

Feeding the Desire: Football Fans and Food

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This chapter examines the role of food and drink within the sports fan experience. Food and alcohol have historically been the primary purchases of sports fans when they attend a sports match but, until recently, there has been relatively little academic research into the actual offerings in stadia. The small number of academic studies on the topic and anecdotal discussions have highlighted that the cost, quality, and healthiness of food and beverages are areas of dissatisfaction for fans. In this chapter we highlight that sports stadia have not been associated with healthy eating and drinking, rather they are linked to excessive drinking of alcohol with this practice closely tied to traditional hegemonic masculinity. However, a lack of healthy options in stadia can be tied to social and historical factors associated with sports fandom, which can reinforce societal inequalities. We finish by highlighting a push for healthier options, led by the Healthy Stadia network, and provide an updated list of recommendations for food and drink in venues.

Introduction

Restrictions on fans attending games in person during Covid-19-enforced lockdowns around the world have not only stretched the finances of leagues and clubs but have also highlighted the significance of matchday attendance, for both clubs and fans. Yet even before this hiatus, with the amount of sport that is available on television and via the internet increasing, some sports teams and codes were struggling to encourage an increasingly sedentary population to attend live events (Parry et al., 2018). Mediated consumption of sport has become the most common method for fans to engage with professional sport. It is now more usual for fans from regions such as Europe, North America, and Australia to watch sport via some form of media rather than to attend a venue in person (Parry, Jones & Wann, 2014). The emergence of new 'players' in the media sport market, such as Amazon Prime Video, have rewritten the schedules of many sports leagues, moving games to satisfy television audiences – to the frustration of many fans – but to the joy of those who are happy to spend hours on end watching numerous matches. Covid-19 lockdowns further impacted match schedules and allowed leagues and broadcasters to fill even more hours with live broadcasts.

The reasons for falling attendances are varied, but the rising cost of attending cannot be ignored. There are concerns that the high prices (when tickets, food, and transport are considered) at some stadia may be pricing the 'the common person', particularly those with families, out of attending sports matches (Sutton, 2017). Indeed, the BBC Price of Football survey reveals the high prices that are now charged by many football clubs in England and Europe, identifying how much tickets, food, and drinks cost at each club. The cost for a family of four to attend an English Premier League football match is likely to be at least £150 (U.S. \$200/€175) when transport and food are taken into consideration.

Moreover it has been argued that mediated consumption is unhealthy for consumers as it encourages sedentary behaviour. Guidelines on sedentary behaviour and physical activity have been established in many countries, aiming to minimise time spent sitting generally and the time that populations spend in front of screens (Parry et al., 2019). As such, the greater availability and enhanced quality of mediated sport may have a detrimental impact on health by encouraging prolonged bouts of sedentary behaviour while watching sport. Therefore, a

greater understanding of the relationship between fans and food and drink is becoming increasingly important.

It has been shown that the price of food and drink is not the only culinary frustration for many fans (Parry, Hall & Baxter, 2017). Closed concession stalls, long queues, poor service, and a lack of food options are issues that impact on the fan experience and that may deter revisitation intentions. The tendency for venues to outsource their catering also puts them in a difficult position. Sports teams who relinquish control over their offerings can make every effort to provide a high quality matchday experience, but even when the team wins fan satisfaction can be marred by poor service quality and low quality, high-priced offerings. Although it has been noted that food and alcohol are the primary purchases that sports fans make when they attend sports matches (Jones, 2002), this element of sport consumption has, until recently, been largely overlooked in academic research into the actual offerings in stadia (Carter et al., 2012).

Amid questions on the suitability of stadia for place-based health interventions (Parry et al., 2019) we refocus attention on the food and drink consumption behaviours of fans. We present findings from a series of ethnographic studies into fandom in both Australia and the United Kingdom, along with insights from our earlier work in this area to examine the role of food and drink within the sports fan experience. In doing so, we provide valuable insight for both practitioners and academics and may provide solutions for those wishing to encourage fans to return to stadia.

