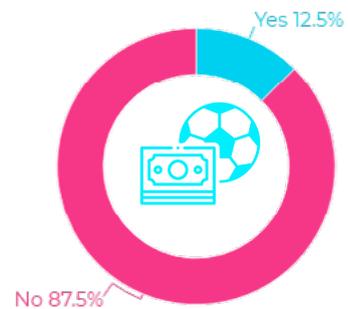
Do you think international football clubs could make more effort to reach and connect with Vietnamese fans?



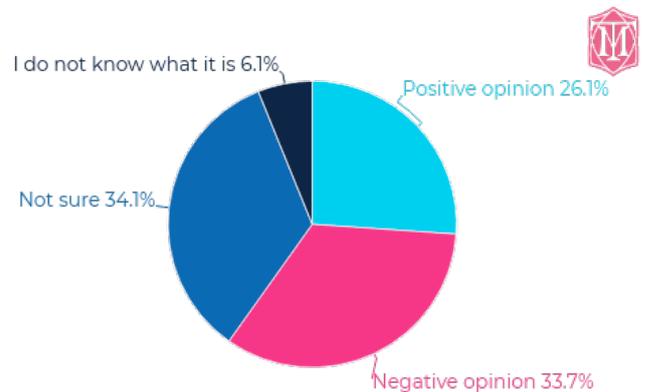
# Offline events and trends



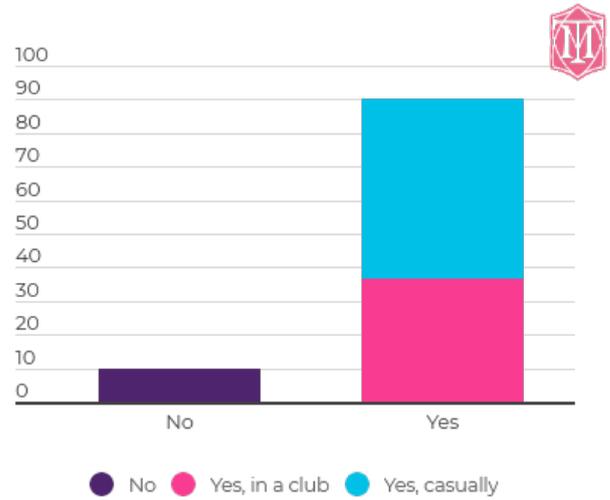
Do you bet money on football?



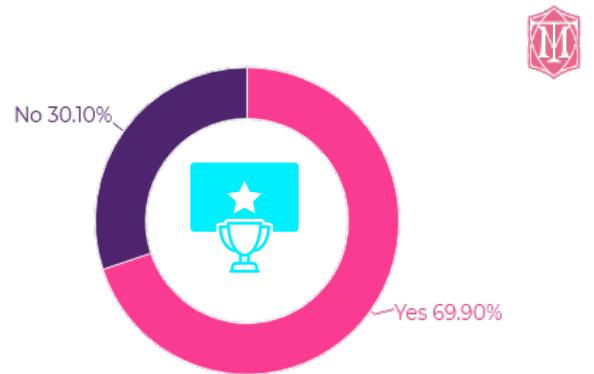
Did you have a positive or negative opinion about the concept of a Super League?



Do you play football?

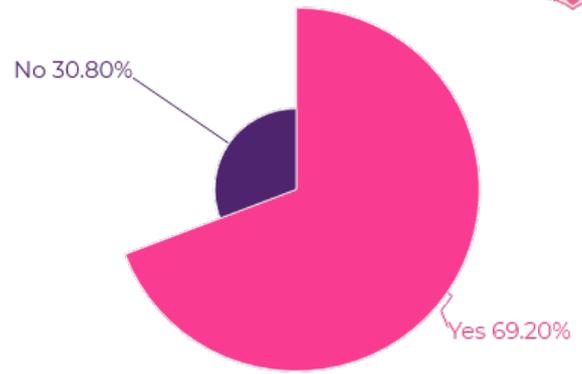


Would you be interested in the organisation of an amateur tournament in Vietnam? (Post pandemic)

