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The financing of the Senegalese Professional Football League: Which Economic Model?

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Abstract

In Senegal, despite a process of professionalization begun in 2009, the football championship is struggling to find financial autonomy that would allow it to face the many challenges related to the demands of modern sport. The aim of this study is to analyze the economic situation of the Senegalese Professional Football League in order to propose some areas for improvement. In order to analyze the structure of its revenues, interviews with league and federation officials were conducted. The analysis of the Senegalese Professional Football League's revenues over five seasons shows a mixed financing model combining public funds with private sector revenues, with a model that is heavily dependent on subsidies. The low attendance at football stadiums is an obvious obstacle to the development of ticketing revenues. It also has a negative impact on sponsorship revenues and does not encourage the broadcasting of matches and thus the marketing of hypothetical media rights.

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Introduction

Known to all and played by over half a billion people on earth, football has become the world's biggest entertainment and spectacle (Gayant, 2013). It is also a fast-growing business sector with stakeholders associated with the providers - the supply side of clubs, federations and leagues, commercial companies - falling into related sectors. The media sector interested in audiences buys broadcast media rights. Sponsors interested in the football image buy marketing rights. Investors want to profit from the profitability of football. At the same time, a public sector of communities and states is also looking for a political and economic return on their investment. Today, the sports economy is worth almost 1,200 billion

euros, or 2% of world GDP (Business Report, ASCI, 2020).

However, in Africa, it only contributes 0.5% of GDP to the continent's resources (Desbordes and Habchi, 2022); and more particularly in sub-Saharan Africa where numerous obstacles hinder its development, notably due to a lack of means and funding. In Senegal, for example, despite a process of professionalization that began in 2009, the football championship is struggling to find the financial autonomy that would allow it to face the many challenges linked to the demands of modern sport. If Tournier and Rethacker (1999) believe that the sporting value of a nation is judged by the number of medals won by its athletes in international competitions, one is

entitled to believe that the recent victory of the Senegalese national football team is the tree that hides the forest of the real difficulties experienced by the local professional championship. Indeed, the President of the Senegalese Football Federation (FSF) declared in 2020: *"This is the paradox that we live in Senegal. For too long, we complained about the results of our national teams (...). Today, the senior team has dominated the African ranking for three years, the junior categories and women's football are winning, and beach soccer is shining. But our local teams are eliminated from African competitions. The financing of professional football in Senegal is a problem"*(2).

To understand the reasons for these difficulties, it seems appropriate to focus on the economic model of the Senegalese Professional Football League (SPFL) and to ask the question of how to improve its financing model.

We propose a two-step analysis: (1) an analysis of the economic models of financing sports organisations as it appears in the literature; (2) an analysis of the economic model of the Senegalese Professional Football League in order to propose some areas for improvement. It should be noted that the analysis is limited to the League's revenue sources and its revenue structure; an analysis of expenditure will be the subject of further research.

Financing of Sport

We propose a review of the literature concerning, on the one hand, the means of financing sports organisations between public and private financing and, on the other hand, the economic models that have been developed.

Public vs. Private funding

In view of its action on health, on integration and inclusion and on societal values such as social cohesion and solidarity, we can argue that sport participates in a positive transformation of society. Moreover, it is now considered as a sector of activity in its own right, with economic and social ramifications. Through their policies, sports organisations aim, on the one hand, to develop practices so that men and women from all social backgrounds participate in sport at all ages and, on the other hand, to increase the performance of sportsmen and women by helping federations and clubs to find talent, but also by training and supporting top-level sportsmen and women. To fulfil this dual mission, they need funding, which can come from both the public and private sectors.

Public funding is aid from the State and/or local authorities. This aid can be direct in the form of subsidies or indirect in the form of the provision of personnel and infrastructure. In Europe, the state's share of public funding for sport varies from 28.5% in Slovenia to 77% in Lithuania. (3)

Private funding of sport consists mainly of household expenditure on sport and entertainment, and corporate funding in the form of sponsorship and media rights. The combined contribution of households and businesses accounts for more than 90% of sport funding in the UK, whereas it is only 20-30% in Bulgaria or Slovakia. Thus, on average, household spending accounts for more than half of sport funding in Europe. Businesses contribute 15%, local authorities 22%, and states 12% of the total. However, these proportions vary greatly from country to country (Miège, 2009).