Fan experience and journey – eating on the way and drinking in pubs

The sports stadium is often conceived as “the place in which sport is produced, consumed and delivered to sport fans” (Westerbeek & Shilbury, 1999: 2). As a result, research on sports fans generally begins and ends in an analysis from inside of the stadium, making little or no mention of the surrounds or processions fans pass to reach their home sports stadium. When such is considered, it usually sits docile in the background of work focused on the ‘football hooligan’ fan identity, or as a backdrop to deviant fan behaviour (Richards & Parry, 2019). Yet, as with the fan experience more generally, matchday food and beverage consumption often also begins outside of the stadium.

Stadia have, historically, been built within densely populated, lower-socioeconomic areas of towns and cities and so the routes that fans take to these venues often have a plethora of takeaway shops, grocers and, perhaps most importantly for fans, public houses (pubs) along the way. The ongoing popularity of these venues emphasises the importance placed on eating and drinking but may also be indicative of frustrations with the existing offerings at venues. Increasingly, clubs and venues are recognising how important food and beverages are to fans on a matchday and have looked for ways to encourage fans to eat and drink more in the venue or the immediate vicinity by setting up fan zones. These have been defined as “bounded spaces external to the stadium that are set aside for family-friendly fan engagement activities” (Richards & Parry, 2019: 4) and it is common to see food trucks or barbeques as part of the engagement activities. These sites add to the atmosphere and environment around the stadium with the smell of fast food and sound of sizzling of burgers tied to what Gaffney and Bale describe vividly as ‘sensing the stadium’ (2004). By this they are referring to the smells that fans experience en route to and inside a stadium, which, they argue, evoke responses that familiarises them with sport (Gaffney & Bale, 2004). Smells, just like familiar landmarks, anchor fans spatially on match-day by triggering in the minds of fans a return to the stadium. This in turn evokes feelings of routine, comfort, and familiarity. While eating at home symbolises intimacy and family, eating out prior to a football match symbolises festivity, excitement, and builds atmosphere for the upcoming fixture (Richards, 2015). The following fieldwork note, which was part of a study into the matchday experience at Everton Football Club, emphasises the role that the senses play in the food and beverage experience:

As I walked down Goodison Road today [towards the club’s stadium], I passed flags on my right of the timeline of the club’s history. I could smell and hear the burgers and onions sizzling away.

(Fieldwork Notes: 15/9/2012 vs. Southampton)

Our research has found that passing or meeting at take-away shops or pubs, which are often endowed with personal memories, anchors fans on their matchday journey. These spaces are locations for social interaction and are often where the match-day atmosphere begins developing. We argue that the spaces inhabited prior to the match remain spatially

configured to encourage the consumption of certain types of food and drink that are tied to interactions and engagements between fans. Therefore, eating and drinking on matchdays becomes a key element in creating a strong bond between fans and the locations that they occupy by connecting them not only to each other, but also to the overall local community (such as shop owners).

Our observations have also shown that pre-match stops at pubs are as important, if not more so, than the match itself for many fans and particularly males (Richards & Parry, 2019). The relationship between association football (although it is equally applicable to many other sports), alcohol and male bonding has been described as 'the holy trinity' (Weed, 2007), emphasising how important alcohol is in the fan experience. While pubs have been spaces for male bonding on match days (Brown, 2010; Wenner & Jackson, 2009), they are also becoming spaces for families and female fans, albeit within a gendered and spatial hierarchy (Richards & Parry, 2019).