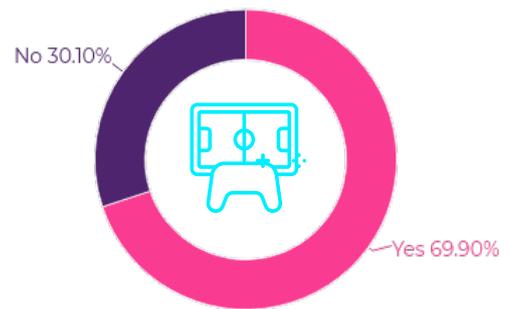




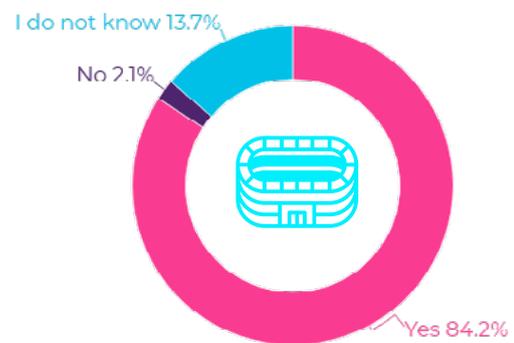
Are you interested in Football E-sport competitions?



Would you be interested in the organization of a Football E-sport event in Vietnam?



Would you get vaccinated if it was mandatory to go see a sports event?



# Vietnam's football media landscape

Television remains the main channel for football in Vietnam but things are changing

## 2007-2010

Since the Premier League became popular in Vietnam, VTC Digital Television bought the rights of the Premier League's 2007-2010 seasons from ESPN Star Sports for \$3.97 million. This meant Vietnamese football fans had to buy VTC's digital sets and pay monthly subscription fees to watch their favourite football league.

