

FOOTBALL GRADUALLY BECOMING A CATALYST OF SPANISH TOURISM



La Liga, the top tier of Spanish football has evolved into a more modern, dynamic and global competition. The championship awakens enormous international interest. So much that it receives spectators from at least 19 different nationalities every weekend. This growth and internalization have contributed to turning football into a catalyst for Spanish tourism.

Football fans swirl at the gates of the San Mames stadium in Bilbao on a regular basis, turning it into a “monument” as popular as Guggenheim. **In neighboring San Sebastian, the reconstructed Anoeta stadium stands out as one of the city’s biggest attractions.** Sevilla, Valencia or La Coruna are also cities of interest, while Madrid and Barcelona obviously as well for the Camp Nou and Santiago Bernabeu stadiums.

Globally Appreciated Sport

La Liga has 2.7 million viewers worldwide, counting also those who live the passion of Spanish football from TV screens or even Facebook or buying a shirt of their idol anywhere in the world. Besides regular fans, even those who travel from various parts of the world to football matches are counted. This is a practice that is far from infrequent.

International sales to watch Spanish football live have multiplied six fold since 2012, according to a study by Goalnomics that also highlights the fact that while Spanish people are more moderate when it comes to spending money on tickets, foreigners are willing to pay much higher amounts even for VIP tickets.

Football boost Spanish tourism and is moving forward with more and more followers and generates an important business. South Korea, Japan and China are the main source markets for Spanish football, but the United States registered 20% of all purchases. It was the country that acquired most tickets to watch La Liga matches. This effect, little by little, is being extended to more and more clubs.

Girona began its particular international conquest with two friendlies in India, while Eibar, the third most followed club in Japan, stimulates this relationship to the point that the commercial and institutional ties between the city and the country do not stop growing. And these are just two examples.

Beneficial for Spanish Economy

All this growth reflects in economic data. It is a global industry that, like any other, aspires to grow and generate more revenues each season. This can also have a positive impact on society, given that La Liga and its clubs contribute with 1.3 million euros in taxes every year. The new levels of growth have only been achieved through evolution, internationalization and innovation.

The football market is expanding and now the whole world follows Spanish football and bears part of the income of the clubs. Could this dynamic growth and internalization have a positive effect on the promotion of new destination?

According to experts yes, but under some conditions. The first is that at least one of the teams should be sufficiently mediatic to arouse interest. The press of the host country should talk about the teams and place them on the map and the footballers, especially the biggest stars, should take care of local fans and sign as many autographs as possible. It also should be referred to as soccer as well as football and the visits of teams should be accompanied by timely promotion of the city.

A study carried out by consulting firm KPMG Sports on the socio-economic impact of professional football in Spain highlights the importance of the sport's role. It is the second concept that most influences the 'Spanish brand' behind tourism and followed by gastronomy and culture.

Spanish tourism has beaches, art and cuisine to offer, but increasingly also football matches are becoming a key element of vacationing. Bringing football closer to the fans is key. Fans who now live in Sevilla, Madrid, Valencia, Barcelona, but also in Tokyo Bombay or Miami.

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