The inextricable link with beer

As noted at the start of this chapter and above, beer remains a key purchase for many fans attending sports matches. The (excessive) drinking of alcohol gives rise to a variety of fan behaviours, including the creation of 'beer snakes' at cricket matches, which are created by stacking a large number of empty plastic beer cups to form a long 'snake'. Although this activity is frowned upon and regulated by security staffs and stewards, fans still attempt to build these creations with the building of snakes taking place in secret, hidden from the eyes of the stewards and police, and then the separate sections of the creation are brought together. Once the snake is revealed to spectators there is often a rain of plastic cups (mostly empty) being thrown towards the snake's creators to help it grow with the accompanying song "feed the snake and it will grow", which is set to the tune of the traditional hymn *Bread of Heaven* adding to this element of the spectacle.

In some countries, drinking beer while attending games is the de facto norm and a symbolic representation of masculinity. Alcohol-fuelled fights, tales of drunken exploits, and spectator boasts over the number of beers that they will be able to drink are commonplace during sports matches (Parry, 2014). Wedgwood (1997: 26) highlights that cricket crowds in Australia

in the late 1990s celebrated and exhibited hegemonic masculine displays through behaviours that included drinking excessively, noting that at cricket matches at this time, "the more beer/alcohol one drinks publicly, the more masculine one is considered". This attitude that the consumption of beer by fans is linked to masculinity is not confined to Australia or to cricket. Observations at association football matches in England reveal a similar pattern, as highlighted by the following fieldwork note from a match between Everton and Aston Villa:

I overheard a male fan decline a beer, with his friend calling him 'soft' and 'weak' and suggesting that he was 'unworthy' of being an Everton fan.

Yet in Australia, players have also elevated drinking large volumes of beer into a national 'sport'. Until recently, Australian cricketers vied with one another to set an unofficial 'world record' for the number of cans of beer consumed on the flight from Sydney to London with cult figure David Boon overtaking Rodney Marsh and setting a record of 52 cans (McKay, Emmison & Mikosza, 2011). With players setting such examples it is unsurprising that fans also associate watching sport with drinking and the price of beer at venues is often a primary concern for fans and the media alike, so much so that increases in the price of beer can make headline news (Parry & Hughes, 2016).

As a further example of the hegemonic masculinity associated with fandom, a number of Australian sports have recently clamped down on the unsavoury presence of so-called 'beer wenches'. As reported in a variety of media outlets, an advert posted on the listing site Gumtree sought young women who were "easy on the eye" to attend a cricket match with a group of male fans, dressed in a "serving wench" outfit in order to queue up for beer and then serve them during the day. The post, which promised to pay AU\$20 per hour and the price of admission, drew outrage and was criticised for being "sexist and demeaning". This practice has been reported at other events previously but in recent years it has been banned by venues who cite an inability to monitor the drunkenness of the fans as the primary reason for outlawing the practice. In this instance, the venue in question stated that "there are rules on the responsible consumption of alcohol that are very clear to everyone throughout the venue and on our website" (Queensland Times, 2015).

Given the perceived desire to consume alcohol to excess at sporting matches, the drinks served in general bar areas at stadia (in Australia in particular) are often low-strength or non-alcoholic, and limits are imposed on the number of alcoholic drinks that can be bought at a time - typically four. However, many North American venues go further and allow no more than two alcoholic drinks per single sale, with Soldier Field in Chicago only selling one beer per purchase in their seating areas during NFL games (Lenk et al., 2010). Due to alcohol-related issues, the Sydney Cricket Ground introduced a “low alcohol beer policy for public concourse areas at international cricket fixtures”, and dedicated non-alcohol seating areas in 1998 (Sydney Cricket & Sports Ground Trust, 2017). In the United Kingdom, football fans have been banned from drinking alcohol in the stands during matches, a result of earlier spectator violence. Images of drunken (male) fans fighting and causing disruptions at major sporting events also help to cement the association between fans and alcohol into the psyche of the wider population. These restrictions serve to propagate views that fans are in some way deviant, needing to be controlled (Richards & Parry, 2019). Nevertheless, the link between sport and alcohol is hard to shake.

