FC GRONINGEN

The pride of the North of the Netherlands

Marketing plan

Simone Toneman | Sports Marketing | 12-01-2018
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1. Introduction

1.1 Rationale

FC Groningen is a football club in the North of the Netherlands. The club plays in the Eredivisie, the highest football league of the Netherlands. The club was founded in 1971 when football club GVAV changed its name to FC Groningen. From 2006 they play in their new stadium, the Noordlease stadium. The best result FC Groningen had in the Eredivisie is the third place in 1991 and 2006, they also won the KNVB Cup in 2015.

As it says on the head page, FC Groningen is the pride of the north of the Netherlands. In the north of the Netherlands there are two football clubs who play in the Eredivisie, the first football league, FC Groningen and SC Heerenveen. When FC Groningen and SC Heerenveen play against each other it’s a derby, a sporting contest between rivals from the same district. In the past, the derby was a big deal in the North, it was a match with passion, pride and both clubs really had to win. Now a day, the derby isn’t like that anymore. They have many fans in the area, but you can’t say that it’s a football club of the people in the North. Since the last couple of years the club changed, especially when it’s about fan engagement, but also financial. In the beginning of this season FC Groningen told the press that they have 2.2 million euros shortage on their budget in comparison with last season. This shortage is the sequel of the television fees which are reduced with 1.5 million euros and the 2000 empty seats in the stadium which costs 400.000 euros. With the right marketing strategies this shortage could be avoided next season.

Sponsorships are really important for companies, especially when they need the money for new investments. FC Groningen needs to develop their players, the team, the facilities and the club itself, for this they need money. There are different kind of sponsorships and different ways to find the sponsors. The most important thing about sponsorship is that both parties are trying to achieve their strategic goals, they both give each other something they can build on (Farrelly & Quester, 2005)

1.2 Club history

Fc Groningen is a football club established in 1921 in the name of GVAV, a combination between Unitas and Rapiditas. They played at that moment in the third league and 35 years later they accomplished a promotion in 1956 to the highest league in the Netherlands, the Eredivisie. After two years in the Eredivisie GVAV degrade to the first league for two years, which happened again in 1977 but from 1980 they played for 18 years in the Eredivisie. In 1971 GVAV changed in FC Groningen, a football club named after the city it’s established.

In 1983 FC Groningen made their debut in the Europe League with a legendary match against Atletico Madrid which they won. After their debut they played 5 more times in the Europe League with victory’s against Galway United, Xamax Neuchatel, Servette and Ikast IF. After all the highlights FC Groningen degrade again to the first league for two years. From 2000 till now the played every season in the Eredivisie.

In 2005 FC Groningen moved from Stadium Oosterpark to the Euroborg, a bigger and more innovative stadium with a capacity of 22.550 https://www.transfermarkt.nl/fc-groningen/stadion/verein/202. The first years in the new stadium were really successful and they ended almost every season in the left line, which means that they were the number 9 or even better.

In season 2014/2015 FC Groningen won their first prize in their club history on the highest level, the KNVB Cup. https://www.fcgroningen.nl/club/historie

In June 2016 FC Groningen made a big change in the sponsorship of one of their overcast sponsors, Noordlease. Noordlease was already for four years their main sponsor and was the biggest sponsor on the competition shirts of FC Groningen, but from 2016 they wanted to present themselves in another but notable way; they became the name of the stadium. https://www.vi.nl/nieuws/euroborg-verandert-van-naam-en-wordt-noordlease-stadion In the history of the club it never happened that a sponsor became the name of the stadium and that’s why it was unique and was noticed by a lot of football fans in the Netherlands. The change in the name of the stadium was also a gesture to the loyal fans, because Noordlease made their wish come true, the opening of the FC Groningen Museum.