In addition to the traditional sources from households - ticket sales and peripheral products (catering, by-products, etc.) - and companies - sponsorship marketing rights and media rights (Tribou, 2023), to which public funding is added - emerging sources are appearing, such as the possibility of taking clubs public. In view of the diversity of sources, the proportions of which vary from country to country, several models for financing sports organizations have been theorised.

Economic models

What is a business model? The management literature defines it in terms of a profitability objective and three points: (1) value creation: which products to sell on the market; (2) targeting: to whom to sell and at what price; (3) how to produce and the choice of the division between labour and capital (Verstraete and al., 2012). This definition is echoed by other authors such as Osterwalder (2011) for whom *"a business model describes the principles by which an organisation creates, delivers and captures value"*; or Matthieu (2008) who believes that *"it 'is simply the representation of how an organisation makes (or tries to make) money, or more simply how it makes money"*.

An economic model therefore aims to serve as a replicable guide to all companies, as a representation of the economic reality of production (how to produce at best?). And in particular to companies aiming to become more professional, such as sports organisations. This is the approach taken by authors such as Andreff and Scelles (2016) who describe the economic model of

football clubs through its revenue structure (its sources of funding to be maximised), its cost structure (its expenses to be minimised) and through the operating balance to be optimised through a strategy (a short-term deficit that can generate a profit in the longer term). At the heart of the model, the revenue structure available to the sports organization is essential for the success of its sports project. It represents all the resources available and the choice of their allocation in order to best implement its activities.

The evolution of sports clubs' business models

In France, the economic model of football clubs has evolved over time. At the beginning of the 20th century, sport was mainly financed by the players (Bourg and Gougnet, 2005), but other financing models subsequently emerged. Indeed, the ASSL model (as in Adherent-Spectators-Subsidies-Local) prevailed until the 1960s and constitutes the founding basis of the French associative system. Indeed, for a long time, the financing of clubs was based, in addition to membership fees, on match revenues (a spectator ticketing office), public subsidies and sponsorship marketing rights; all of which came from essentially local (rarely national, never international) sources of income. As member participation became marginal, the ASSL model became SSSL (as Spectator-Subsidy-Sponsorship-Local), giving the primary role to spectators and relegating the contributors to second place.

In the 1960s and 1970s, sponsorship developed, with brands now seeking notoriety and image through the sporting spectacle (Andreff and Staudohar, 2000; Tribou, 2023 (4)). In the 1990s, the model evolved into MCMMG (Media-Corporations-Merchandising-Markets-Global) on a European scale in order to assert the marketing role of clubs and the weight of the media. The clubs now rely heavily on financing from media rights (mainly television rights).

Another development is the emergence of tycoons, i.e. large investors from industry and commerce, Eastern European oligarchs, Middle Eastern emirs and American investment funds, who are attracted by the profitability of football as an investment object. At the same time, other sources of financing have developed, such as commercial revenues from merchandising, or those linked to the labour market (capital gains from player transfers) and the capital market (stock market listing of clubs), all of which come from global sources of financing (Andreff and Staudohar, 2000).

Materials and Methods

The objective of this study is to analyze the sources of financing of the Senegalese Professional Football League. Why did we choose this sports institution and not a federation or the football clubs? Because it claims a form of professionalism and football remains the "king" sport of the Senegalese and, more broadly, of African nations.

The scope of the study: the Senegalese Professional Football League

The Senegalese Football Federation (SFF) was founded in 1960 as the National Federation of Senegal and ran and organised an amateur football league until the 2008-2009 season. After the participation of the Senegalese national team in the 2002 World Cup, local football was plagued by repeated crises marked by disagreement between the federation's leaders and the ministry in charge, and fuelled by the lack of results of the national team and clubs at continental level.