Even in countries that have more conservative views on the consumption of alcohol, the role that beer plays in the fan experience is recognised. Qatar, a Muslim state and host of the 2022 FIFA World Cup has strict laws on the consumption of alcohol. It is normally only available at licensed hotel restaurants and bars while expatriates living in Qatar are only able to buy alcohol via a permit system. According to the US Department of State (2018), penalties for alcohol-related offences “are severe, including immediate arrest, heavy fines, imprisonment, and/or deportation”. In 2019 Qatar introduced a so-called “sin tax” as part of a series of measures to target “health-damaging” goods (Osborne, 2019). The move involved a 100 per cent tax on alcohol, which effectively doubled the already steep price of beer. These measures added to the worries of sports fans and administrators, even those who seem more willing to overlook more significant human rights violations. FIFA has long attempted to allay the fears of fans that the choice of Qatar as host nation would result in a different, more restricted experience, but in 2016 it was reported that the public consumption of beer, including in public squares and in stadia, would be banned during the tournament (Payne, 2016). However, in another example of the power-wielding of FIFA (and other sports bodies), a nation state has adapted its laws to satisfy the demands of fans (or the commercial

imperatives of the sport). At the recently completed 2019 FIFA Club World Cup in Qatar, which was viewed as somewhat of a test event ahead of the World Cup, a fan zone was set up at Doha Golf Club so that fans would be able to enjoy a traditional match day fan experience with fewer of the typical Qatari restrictions on alcohol. As part of this change, beer was subsidised and cost 'only' \$7 instead of the \$10 that is typically seen in Doha (Robinson, 2019). This move is likely to be replicated at other locations during the World Cup and, in addition, hotel happy hours are to be extended and alcohol will be available in more locations or the World Cup itself. The chief executive officer of the 2022 World Cup, Nasser al-Khater is quoted in the Guardian (Ingle, 2019) as saying:

Alcohol is not part of our culture. However, hospitality is. Alcohol is not as readily available here as in other parts of the world but for the World Cup we want to ensure it is accessible for fans who want to have a drink, so we are trying to find designated locations for fans to have alcohol, other than traditional places such as hotels and so forth...We recognise there is an issue with the price and it is something we are looking into. We are looking at finding ways to reduce the price of alcohol.

Again, the 'important' relationship between sport fandom and alcohol is recognised and ordinary rules are deemed to no longer apply. As we note, for many fans drinking alcohol has been the most important aspect of attending sports matches, again making it difficult to change behaviours and encourage healthier and more inclusive practices.

In stadia food options

Given their enclosed nature and with increasingly strict security measures to control who may enter, stadia are effectively physically sealed off from the outside world, much like airports, providing the kind of commercial domain that allows food and beverages to be controlled by a monopoly or oligopoly of caterers. A small number of suppliers pay a premium to provide a limited offering to the fans at a high mark up. The economic reality of such a system has, until recently, encouraged catering companies to offer food that is quick to prepare/cook and that has a low initial cost (typically due to its lower quality). As has been noted previously, recently enhanced security checks when entering sports venues not only ensure the safety of attendees but also stop attendees from entering with "those [food and drink items] that may

‘injure’ the profit margins of the suppliers of hospitality” (Parry et al., 2017: 220). ‘Trapped’ inside these spaces, fans have little option but to pay the price. As far back as the mid 1990s, stadium food prices were identified as an area of dissatisfaction for many sports fans (Wakefield & Sloan, 1995), and a number of more recent studies suggest that many sport attendees are still not satisfied with stadium food and beverages (Ireland & Watkins, 2010; Martin & O’Neill, 2010; Parry, Hall & Baxter, 2017; Sukalakamala, Sukalakamala & Young, 2013).