1.3 Notable Achievements

This is a list of all the achievements of GVAV and later FC Groningen; the promotions, the European football, the Eredivisie and other notable achievements they made since their establishment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Season</th>
<th>Achievement</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1921</td>
<td>Establishment GVAV</td>
<td>Fusion Unitas (1915) and Rapiditas (1917)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1923/1924</td>
<td>Promotion to the Second League</td>
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<td>1925/1926</td>
<td>Promotion to the First League</td>
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<td>1939/1940</td>
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<tr>
<td>1955/1956</td>
<td>Placing in the first edition of the Eredivisie</td>
<td>They won the decision match in the after competition.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1959/1960</td>
<td>Promotion to the Eredivisie</td>
<td>After two years in the first league again the made a promotion to the Eredivisie.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>Establishment Foundation Payed Football GVAV</td>
<td>Foundation for the first team of GVAV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Event</td>
<td>Details</td>
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<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>Establishment FC Groningen as a successor of GVAV</td>
<td>GVAV is named after the city it’s established.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>Goalkeeper Tonny van Leeuwen of FC Groningen wins prize for best</td>
<td>On his way back of the ceremony the goalkeeper got an car accident and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>goalkeeper of the Eredivisie</td>
<td>died. After three years they degraded.</td>
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<td>1979/</td>
<td>Promotion to the Eredivisie</td>
<td>Championship in the First League with their own youth team.</td>
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<td>1980</td>
<td>First time they achieve European football</td>
<td>Disabled in the second round by Internazionale after a legendary win</td>
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<td>Achieve the EUFA-Cup</td>
<td>Disabled in the third round against Vitória Guimarães.</td>
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<td>1983</td>
<td>KNVB Cup Final</td>
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<tr>
<td>1986/</td>
<td>Most successful season FC Groningen up to now</td>
<td>They became 3th in the Eredivisie</td>
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<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>Achieve the EUFA-Cup</td>
<td>Disabled in the first round</td>
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<td>1988/</td>
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<td>1989/</td>
<td>First time they played in the Intertoto Cup</td>
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<tr>
<td>1990/</td>
<td>Promotion to the Eredivisie</td>
<td>After 18 years in the Eredivisie they degrade for two years to the first league, but reached the Eredivisie again in 2000</td>
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<tr>
<td>1991/</td>
<td>FC Groningen moved to the Euroborg Stadium</td>
<td>On the 7th of January 2006 they opened a new stadium under the name of</td>
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<tr>
<td>1992/</td>
<td>FC Groningen ended 5th in the Eredivisie</td>
<td>From that moment FC Groningen played their matches in the new stadium.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Qualification UEFA Cup</td>
<td>They didn’t reach the group phase</td>
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<tr>
<td>2005/</td>
<td>Qualification UEFA Cup</td>
<td>They didn’t reach the group phase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006/</td>
<td>Best first half of the season in the club history</td>
<td>FC Groningen had 37 point out of 19 matches, which led to a third place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007/</td>
<td>100 Eredivisie matches in the Euroborg</td>
<td>in the Eredivisie. The second part of the season wasn’t that good anymore and they became 5th. They achieved the play-offs but couldn’t win.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011/</td>
<td>Erwin van de Looi the new trainer of FC Groningen and they reached</td>
<td>The match against VVV-Venlo was won by FC Groningen with 2-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013/</td>
<td>European Football again</td>
<td>After two weak seasons van de Looi made FC Groningen successful again.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The best performance in the club history</td>
<td>They ended on a 7th place. After the Play-offs they reached European Football.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Event</td>
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<td>2014/2015</td>
<td>Champions in the KNVB Cup</td>
<td>FC Groningen won for the first time in their club history a prize. This prize led to participation in the UEFA Europa League.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015/2016</td>
<td>Qualification UEFA Europa League</td>
<td>They only reached the group phase.</td>
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2. Income SWOT

To see what is going right and wrong in a company we need a SWOT analysis, the SWOT analysis helps us to understand the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. With this information is easier to make new choices which can turn the weaknesses in strengths and the threats in opportunities. This chapter is about the income of FC Groningen. According to the Cambridge Dictionary income is the money that is earned from doing work or received from investments. [https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/income](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/income) The income SWOT shows us how much money FC Groningen has earned and received, but also the weaknesses of their finances and the threats they could have including the opportunities.