This situation of instability led the ministerial authorities to dissolve the FSF and replace it with a Football Normalization Committee (FNC) in 2008, followed by the creation of a Senegalese Professional Football League (SPFL) in 2009. Thus, after years of amateurism (in both senses of the word: love of football and lack of professionalism), Senegalese football has entered a phase of restructuring at four levels: two levels of professional football (League 1 and League 2) and two levels of amateur football (National Amateur Championship 1 and 2).

The Senegalese Professional Football League is responsible for organising professional football in Senegal exclusively and for an indefinite period. It brings together 28 professional clubs (14 in League 1 and 14 in League 2) and manages the championships as well as the Senegalese Football Cup and the League Cup. To participate in the various championships, amateur clubs must have a minimum budget of 76,000 euros for League 1 and 61,000 euros for League 2. They must also have a cash flow equivalent to 50% of the required budget at the time of application (balance certificate or bank guarantee).

Investigation techniques

The present study method is qualitative. It is based on interviews conducted with officials of the league and the

federation. Seven semi-structured interviews lasting an average of one hour were carried out with the help of a guide containing relative themes making an exhaustive tour of the various sources of financing and expenditure items; with regard to the league's overall budget.

It is completed by a documentary research on the accounting documents of the league, in order to analyse the structure of its income. The activity report and the financial statements including the budget allowed us to collect valuable information on the financial data. In addition to the analysis of these accounting documents, we added another documentary research on publications of the local written press and of the online press.

It should be noted that very few studies have been conducted on Senegalese football governing bodies, particularly on their financial situation. One of the explanations for this is the difficulty of accessing potentially sensitive data, which is probably the result of a culture of secrecy and distrust of actors outside the world of professional football who could harm it in one way or another. This led us, on the one hand, to have to promise anonymity to reluctant managers during interviews; on the other hand, to favour the return of data in the form of percentages that are more evasive than financial data deemed highly confidential.

Results and Discussion

The results relating to the overall budget of the Senegalese Professional Football League cover the sports seasons from 2016-2017 to 2020-2021.

The Senegalese Professional Football League (SPFL) budget

Figure 1 shows that the annual revenue structure of the league over the five editions (2016 to 2021) is up and down. It also shows that annual expenditure exceeds income (negative balance) in the first three seasons (2016 to 2019). This deficit has had the remarkable consequence of cancelling certain competitions in order to eliminate expenses (the League Cup or the Senegalese Cup), as well as the inability of the league to give the champion clubs their rewards in the form of trophies and victory bonuses. The league has also had to take on short-term debt in the form of bank overdrafts.

To cope with its financial difficulties, the league has regularly turned to the Senegalese Football Federation and the Ministry of Sports to obtain exceptional subsidies. Their payment is at the origin of the strong

increase in the budget reaching more than 323 million CFA francs (about 495,000 euros) in 2019-2020, an increase of 30.1% compared to the 2018-2019 season. This remarkable increase can be explained in part by the performance of the national team, which enabled the federation to receive a cheque for 2 million dollars for its participation in the 2018 World Cup and 2.3 million dollars as a finalist bonus at the 2019 CAN. Thanks to this financial agreement, the federation was able to "accompany the league with regard to all the different operating costs for the entire 2019-2020 season" (according to an executive).

However, we noted a decrease in the 2020-2021 budget of 38.5% (vs. the 2019-2020 budget) as a result of the Covid-19 health crisis that broke out at the end of the first quarter of 2020. In the absence of sports activities, the drop in revenue has had a significant impact on the league's total budget.

The revenue structure of the SPFL

The sources of financing of the league are subsidies, ticketing revenues, marketing rights from sponsoring and revenues from activities.

Subsidies

Subsidy income is the most important source of income for the league. With the exception of the 2018-2019 season, the share of subsidies exceeds half of its total budget (Table 1); reaching a record of over 90% in 2019-2020. These subsidies were allocated by the federation and the Ministry of Sports. The league has thus been regularly perfused by the federation, which has helped it to overcome the financial difficulties it has encountered at the end of each sports season. Thus, in 2018, the federation granted it an exceptional subsidy of 30 million FCFA (5) (about 458,000 euros) to compensate for the withdrawal of its main sponsor Orange.