Based on the supposedly healthy nature of sport, it may be expected that sports stadia could/should act as sites for health promotion. However, one of the juxtapositions of modern professional sport is that the majority of people (including those who can afford to attend live matches) spend a large amount of time sat watching a small minority exert themselves for their viewing benefit. Moreover, the tendency for sports venues, clubs and leagues to ‘partner’ with fast food, soft drink and alcohol companies means that spectators and viewers are bombarded with messages for unhealthy food and drink choices (not to mention unhealthy lifestyle choices such as gambling and previously smoking). Any health promotion messages can, therefore, be lost amidst the background noise of these sponsors. Spectators are left perplexed at the lack of promotion for healthier foods (Ireland, Chambers & Bunn, 2019) and there is growing concern at the connection of such products with sport (Piggin, Tlili & Louzada, 2017).

More so, technological developments and the increased proliferation of internet-enabled mobile devices have resulted in enhancements such as the San Francisco 49ers’ stadium app that shows the length of queues for beverages, reducing the time that fans need to wait. In addition, there is also a greater availability of in-seat delivery, whereby food is pre-ordered and then delivered straight to the fan in their seat. App-based companies such as *Seat Serve* now allow fans to order food from the concession stands closest to their seats and receive it during the match. Another ‘enhancement’ to the fan experience is the introduction of all-you-can-eat food promotions, which in the United States may only add an extra U.S.\$15-20 onto the price of a ticket (Parry et al., 2019). Such a promotion clearly encourages fans to over-indulge and this practice can also be seen at corporate levels where hospitality packages often include unlimited food and drink.

The services listed above may provide a greater degree of ease and convenience for those attending games, but they also raise questions concerning the ethical practices of sports clubs and stadia and the extent to which they have a responsibility to promote healthy behaviours. Both of the all-you-can-eat options above are contrary to best practice in nutrition with regards to eating smaller portions more often. Browsing the selection of food available through the apps noted above reveals that what is on offer typically conforms to traditional views of stadium food; pies, chips, burgers, chocolate, and alcohol are commonly found. While it is not easy to find a clear definition of healthy foods, it is typically those that are low in fat, sugars and cholesterol that are considered healthy. Stadia sell vast quantities of foods but these are generally high in fats, sugars and cholesterol. In addition, in-seat delivery reduces the physical activity levels of match going fans, increasing sedentary behaviour. Fans are therefore 'encouraged' to embrace unhealthy practices when attending sports matches. As noted earlier, fans of all ages are widely exposed to advertising of unhealthy food and drinks with children able to recall these unhealthy sponsors (Ireland, Chambers & Bunn, 2019). Significantly, it has been found that exposing younger fans to unhealthy food and drink environments can influence behaviour patterns in later life, shaping their food choices (Koenigstorfer, 2018) so the proliferation of unhealthy choices should be of concern.

It should, therefore, not be surprising that the food available through in-seat delivery apps is unhealthy as it has been shown that stadia generally provide very few healthy options for fans (Parry, Hall & Baxter, 2017) and those that are available are often over-priced. Although a growing number of fans do want healthier options at sports matches (Parry, Hall & Baxter, 2017), it is often difficult for them to find any at a reasonable price. Healthy options have previously included frozen yogurt, teriyaki bowls and fresh fruit (Roan, 1997). Newer venues now offer healthier food options including pizzas made on whole-wheat pitas, wraps, grilled sandwiches and low-fat organic parfaits (Fabricant, 2005). A greater variety of food and beverages are also appearing on the menu of many stadia and, as noted previously (Parry, Hall & Baxter, 2017), the New York Yankees serves Latin food (while retaining the 'compulsory' hot dogs, popcorn and Cracker Jack) while Miami's Sun Life Stadium have handmade turkey empanadas, baked potatoes and a 'Pizza Dog' – a foot-long hotdog baked in pizza dough on their multicultural menu. In Australia, redevelopments at a number of their