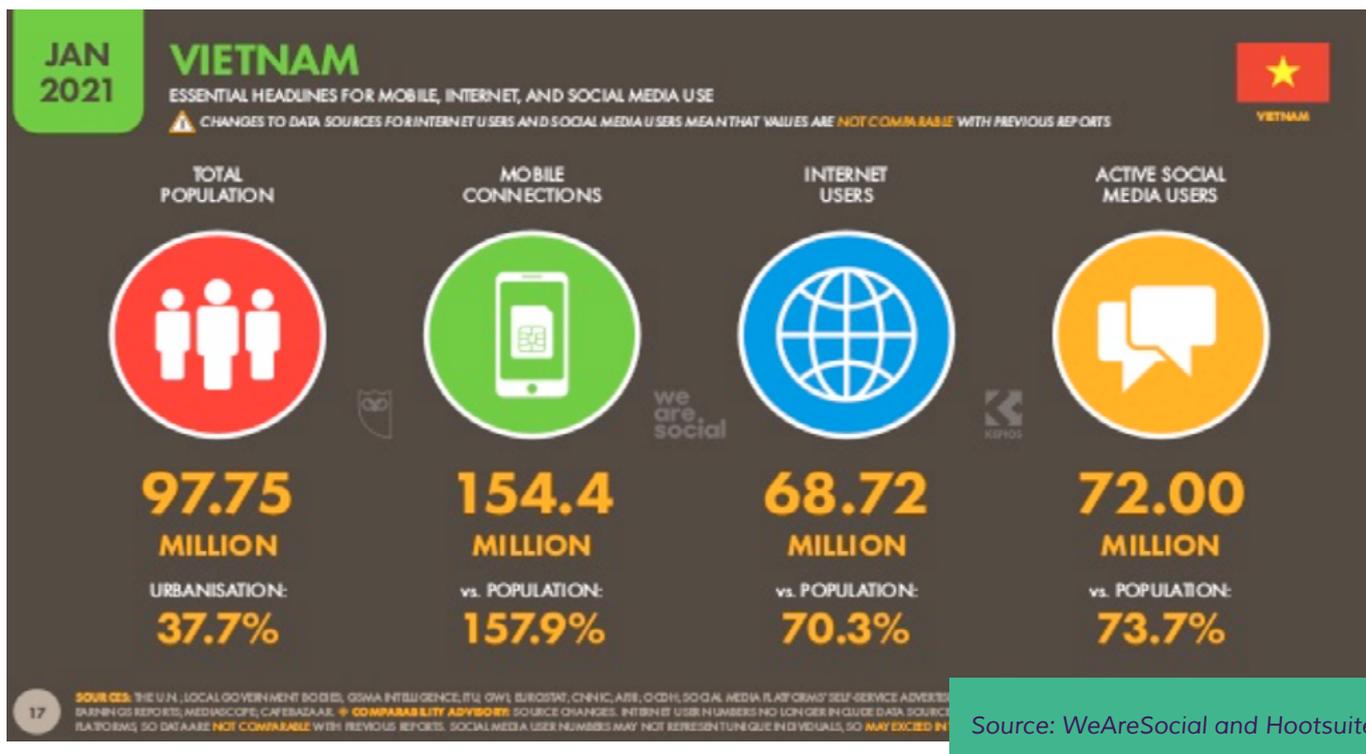
## 2010-2013

The next three seasons' television

rights belonged to MP & Silva, who earned millions of dollars by selling broadcasting packages to service providers such as K+, VTVcab, SCTV, Hanoi Television, Ho Chi Minh Television, VNPT and FPT.

## 2013-2019

Trans World International (IMG) won the TV rights for the 2013-2016 seasons, continuing to profit as prices tripled the previous season's. For the 2016-2019 seasons and 2019-2022





# Upto 37% of fans now use live online streaming instead of TV to watch sports.

A variety of websites have brought Vietnamese fans different choices to read breaking online news:

- 24h.com.vn is for hot daily news
- Bongdaplus.vn is for more focused football content
- Bongda.com.vn covers the latest football news
- Thethao.vnexpress.net does sport news in general and is famous for its football videos

The Vietnam News Agency launched The Thao va Van Hoa Newspaper — the Sport and Culture Newspaper — to give up-to-date coverage of the World Cup 82, which gradually became the leading sports newspaper in Vietnam. It launched its own Youtube channel in 2016 to get among the action and add video content to its football coverage.

## The decline of newstand football magazines

While the development of sport

and football culture at the end of the 1990s in Vietnam saw a flood of new publications — one of the notable magazines is Tap Chi Bong Da (Football Magazine) produced under license by the Vietnam Football Federation — readerships have dropped off dramatically with the rise of smartphones, Facebook and YouTube.

The Ganassa Report: The State of European Football in East Asia 2020 (Ganassa) shows that 60% of surveyed European football fans follow their club's news via the internet in their local language, 77% via social media in their own language, 60.1% via television and only 23% via newspapers and magazines, which we would suggest are the older and more traditional generations.

Thethao247.vn and 24h.com.vn are among Vietnam's top 10 most visited websites by traffic according to Alexa, and throughout 2020, Bong Da (the Vietnamese word for "football") was ranked 17th among the top Google search queries in Vietnam.

Up to 37% of Vietnamese fans now use online live streams instead of television to watch sports according to Statista.com, and, according to the Aquarius' CEO in Vietnam, more sports fans tend to watch matches via smartphones and tablets. Viewers are watching sports with multiple screens: TV to watch matches and smartphones or tablets to comment, share and live stream.

Words by My Linh Bui.

# Football marketing and the opportunity for global brands

*With deep-rooted allegiances to foreign football brands, rising domestic spending power and the widespread adoption of smartphones, now is the time for clubs looking to leverage football and brand marketing in Vietnam*

**V**ietnam has become known in recent years for its love of football.

The national team is a treasure Southeast Asia — and fans have an ardent devotion to foreign football clubs.

But despite a highly engaged and vociferous fan base, few foreign football clubs are yet to truly leverage this well of support.