The SWOT Analysis is used to evaluate the Strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats involved in a company, project or any other situation requiring a decision. The Strengths and Weaknesses are internal, attributes of the organization, and the Opportunities and Threats external, attributes of the environment. [http://www.isprs.org/proceedings/xxxvi/4-c42/Papers/OBIA2006_Hay_Castilla.pdf](http://www.isprs.org/proceedings/xxxvi/4-c42/Papers/OBIA2006_Hay_Castilla.pdf)

In figure… The SWOT analysis is shown in a short version, but clear. In chapter 2.1 and 2.2 there is a more detailed version with explanations. All the amounts of money in the figure and text are in euros.

**Key Strengths**
- They money they can spend on new players stays the same
- Their merchandise can provide more income (and awareness)
- 40 sponsors already extent their contract for next season
- Good relationship with sponsors, they rank their sponsorship with an eight
- Main sponsor Noordlease become stadium sponsor
- New main sponsor

**Key Weaknesses**
- FC Groningen gets 1,5 million euro less than last year from the television companies because of their ranking
- They sold less season tickets, what means a loss of 400.000 euro
- Not many local sponsorships

**Key Opportunities**
- Create more sponsorships so the money can be used to fill up the money they lost with the ticket sell
- Invest more money in the education of the young player so they get better players from their own youth which will lead to better results
- Invest money in discount actions for tickets to sell more tickets, what will lead to sell more

**Key Threats**
- They can’t spend that much money as last year, the need to fill the gap.
- Results of the team are disappointing
- Sponsors will stop investing money in FC Groningen


2.1 Strengths and weaknesses

If we are looking at the Strengths FC Groningen has it’s obvious that they have a good connection with their sponsors. Fc Groningen published a news post about the fact that 40 sponsors of them already extent their contract for next season in the beginning of this season [https://www.fcgroningen.nl/zakelijk/sponsoren-staan-op-voor-fc-groningen/8]. This information shows that their sponsors are satisfied and happy to invest money in FC Groningen again. The sponsors rank their sponsorship with FC Groningen with an eight. On the other hand a weakness of FC Groningen is that they don’t have enough local sponsorship, most of their sponsorships are national. [https://www.fcgroningen.nl/zakelijk]

The biggest sponsor at this moment is Payt, they became the main sponsor of FC Groningen 6 months ago. After 5 months they were already on place 9 of the most mentioned shirt sponsor in the Eredivisie, the highest league in the Netherlands, according to a research of Voetbal International. [https://www.fcgroningen.nl/zakelijk/payt-na-vijf-maanden-op-9de-plek-bekendste-shirtsponsor-ereditisie/8]. The research also mentioned the old shirt sponsor of the club, Essent. Essent has been their main sponsor for 6 years and also people voted for Essent on the question is they can mention a shirt sponsor of the Eredivisie. Also the stadium sponsor Noordlease is mentioned, in the survey even if they aren’t their shirt sponsor. We can conclude that being a shirt sponsor makes a brand recognized, even after the sponsorship. Payt needs to pay 1.1 million euros in the first year and in the second year 1.3 million euros to be their main sponsor. The growth of Payt leads possibly to more money for FC Groningen instead of the performances of the first team. [http://www.voetbalzone.nl/doc.asp?uid=299701 After the first two years of sponsorships they will decide if they stay the main sponsor for another year. The fact that they have a great main sponsor could also lead to problems if the main sponsor quits after two year and they didn’t find a new sponsor. Luckily they have a good relationship with their sponsors, so the change that they quit is reduced.

FC Groningen has two big sponsor, the main sponsor Payt, and their stadium sponsor Noordlease. Noordlease was the main sponsor of FC Groningen from 2007 till 2011. It’s the first time in the club history that they have a stadium sponsor. They told the press that after many years of sponsorship they really wanted to present themselves in a mentioned way in Groningen, the name of the stadium was their solution. [https://www.vi.nl/nieuws/euroborg-verandert-van-naam-en-wordt-noordlease-stadion For FC Groningen the sponsorship with Noordlease means more money and for the company Noordlease brand awareness.