iconic venues have included better quality food options, which spectators appear to have embraced. It is now common to find à la carte restaurants specializing in local seasonal food and local beverages, and the 2012–2014 Sydney Cricket Ground Northern Stand redevelopment included a ‘food court’ style food area and a microbrewery bar. This food court offers higher quality and healthier food options with a number of higher end brands. The newly constructed Western Sydney Stadium also has gourmet options including a Korean fried chicken burger on a charcoal bun. It also offers healthier choices such as poke bowls, salads and wraps with both gluten free and vegetarian options. In England, eighteen of the twenty Premier League clubs had invested in plant-based or low-carbon foods and most clubs were reducing or removing single use plastic from their food and drink offerings. For example, Liverpool Football Club have removed plastic straws and single use plastic food packaging, replacing the latter with compostable palm leaf and maize trays (Sport Positive, 2019). In a survey of these clubs, food options include; three bean Mexican wrap, Sticky Korean glazed vegetable, Veggie Chilli Cheese Fries at Arsenal; beetroot burgers, hot jackfruit sandwiches, Tofu Katsu curries, and beer battered tofu at Tottenham Hotspur and vegan hot dogs and burgers with non-gluten bread offered at Southampton (Sport Positive, 2019).

It is common to find either organic gardens or farms, which grow food both to use in the venues’ catering outlets and often make donations to the local community in North American stadia. For instance, Fenway Park (home of the Boston Red Sox baseball team) has a 5,000-square-foot rooftop farm and San Jose Earthquakes’ Avaya Stadium has an ‘edible garden’ which includes fruit trees (Johnston, 2015). At the time of writing in 2020, some Australian venues were also planning to adopt this initiative (Rolfe & Frost, 2019). North America also has a long tradition for tailgating, where fans set up portable grills or barbeques in stadium car parks and cook their own food as an alternative to eating within the stadia. This practice has grown from its historic association with College football in south-eastern states of North America (Keaton, Watanabe & Gearhart, 2015). Food and socialising are important elements of this practice and a varied menu is likely to be found that may include ribs, steaks and seafood (Russell, 2011). However, a variety of historical and societal factors may mean that healthy eating initiatives may not be accepted by fans.

Fan Food preferences

Stadia have historically been built in the less affluent areas of cities and towns. In these regions, particularly where there are food-insecure populations (Puppephatt et al., 2020) even when individuals value eating healthily they are often not able to afford healthier options as they cost significantly more than less healthy choices (Ashton et al, 2016). The higher cost, in addition to factors such as the greater accessibility of fast-food shops and viewing healthy eating as not masculine mean that those living in these areas may have little option but to opt for fast food and lower-priced, unhealthier options (Ashton et al., 2016; Puddephatt et al., 2020). Potentially due to a combination of these factors, the higher-quality, healthier options that we highlight above are often only available in sections of stadia that are reserved for members or corporate attendees. In this way, societal inequalities are reinforced and stereotypes are perpetuated. Moreover, consuming fast food has symbolic meanings attached to it as well, where meanings tied to particular types of food are reflective of and attached to match-day experiences and traditions. Blumer (1969) notes that the nature of an object (such as food) consists of the meanings that are created by the person and also how the group the individual is interacting with at the time defines it. Sports fans often see stadium food as a guilty pleasure to indulge in during their time in the stress-free stadium environment. Attending sports matches is often seen as a 'release' for fans from their everyday life, resulting in them engaging in indulgent behaviour that can include excessive alcohol consumption and unhealthy fast food – termed the 'football fan diet' by Ireland and Watkins (2010) in their study into association football fans. As part of our research on Everton Football Club, Stacey stated that she only let her child Callum and his cousin consume fast food on match-day. She considered the practice of consuming fast food at a sporting fixture a treat, and subsequently tied to the experience of match-day:

Well, my Callum is allowed to eat that type of, like deep-fried, type, food like, only on match-day. Only before the match, with his cousin, like a treat. Usually he doesn't eat it...well I don't know, I don't let him eat it other times.