Which is no surprise: harnessing support in Vietnam isn't as easy as Google Translating global content and hoping it will land 'top bins'.

"Younger audiences have a different relationship with content and expect to be understood and catered to in different ways," said James Anderson, Business Director at Publicis Sport & Entertainment, talking about several key trends for 2020 in sports marketing worldwide. "They expect to participate in or alongside it", he added.

Vietnam's football fans are no different. They want much more.

Any such appeal to Asian football fans has to be localised and nuanced to create the sort of engagement that transforms an armchair fan into a commercially engaged supporter.

To help define marketing strategy, it's worth taking a look at Vietnam's football marketing story so far, which is still in its nascent chapters.

## History of football coverage in Vietnam

Football became the most popular sport in Vietnam during the French colonial era of Cochinchina (from 1896). But it wasn't until 1994 when Vietnam Television partnered with HTV to provide extensive coverage of the 1994 Football World Cup that it really captured the nation's imagination.

People gathered in front of small

television screens everywhere to watch live football matches and Vietnam's love affair with the beautiful game was ignited.

Following the World Cup, the Premier League was first broadcasted on VTV3 in Vietnam during the 1998-1999 season - it remains the most popular league for Vietnamese - and Euro 2000 had Vietnamese fans eating, sleeping and breathing football.

Vietnam Television then partnered with the ADT Group in a deal to buy the domestic broadcasting rights of more football leagues in a bid to feed football-mad Vietnam.

The country's embracing of Premier League coverage coincided with the long-term dominance of Manchester United, and this is still reflected in the high levels of support the Mancunians maintain today,

despite less stellar performances in recent years.

When it was announced that Manchester United would play the opening match with Inter Milan at the International Champions Cup 2019 in Singapore, Vietnamese fans hunted for tickets to see their idols in the flesh for the first time. Real passion needs real experiences. And with growing living standards and increased global integration, Vietnamese football fans are thirsty for authentic engagements with their favourite clubs.

They are no longer passive consumers. Some fans are prepared to make the pilgrimage to their club's ground in England to experience match-days up-close-and-personal.

Vietnamese also want to feel like first-class citizens when it comes

to fandom, and that requires Vietnamese language content for social media users.

Clubs now need to think beyond quick-win content executions - such as Lunar New Year greetings in Vietnamese on their official social media channels - if they want to impress and excite fans.

"Repeating this year after year has become lazy and outdated," says Nguyen Lam Binh Nguyen, former Social Media Consultant for Liverpool Football Club.

"The buzz has faded and going forward, teams need to get more creative."

That's why marketers need to think out of the box if they want to "erase the distance, not just geographically but mentally" between Vietnamese football fans and international football clubs on social media.

### Social media in Vietnam

Up to 92% of 16-64-year-old Vietnamese internet users visit Youtube, with Facebook reported to be the second most used social media platform in Vietnam in 2020.

It's easy to quickly find a lot of Facebook fan pages for foreign football clubs in Vietnam. These are communities where fans can connect with people sharing the same interests and love for their favourite football leagues or players (Vietnamese fans also create Facebook fan pages for famous individual stars such as Lionel Messi, Cristiano Ronaldo, and Mesut Ozil).

Below are statistics of some



Vietnamese Manchester United fans at the Man Utd-Inter Milan match in Singapore (International Champions Cup 2019).  
Source: Binh An

Facebook pages of supporters clubs	Page followers	Average engagement on post
Manchester United	185,642	500-1.5K likes/post
Arsenal	491,000	800-1.8K likes/post
Chelsea	490,384	200-800K likes/post
Liverpool	78,890	650-2K likes/post
Manchester City	73,962	600-1.3K likes/post
Bayern Munich	37,000	430-1K likes/post
Borussia Dortmund	30,724	50-230 likes/post
Tottenham Hotspur	11,629	80-750 likes/post

official Facebook fan pages launched by Vietnamese supporters' clubs.

Generally, Facebook pages of supporters' clubs such as Manchester United, Arsenal, Chelsea and Manchester City have the most followers — from 70,000 to 490,000 followers — with high engagements on each post (between 600 to 1,000 likes).