Similarly, in 2019, it granted another exceptional subsidy of more than 195 million FCFA (about 229,000 euros), i.e. 60% of the amount of the subsidies for the 2019-2020 season. This financial support allowed the league to "face its financial difficulties" and "make all the necessary arrangements for the start of its competitions for the 2019-2020 season".

In addition, national sports federations, which have been delegated a public service mission, also receive state aid. Public support from the State through the Ministry of

Sports took the form of direct operating subsidies representing CFAF 50 million (more than '76,000) in 2016-2017 and FCFA 100 million in 2020-2021, representing 31% of the budget subsidies. This high level of intervention by the Ministry of Sport in football expresses a political choice to favour football to the detriment of other sports disciplines that have been left relatively abandoned. Moreover, the leaders of other sports federations regularly complain and accuse the ministry of being in reality 'a ministry for football only'.

Ticketing

Ticketing revenues concern the matches of the League Cup and the Senegalese Cup. Figure 2 shows that in Senegalese professional football this source of funding is very low and does not reach 5% of the league's annual budget. It should be noted that ticketing is a direct source of funding based on regular attendance by the spectators. However, the latter seem to be indifferent the many competitions organised by the league.

The low attendance in the professional championship is explained, among other things, by 'the conditions of football matches related to the poor condition of the bleachers, the lawns and all the stadium facilities such as toilets, parking, etc. (which) are an obstacle to stadium attendance in Senegal'.

But the poor attendance of stadiums does not affect all matches in the same way. Indeed, while regional clubs and those from the "navétane" (6) movement mobilise spectators, as much as corporate clubs, football academies and some traditional clubs struggle to mobilise supporters. Indeed, these clubs, which are not located in a populated area, do not have an emotional base and do not mobilise a sufficient mass of supporters to guarantee a regular attendance.

The low attendance coupled with the lack of a rigorous organisation of the competitions also dissuades broadcasters and limits the participation of companies in the league's sponsorship revenues (purchase of billboard space, hospitality operations).

Sponsorship revenues

Apart from the 2016-2017 season when it reached a record of more than 40% of the overall league budget, sponsorship revenues continued to decline in subsequent seasons until they completely disappear in 2020-2021 (figure 2).

The National telecommunications company (Sonatel), through its Orange brand, has long been the main external source of funding for the professional league, in exchange for naming the championship after it. Orange injected CFAF 380 million per season between 2013 and 2017.

The sharp drop in sponsorship revenue in 2017-2018 is therefore the consequence of Orange's withdrawal following the tragedy at Demba Diop stadium where nine people died. A fight between the supporters of the two finalist teams of the League Cup had then degenerated. Although Orange officials have been quoted in the media as saying that they do not want to associate their brand image with the violence in football stadiums, some league officials have interpreted this decision by their major sponsor as a refusal to meet their request to increase in its financial contribution. Because "there was talk at one point of injecting more funds. This was refused by Orange at the time, among other reasons » (7). Following the much-discussed withdrawal of the Orange brand, the other sponsors followed. Thus, the Senegalese National Lottery (Lonase) stopped its partnership in 2016-2017, followed by CNART and Diamond Bank. (8)

Activity revenue

These are revenues mainly composed of the sale of derivative products, the payment of fines and other financial penalties, the membership fees of the clubs for access to the professional league and the sale of sports material and equipment to the clubs, especially balls. Indeed, as an association, the league may sell products and services or offer events in order to secure its own revenue.

The lack of dynamism in the marketing management of the league can be seen in the analysis of its revenue from activities which remain low overall, except for the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 seasons. Indeed, in Senegal, merchandising products are very poorly marketed by the league which, although aware of the potential revenue that can be generated by merchandising (like European leagues), is not very dynamic and imaginative in this area. "We are aware that we need to develop this aspect of merchandising, to sell merchandising products, but unfortunately, we are not doing it. It must be said that the football federation itself does not do it, it does not take advantage of the lions' exploit to develop this aspect" (according to a member of the League). The only products sold by the league are balls, which allow it to

make a very modest turnover of between 800,000 and 4 million CFA francs per season. In addition to the sale of balls, the LSFP receives very limited revenue from fines and club subscriptions, amounting to one million CFA francs per club.