Even with a new main and stadium sponsor FC Groningen has money problems. In compassing with last season their budget is reduced with 1.5 million euros, this is a result of the fact that they get 1.5 million less of the television company because they their ranking has changed from place 6 till 8. Another consequence are the 2000 empty seats in the stadium. Everything together, they already had a shortage, it means a shortage of 2.2 million euros. [https://groningen.nieuws.nl/sport/500176/begrotingstekort-en-primeur-fc-groningen/ Luckily FC Groningen has a buffer and can pay the shortage with the money they saved in the last couple of financial good years. A strength in this story is that they keep the same budget for new players and that the keep investing in the education of their own youth.

A strength of FC Groningen is their collection of merchandise. In the fan shop in the stadium or online in the web shop fans can buy their own shirt, tools and a lot of other FC Groningen accessories. With their big collection and shop they can earn more money and create more awareness. [https://www.fcgroningen.nl/webshop]
2.2 Opportunities and threats

As mentioned above, FC Groningen has a good connection with their sponsors. The sponsors they have are satisfied and they just have two new big sponsors who pay a lot of money to be their sponsor. With this good reputation they could attract even more new sponsors, especially local sponsors.

FC Groningen has their own community, FC Groningen in de maatschappij, this means FC Groningen society. This society tries to get as many people for their society projects. The projects focus on health, social cohesion and education especially in the surroundings of Groningen. For those projects they need money, if they get more local sponsors who also can help with the projects they earn more money and can FC Groningen save money for other stuff and to decrease the shortage they have this year.

Another opportunity is their youth, in the news post they published about the budget this year, they told that they spend the same money on the education of their youth as last year. If they provide more sponsorships they can invest more in their youth which will lead to better players who can play in the first team. The more players they take from their own youth, the less players they have to buy or hire, which means more money. In the best case they can also sell players which will leads to more income as well. This opportunity is an investment for the long term and will make money in a couple of years and not directly.

A weakness of FC Groningen are the empty seats in the stadium, they lose around 400,000 euros a year on it. This is a waste of money and they need to try to fill the stadium with more people, there is nothing better than playing in a stadium which is completely full. At this moment they have three different kind of season tickets, the regular tickets, children tickets and elderly tickets. Also the prices are different for different places in the stadium. Groningen is a city with more than 50,000 students. It’s a waste that they don’t have different season or match tickets. The same with the focus group families. If FC Groningen introduces tickets who are cheaper or cheaper if you buy them in bigger amounts then there is a change that the stadium has less empty seats, which will in the end lead to new fans who buy season tickets every year.

A threat in the sport business is always the fact that you don’t know how the team performs during the season. If FC Groningen stops winning matches sponsors will drop and that means less money for the club. With a long term sponsorship contract FC Groningen makes sure that a couple of sponsors stay for a longer time, even if they play worse than expected.
3. Marketing SWOT

This chapter will focus on the marketing SWOT. Different from the income SWOT is that this SWOT is focused on the marketing strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of FC Groningen. The definition of marketing that is used is based on de 7 P’s of marketing; Price, Product, Place and Promotion, but also three more P’s. Personnel, Physical facilities and process management.

https://mybu.bournemouth.ac.uk/bbcswebdav/pid-1418296-dt-content-rid-7169037_2/courses/077941/01%20-%20Journal%20-%204Ps%20of%20Marketing%20-%20Magrath%20-%201986.pdf. Magrath says that ignoring these three additional P’s means ignoring elements critical to the marketing of services. In this case the product is FC Groningen, the Place Groningen and their surroundings, the price is what people pay for the matches, merchandise but also arrangements and the promotion they have for FC Groningen in anyway. Personnel is in this case the service and the collaborators at FC Groningen, Physical Facilities the stadium and Process Management everything from the beginning till the end, think about ticket selling.

In figure 2 the SWOT analysis is written down as a summary, in chapter 3.1 and 3.2 there is an explanation of the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats.