Vietnamese fan clubs often organise fan talks or hold live streams with page admins to create more engagement among the community. Fan pages sometimes re-post content from official Facebook pages and Facebook Ads are used to promote supporters clubs' offline events.

In addition to the official Facebook pages of European football teams — on which Vietnamese fans love to debate, predict and analyse — there are also unofficial Facebook pages and private groups, which are established to meet

the demands of Vietnamese language social media content. For example, if you search for "Liverpool Vietnam" on Facebook, it will give you a huge variety of results, including unofficial fan pages and groups. The scale of these fan pages aren't huge but they upload news and bring fans closer together to organise offline events and share their love for their clubs and favourite players.

#### Online to offline: clubs on tour

In 1996, Vietnamese football fans were surprised when Juventus arrived in Vietnam for a friendly match.

Nine years later, at the Honda Cup organised by VFF, the Vietnam national team played Barcelona B, which included first-team players such as Ivan Ruben, Abella Damia, Gonzalez Pena and Riera Magem.

In 2008, Vietnam was chosen as a friendly opponent of the Brazilian Olympic team. This event was made even hotter

with the participation of Ronaldinho. Vietnamese football fans also remember 2013 as a big year for fans, when Arsenal travelled to Vietnam for three days for a friendly match with the Vietnam national side. It was a dream come true for Arsenal fans in Vietnam and they could participate in a fan meeting with the players. A young man called Vu Xuan Tien became a viral sensation when he ran 5km through the city to follow his team's tour bus.

The most recent high profile friendly fixture was against Manchester City in Vietnam on July 27th, 2015. Fans spent hours queuing in front of the My Dinh National Stadium to buy tickets, and thousands of Vietnamese fans joined the open training session/fan meet and greet at the stadium.

#### Visiting legends

Retired professional footballers often visit, too.

Former Manchester United player, Andy Cole visited Vietnam in 2015 as an advisor to select 20 players for the team to play Than Quang Ninh Club.

David Beckham has visited four times (2003, 2005, 2014, 2019) and has remained a hot topic ever since.

In 2019, Bundesliga held a Penalty Shootout Tournament in Ho Chi Minh City and live screening of the FC Schalke 04 / Borussia Dortmund derby with goalkeeping legend Roman Weidenfeller.

The winning team won tickets

to experience a Bundesliga match from inside the stands in Germany.

During the pandemic in 2021, Manchester City partnered with SHB Bank in a project for local football development in Vietnam.

Three grassroots clubs across the country were presented with 50 sets of training gear from Manchester City and the offline campaign was showcased on digital channels with a three part documentary series on City's Facebook page.

### Opportunities for digital sports marketing in Vietnam

With enthusiastic football fans, Vietnam has huge potential for international football clubs and leagues. More localised and country-related content could help to fill this gap for Vietnam's market.

Through more content targeted to Vietnamese football fans on the official Facebook accounts, Bundesliga, Chelsea, Borussia Dortmund, Tottenham Hotspur have "increased their popularity with a digital presence in the country".

Manchester City has also grown their engagements with Vietnamese football fans through partnership activities with SHB Bank.

With few clubs really prioritising this rapidly-growing market, it is a perfect opportunity for front runners to seize their advantage, but there are existing challenges that all marketers need to prepare for before tackling Vietnam head on.

The lack of cultural understanding may create more distance in the relationship between foreign football brands and fans on the ground. Marketers require local insight to speak the language of the Vietnamese, both literally and metaphorically.

Though it will be a challenge at the beginning, done well it will form a solid foundation for a long-term relationship between football clubs and fans in the future.

While Vietnamese average wages aren't huge, there is a growing middle class that is ready to spend money on official content, merchandise and experiences for years to come.

The clubs that understand this dynamic are sure to reap rewards.

Words by My Linh Bui.