Media rights

Media rights are an essential, even priority, source of funding for European professional football, which derives a large part of its revenue from them. But they are absent in Senegal. Indeed, in the league's championships, matches are not broadcast on local TV channels. At best, a short summary is broadcast on the national channel to report weekly on the progress of the championships. According to an official of the league, "the television channels require us to participate in the costs of broadcasting matches because, they say, they do not have sufficient means to ensure all the logistics. However, at the level of the league we do not have a budget to devote to the broadcasting of our matches. To compensate for this disengagement of Senegalese media, the league was led to sign a partnership with the Chinese commercial company Startimes for an amount of 6.2 billion over a ten-year period. The amount of this agreement must enable the league and the professional clubs to benefit from a guaranteed and substantial source of income that will allow them to balance their budgets and allow Startimes to sell its decoders on the Senegalese market. But the contract is contested. Indeed, a complaint was filed before the National Audiovisual Regulatory Committee by the local audiovisual group Excaf, which challenged the validity of the agreement.

According to the complainant, StarTimes must comply with the texts in force in Senegal, which require any investor in the audiovisual sector to "create a company under Senegalese law, 51% of whose shares are held by Senegalese", which the Chinese company has not done. Consequently, Excaf has asked the regulatory body to

declare "the sponsorship null and void for violation of the law". As we can see, the road to financing Senegalese football in line with its ambitions is full of pitfalls.

In the light of these observations, it is relevant to examine the factors explaining the difficulties of the league to generate sufficient revenue to meet its expenses and to formulate some recommendations

From public subsidies to public sponsorship

The share of subsidies is largely predominant in the financing of the league as it represents more than half of the total budget on average. These subsidies come mainly from the Senegalese Football Federation and the Ministry of Sports. However, the league only receives federal funding in relation to the national football team's international campaigns: participation in a World Cup or African Cup of Nations (as was the case in 2018 and 2019). This means that this form of subsidy ceases outside of these periods and is very random (qualifying the national team).

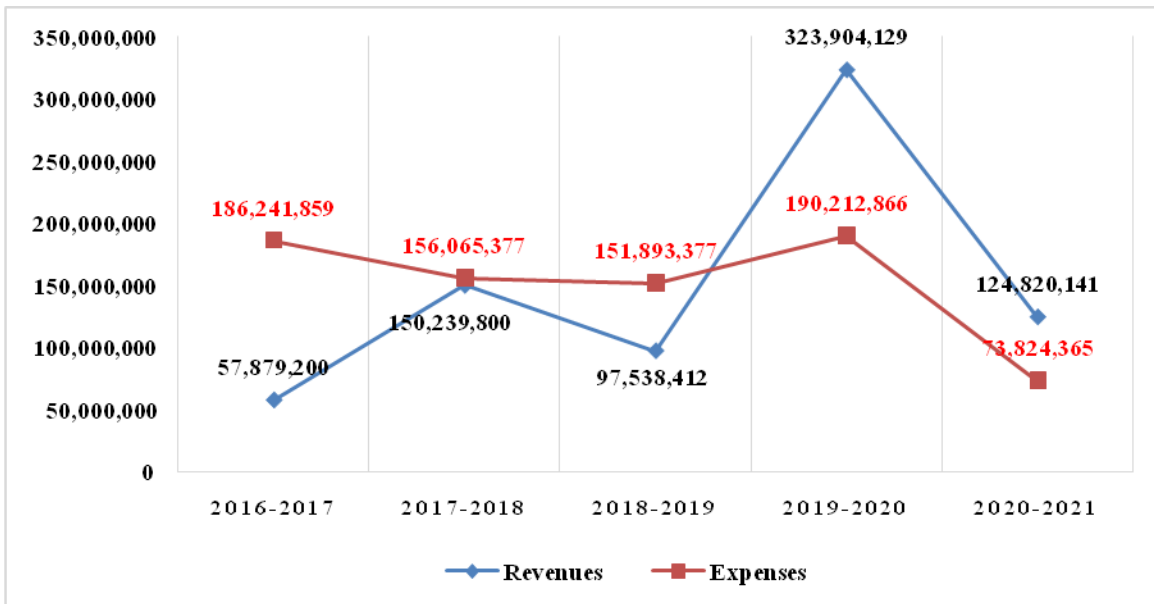
Public state funds complete the picture of subsidies through the participation of the Ministry. The justification for public investment in sport lays both the supposed benefits of sport for society, but also and above all in the political marketing of sport. Indeed, the popularity and sporting success of a national football team can benefit the current regime and have a greater or lesser influence on elections. In Europe, even though professional clubs are still partly financed by public authorities (Durand & Bayle, 2004; Bayeux, 2011; Chaix, 2011), the proportion of subsidies has fallen considerably. A 1999 law capped the granting of public subsidies, subject to missions of general interest, notably linked to the training of young players (Touchais, 2000). However, sport, and football in particular, remains a socialisation issue that is very present in the political game.