Key Strengths
- Playing in the first league of the Netherlands and won the KNVB Cup in 2015
- Being one of the two teams in the North of the Netherlands
  - Club with a history
  - Increased use of media
- Creating more awareness by selling a lot of merchandise products
- Socially important for the surroundings

Key Weaknesses
- They don’t use social media during the matches
- They don’t have different discount tickets for different persona’s
- The stadium is half full
- Eat and drink facilities are weak
- No contactless payments
- They don’t have football for women

Key Opportunities
- Use social media more, in all the stages to create more awareness
- Arrange different ticket actions
- Use the social initiatives to create more awareness
- Involve students
- Invest in women’s football

Key Threats
- When FC Groningen keep losing their matches people are becoming less interested
- Other teams are playing better constantly, more change to see a good match.
- Other stadiums have better facilities and contactless payments
- Sponsors are leaving because of the disappointing outcomes
3.1 Strengths and Weaknesses

FC Groningen is one of the two football clubs in the North of the Netherlands, FC Groningen in Groningen and SC Heerenveen in Friesland. Because there aren’t many football clubs in the north, the area with fans is bigger, this means more change for more fans. The fact that they are socially effective in the surroundings makes it even better. The last couple of years FC Groningen plays in the highest league of the Netherlands, this is absolutely a strength, now a days they make sure they stay in the Eredivisie. For the fans is this better, they trust the club and keep buying their season tickets.

On the other hand could they create even more awareness by involving women in their football club. At this moment they don’t have a women team or education. In comparison with other football clubs in the Netherlands are they behind. Last summer the Women European Tournament was in the Netherlands, the event was even more popular than anyone could expect. With a sold out half final and final it was the best visited women’s football tournament ever (BRON). Women’s football is getting more popular every day, also in the North of the Netherlands this is why they should think of involving women in FC Groningen.

Another weakness is the stadium, the stadium itself but also the people in the stadium. As told in the income SWOT, FC Groningen loses a lot of money because of their empty seats in the stadium. This could be an result of the no personalized season tickets, but also the bad eat and drink facilities they have. In the stadium people need to pay with coins which they can buy at a kiosk in the stadium, now a days it’s faster and important that visitors can pay contactless by card. (BRON)

A positive thing FC Groningen does at this moment is their increase in using social media. They have 92 K Facebook followers, 23 K Instagram followers, 8,8 K on You tube and 75 K on Twitter. They use their media accounts in front of the match, but not during the match. They could even make more afford out of it.

With all the merchandise they have they could even create more awareness in the surroundings. Together with FC Groningen in de maatschappij, the social aspect Groningen does in their area, could they organize events and projects who can help people, but also sell their merchandise.

3.2 Opportunities and Threats

As mentioned above, FC Groningen should do more with their social media accounts. Marketing through social media is really important now a days. (BRON)

Another opportunity FC Groningen has is women’s football. FC Groningen could be one of the first clubs in the north of the Netherlands with a women’s department. If they invest more in events, like tournaments, especially for women they could also attract more women to visit the home games of the men’s team. At this moment they don’t do anything with women, which is a waste.

Also the 50.000 students in Groningen don’t get a special offer to buy tickets for a match. It’s clear that students don’t want to spend a lot of money on tickets because they have less money to spend every month. (BRON) It’s an opportunity to get more people in the stadium during the match, which will make the whole experience better (BRON).

A positive is their FC Groningen society, they do a lot of projects in the area. Peop
Shirt Sponsors:

Partner:

Digital partner:

Analyze sponsors
Mental Map
Mind Space
Innovation and creativity
Discussion of opportunities identified from SWOTS
Comparisons with other football clubs
Recommendations

- Show business in the Netherlands their sponsorship options and reviews to get new sponsors
- Invest in the youth education program to get better players from their own education
- Look at different opportunities to sell more season tickets, for example student discounts, family discounts or try out tickets
- Involve the socially initiatives to attract more local sponsorships

Recommendations

- Improve social media, before, during and after the football match
- Use the social initiative to create more awareness in the surroundings
- Involve students, in Groningen their live 60,000 students
  - Improve the eat and drink facilities
  - Enter contactless payments
Discussion of recommendations resulting from opportunities
Projection of estimated benefits of new marketing plan

Generate more income
Targeting new sponsors
Justifying & identifying the sponsor’s audience
Justification 1: Which sponsors are appropriate for your scenario?
Justification 2: Does your subject fit the sponsor and vice versa?
Justification 3: Or put another way
Are these the right media?

Do these reflect the correct tone and message?

Is the synergy as simple as colour?