“

**The clubs that understand this dynamic are sure to reap the rewards.**

# Make Vietnam your homeground in Asia

Start with hyper local content marketing fuelled by insight with We Create Content

**97m**

people, in Vietnam, 75% are sports fans

**85%**

of sports fans choose football

**30%**

of football fans identify as super fans

**73.7%**

social media penetration with 95% preferring video content

**E**uropean football has never been more popular in Asia.. Vietnam is no exception.

Rapidly growing markets offer fertile ground for football brands and sponsors. Disposable incomes are increasing and the middle classes are searching for authentic football experiences - online and off.

Millions of fans are waiting for your club to transform a distant love affair into a true passion. They have an unsuitable thirst for rolling news, behind the scenes content and all the goals, but true loyalty can only be cemented through closer, more authentic connections.

Fans in Vietnam are waiting for top teams to show they understand their fan culture.

The time is now. Be among the first movers and win generations of football fans to make Vietnam your home ground for support in Asia.

**A content marketing agency fuelled by local insight**

We are a content marketing and

social media agency in Vietnam, one of the world's fastest growing markets.

With local audience insights, knowledge of Vietnam's marketing trends, and a deep-rooted cultural understanding, we help you engage your club's fanbase in this country of 97 million people.

We help you...

understand your audience in Vietnam and access local market insights and trends based on culturally informed localised content

produce authentic on-the-ground storytelling, host engaging offline events, work with influencers to get your brand amplified and win outreach in local media channels

generate a base of loyal brand ambassadors and use social as a springboard to a full marketing strategy

**Social media localisation**

As your social media agency in Vietnam, we take care of your monthly content plans, production schedules and



# Bundesliga won an uplift of 1,414% in new users on Facebook in Vietnam.

distribution strategies to help you connect and engage with a new and energetic base of loyal football fans on social media.

DFL Digital Sports and the Bundesliga hired us to do this for two and a half years before COVID-19 struck.

Our social media approach was two-fold:

1. create educational and bite-sized local language content that celebrates the players, stats and goals of the league for Vietnam's core Bundesliga fans.

2. tap into trending local topics such as Lunar New Year, the rise of the National U23 Team and pop culture references to pique interest and win the hearts and minds of new audiences

Bundesliga won an uplift of 1,414% in new users on Facebook in Vietnam after partnering with We Create Content, with social media engagement rates 175% higher than Vietnam's averages.

See how we did it by taking a closer look at our social media work with the Bundesliga..

## Video production

Whether it's a short video or long form documentary series for social media or a video campaign for TV, we have the in-house video production resources to make it happen for you in Vietnam.

As well as shooting raw footage for Werder Bremen's CSR programme in the southern region's Mekong Delta, we also traveled up and down the country covering grass roots football stories for Manchester City, who partnered with local bank SHB to offer three amateur teams branded training kits. We Create Content was hired by Dugout Media to track down the winning teams and create a three-part mini doc series for social.

We told the stories of a community club in Vietnam's northern mountains, named after

their local market FC Cho Lon, and visited RUCO FC in Ho Chi Minh City, where the captain is a die hard City supporter with a house brimming with collector's memorabilia. We touched down in the capital city of Hanoi too, to speak to Tri Nam FC.

The documentaries were published as paid campaigns on Manchester City's social media channels as well as distributed across the Dugout media network.

## Offline events and experiences

As your marketing agency, we conceptualise and plan, promote and manage events on behalf of your club. We top it off with video content and event photography for your social media and PR coverage in nationwide media channels.

We produced the Bundesliga brand assets and promotional content of the DeutschlandFest in Hanoi. We also worked closely with Bundesliga's team in Singapore to create a Penalty Shootout Arena in Ho Chi Minh City - 400 Bundesliga fans attended the 18-hour event to compete in an action-packed competition and enjoy a live screening of the Borussia Dortmund / FC Schalke derby with a guest visit from a Bundesliga legend.

All players took home an authentic shirt of the Bundesliga team they represented (real shirts are very hard to come by in Vietnam!) and the winners enjoyed an all-expenses trip to watch a Bundesliga match from the bustling stands in Germany.

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