Table.1 Relative values of the SPFL's sources of income

Sources of revenues	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
Subsidies	51,83	59,91	46,14	91,21	85,75
Sponsoring	40,60	10,19	20,5	7,72	-
Ticketing	4,98	0,2	2,24	0,54	1,13
Others products	2,59	29,7	31,12	1,53	13,12
Total revenue	100	100	100	100	100

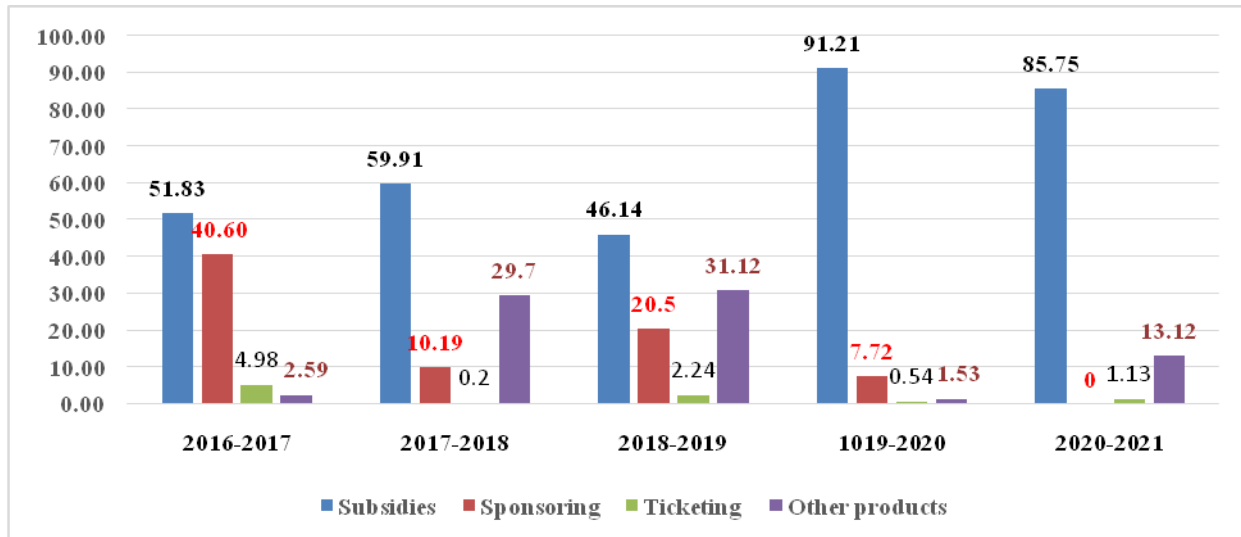
Source: Survey (2022)

Fig.1 Evolution of the SPFL budget



Source: Survey (2022)

Fig.2 Share of revenue sources in PSL revenue



Source: Survey (2022)