(Interview: Stacey, 30-40)

Fans are resistant to changes in their matchday routines and habits, which can hinder attempts to introduce less traditional or healthier options. For example, corporate fans were famously described by former Manchester United football player Roy Keane as individuals

who watch the game while eating a prawn sandwich (Roy Keane, The Telegraph, 2010). Because of this comment, corporate fans and/or those who do not consume the 'traditional football fan diet' have been dubbed the 'prawn sandwich brigade' by the wider football community. It is not surprising then that clubs/venues that break from the norm and attempt to innovate with their food and beverage offerings can often come in for criticism. Parry et al. (2019) detail the example of Forest Green Rovers Football Club who became the first vegetarian, and then, in 2015, the first vegan football club in the world as part of a wider push to promote healthier and sustainable living. While their meat-free policy was initially introduced for the players, it was subsequently applied to the whole stadium. The response from fans and the media was largely negative in the first instance and drew on stereotypical views on vegetarian and vegan food. The vegan diet of the players was blamed for poor performances and it was common to find reports of resistance from players initially. While 'home' supporters have now embraced the menu, opposition fans are more likely to complain when they visit Forest Green's New Lawn stadium. Parry et al. (2019: 193) examined fan reviews of the matchday experience on the *Football Ground Guide* and *TripAdvisor* websites and note numerous comments on the club's food. They conclude that, for opposition fans, "the fan experience is adversely affected by perceptions of the poor-quality". However, food can play a major role in uniting sporting communities through change. For example, we observed how Everton Football Club celebrated the (recently appointed at the time) manager Roberto Martinez through a Spanish cultural food day in the 'fan zone' precinct at their home stadium prior to a match (see below for more on fan zones). Spanish cuisine was on offer to local fans as a way of building a connection between them and the international manager at a time when some fans were uncertain about his appointment.

Moving forward

Despite our above note of caution on stadium-based health promotion, there is some evidence that stadia and clubs are truly embracing healthier food options. There is also an expanding network of academics and practitioners that are working to improve the quality and healthiness of stadia food (and all aspects of stadia). In Europe, the Health Stadia Network has developed a series of guidance documents and toolkits to facilitate the development of stadia as health-promoting environments, which may also include healthy eating policies. Their guidance has focussed on achieving tobacco-free stadia, promoting active travel, and a

benchmarking tool for healthy matchday catering, which is supported by the British Heart Foundation. This tool includes a 'Healthy Match Mark' award for compliant venues and focusses on the sale of healthier food options; food preparation and healthier cooking techniques; the control of portion size and condiments; the supply of healthier beverages; pricing; and the promotion of healthier options. As such, Healthy Stadia, are defined as:

those which promote the health of visitors, fans, players, employees and the surrounding community...places where people can go to have a positive healthy experience playing or watching sport. (Philpott & Seymour, 2010: 69)

In addition, we, along with our earlier co-authors (see Parry, Hall and Baxter (2017) and Parry et al. (2018)) have added a number of recommendations in this area including offering healthier drinks, offering healthier food options such as sushi rolls, providing nutritional information (particularly nutrient values) for stadium food at the point of sale, and more widespread use of designated driver programmes. However, for these changes to be accepted, a cultural shift in the attitudes of and towards sports fans is needed. Rather than major sporting events (and whole countries) accommodating sports fans it may be time for fans to alter their behaviours. With the advent of new norms, driven by changing demographics of sports fans, it is possible to marginalise traditional practices and create alternative, inclusive environments.

As we have detailed, food and drink are a significant factor in the fan experience and may be able to increase repatriation intentions by creating emotive responses and comforting memories. At a time when clubs are desperate for fans to return to stadia, the significance of this factor should not be overlooked. With the cost of attending sport rising, the quality of the in-stadium experience needs to be enhanced to appeal to a greater range of fan demographics. Therefore, the cultural shift in fan attitudes that we identify above will need to be matched by similar challenges to issues such as the economically-driven practices of stadium catering, the restriction of higher-quality, healthier options to member and corporate sections, and the tendency for clubs and venues to partner themselves with sponsors associated with unhealthy lifestyle choices. Clubs and stadia cannot continue with

established practices that reinforce social inequalities and impact both the pocket and the health of fans.

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