A recommendation can be formulated in the light of developments recorder in France in particular, where the public authorities are very present in sport. A local authority, like the state, is increasingly behaving like a public sponsor expecting a return on investment (Tribou, 2023). This expected return can be economic: attracting more tourists (for example, the Vendée Globe increases the number of tourists in the Vendée department with each edition of the transoceanic race), attracting more companies or students (the promotion of Paris 2024 improves the appeal of the Olympic city). It is also of a

political nature: improving the image of elected officials who are involved in the show and influencing the behaviour of voters. Thus, the league could consider the Senegalese state as a stakeholder to be convinced by putting forward the advantages to be gained from a balanced partnership. A clarification of the return of image that could benefit the public institution, the direct and media audiences that intersect with certain categories of voters, the tourist and more broadly economic areas to be favoured in the choice of sports sites, or the preparation of a sponsorship file demonstrating the

profitability and political relevance of the subsidy, would undoubtedly be a step forward in the way of considering the public competition. It is no longer a question of aid to be solicited in an ethical and meritorious mode (it is good to help sport), but a form of marketing of public sponsorship products. This brings us back to the issue of commercial sponsorship, which is aimed at private companies with their own objectives.

A commercial sponsor lacks inspiration

For several decades, a growing number of commercial companies have relied on sport for image and advertising purposes (Tribou, 2023). Andreff and Nys (2001) note that the average budget of the top ten sponsors in French sport has increased by 30% in ten years and that sponsorship revenues can be as high as 75% of the budget of some European clubs. However, our study shows a decrease in the share of resources from private partners in Senegalese football. Indeed, the League is struggling to cope with the withdrawal of its major sponsor Orange and the hiatus imposed by the pandemic has aggravated the situation. However, how can we explain the fact that sponsorship revenues have totally disappeared from the football economy?

A first explanation is related to the behaviour of the institution itself. The league does not seem to have a sufficiently dynamic and convincing policy towards local commercial companies to get them to sign partnership contracts. It has all the more difficulties to attract investors as its competitors succeed better than it. This is particularly true of Senegalese wrestling, which is more attractive (Fall, 2022). One recommendation stems directly from this observation. Can we not envisage a benchmarking of the competitor who effectively markets the spectacle of wrestling in order to find a source of inspiration for developing football partnerships? It should be remembered that football imported from Europe, a carbon copy of its European counterpart (in terms of organisation), has no roots in Africa. It does not belong to traditional African culture. It is therefore not surprising that the public, and consequently sponsors, prefer a traditional sport.

Another reason that may explain the reluctance of sponsors to engage the spectacle of football is, it seems to us, the low attendance of stadiums in Senegal to watch football and therefore the entertainment contexts lacking in tone and sparkle, unlike wrestling shows that often sell out in a high-energy atmosphere that delights sponsors (Fall, 2018). This is why many companies limit

their partnerships to supporting the national football team in the finals of the African Cup of Nations or when it qualifies for the World Cup. Indeed, this is the only show that can guarantee a minimum of traffic and exchanges on social networks.

The lack of media coverage of League matches does not encourage companies to come and improve their visibility on billboards, and stadiums that are almost deserted also pose a problem for offering hospitality services (Tribou, 2023). Moreover, incidents of violence in football stadiums are also a hindrance for companies wishing to improve their brand image.

The lack of media rights ...

In European and American countries, media rights are one of the main sources of funding for football clubs. Audiences are such that television channels are in strong competition and they are led to pay huge sums of money to obtain the right to broadcast the best football competitions such as the Premier League or the Champions League. The media, and in particular television, have been responsible for the change in the business model of professional sport (Bourg and Gouguet, 2005, 2007). A report by Deloitte (2021) on the financing of football clubs shows that at least 50% of their income comes from rights paid by TV and radio stations. The 2022 Statista report shows that TV rights revenues in the 2021-2022 season amounted to €3,518 million in the Premier League, €2,049 million in La Liga and €637 million in French Ligue 1. 637 million in the French Ligue 1. And they can represent up to 75% of revenues. TV rights revenue is therefore a key financial resource for professional teams.

However, in Senegal, no television rights have ever been registered on the league's account since its creation. Among the causes, a sports journalist points to "*the low quality of the sports show, with football that is not at all attractive, which means that television stations do not want to broadcast the matches. They prefer entertainment, wrestling or European championships*". Added to this is "*the low production capacity, financial, technological and structural limits of local broadcasters*" (Akindes, 2022: 10).

A recommendation can be made on the basis of what is observed in European amateur football. A non-professional club that is not of interest to the media because of an insufficient audience must find a way to ensure a minimum of revenue. The solution is sometimes

online television channels (or web-TV hosted by YouTube or Twitch) which, if they achieve a minimum audience, can be used to sell advertising space. The club does not actually receive media rights, but advertising revenue from its own channel. The common sense condition is the ability to produce quality images and video editing at low cost. This can be done by a volunteer whose job is outside the club.

To the weakness of the ticketing system

Faced with the lack of image and sporting interest in their local league, African spectators are turning away from their own clubs in favour of foreign leagues in general and European leagues in particular (Ndiaye, 2022). These are mainly clubs in which Senegalese expatriate play. For Fattah (2022: 76), this is what makes "*African sports fans and leaders, paradoxically, much better informed about European and American sports activity than about that of their own continent*".

The stadiums where the local professional league matches are played are almost deserted by spectators. In 2017, the average number of spectators at professional league football matches was 843 in Ligue 1 and 499 in Ligue 2 (Fall, 2018). These data show the inability of the league's clubs to attract a minimum number of spectators capable of triggering a dynamic attendance. Akindés (2022:101) confirms that "*African national competitions only occasionally fill stadiums and sports arenas*".

As a result, the ticketing revenue that should have been a regular resource remains insignificant (Sakho and Diassé, 2007). Yet, the ticketing service is one of the basic sources of revenue for a football club or league (Desbordes and Richelieu, 2011). How can this be remedied? The recommendations mentioned above to revive sponsorship also apply to spectator audiences, as the two are closely linked. Even if the solutions implemented by competitors cannot be transposed as they stand, they can constitute a basis for reflection and innovation in order to achieve comparable attendance rates. Because the Senegalese football spectator is neither the European football spectator nor the Senegalese spectator of traditional wrestling. This means that the sources of inspiration must be measured and adapted to the specificity of football in Senegal.

The analysis of the Senegalese Professional Football League's revenues during the 2016-2017 to 2020-2021 seasons shows a mixed mode of financing combining public funds with private sector revenues. It shows a

concentration of financial resources around subsidies and marketing rights from sponsorship of local companies. The reference model can be considered as the SSL model, i.e. a model combining Grants and Sponsorship revenues mainly at Local level. However, this model is unbalanced as it is heavily dependent on public funding which exceeds half of the total budget for each season. These subsidies are mainly federal and ministerial, which indicates that professional football is struggling to gain financial independence from the public authorities. Senegalese professional football does not yet have the means to implement its professionalisation policy.

The league organizes many competitions that attract few spectators. This low attendance at football stadiums is an obvious obstacle to the development of ticketing revenues. It also has a negative impact on sponsorship revenues and does not encourage the broadcasting of matches and thus the marketing of hypothetical media rights. This deficit of own revenues highlights the fragility of the Senegalese professional football ecosystem and a precarious economic situation. Indeed, over the first three seasons studied, the SPFL had to face a deficit balance sheet due to a lack of revenue; the only solution was to reduce its sports offer.

If the analysis of the current economic model of the league allows us to point out a strong dependence on public subsidies, it struggles to propose a new ad hoc model. Nevertheless, a path is emerging if we adopt a clear marketing approach. Considering a professional league as a brand offering championship products to a demand of spectators, in competition with other brands with undeniable competitive advantages, leads to a strategic analysis. How to position the current products, which categories to target in priority and above all how to make the products evolve to make them more effective on the sports entertainment market? These are all questions that can help to dust off the debate and lift it out of the political weight that paralyzes it.

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