

LINCOLN CITY FOOTBALL CLUB

The role the club has to play
in developing 'Brand Lincoln'
and the city's economy



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Lincoln International Business School And Coventry Business School



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The report acknowledges where Lincoln City Football Club (LCFC) is making a positive contribution to ‘Brand Lincoln’ and the economy, but also seeks to offer suggestions on how they might enhance and develop this for the benefit of the club and the city. The report is exploratory in nature and rather than reporting simply on numerical evidence of impact (which is scant at this point in time and an initial investigation as produced here was required to ascertain which areas to examine) it seeks to consolidate knowledge about the current contribution of LCFC on ‘Brand Lincoln’ and the wider visitor economy and to suggest ways in which this could be enhanced and developed.

The report is presented in four sections. The first is a short section to contextualise the research that has taken place. The following two sections are designed to provoke discussion between LCFC’s Executive Management Team and spark ideas about new ways of capitalising on the club’s success and making a positive contribution to the city’s visitor economy.

To achieve this we examine the current and potential contribution of LCFC to the city of Lincoln through engaging with cultural programming, leveraging fans, utilising fan zones, and the concept of the ‘last mile’ in sporting events and venues. We then examine the current and potential economic benefits to the hospitality and leisure sectors in Lincoln, looking at food and beverage outlets and accommodation, and then retail and transportation. Finally we consider the potential for further partnership research between LCFC, The University of Lincoln, and Coventry University, as we believe there is further research potential in this area.

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REPORT HEADLINES

Michael Duignan

- Football clubs can, if the visitor experience is harnessed appropriately, significantly contribute to both short-term visitor economy and the longer-term brand enhancement benefits of a place.
- As a Corporate Partner of Visit Lincoln, LCFC must identify strategic linkages between sports, culture and Lincoln's destination image.
- Fans, whether home or away, assume the identity of cultural tourists too and therefore can be understood as potential consumers of the city and its culture – as well as consumers of football.
- Straddling the sporting and cultural aspects of the visitor experience may result in what Weed (2008) argues to be 'active sport event tourists' who engage longer and deeper with a place resulting in greater economic spend. Currently, 46.6% of match day spending is spent on food and drink but there is room to grow this and other types of spending.
- It is in the best interest of LCFC and Visit Lincoln to follow fans' spending in immediate term and longitudinally: How much? Where do they spend? How long do they stay?
- Data suggests on match day, significant increases in sales for global chains (e.g. KFC reported 100% increase in revenue) and local businesses (e.g. Rzyaz Indian 60% increase). However, bringing in a more local offer is vital for supporting the sustainability of small businesses and better showcasing local products.
- Extending cultural stays by developing relationships with local cultural attractions and festivals, and promoting a two day itinerary to encourage fans to 'make a weekend' of sporting-come-cultural trip.
- Data at the time of writing suggests that 15% of fans travel 50+ miles to the match, presenting the opportunity to sell overnight stay packages that could be developed in conjunction with Visit Lincoln and local businesses.
- LCFC's 'Fan Zone' offers an excellent platform to be developed further deploying mobile street food movements to produce a more local, authentic and distinctive offer, and the advertising and promotion of national and regional businesses, both for extra third stream income.
- 177 of 240 respondents (74%) believe the club has a positive impact on the reputation and branding of the city – and – televised matches play a key role in increasing awareness and attention to the city itself via a positive image transfer between LCFC, sport and Lincoln as a destination.
- Football generates significant 'civic pride': LCFC may wish to mobilise fans-as- ambassadors to champion what the city has to offer and work alongside Support Liaison Officers (SLOs) and Visit Lincoln's city ambassador scheme.
- LCFC already have some excellent examples of partnership working that have impacted positively on Brand Lincoln and the local economy. These are provided in short vignettes to demonstrate existing achievements and to be used to develop future relationships.
- The closing section presents a suggestion for a plan of activity between the University of Lincoln, Coventry University, LCFC and other stakeholders to put some of these ideas and initiatives in to actions. It includes a commitment from the University of Lincoln's Department of Marketing and Tourism to further develop a SMART partnership research action plan utilising the expertise of the Sports Business Management Programme Leaders.



Lincoln City Football Club:

A CONTEMPORARY SUCCESS STORY

Abigail Hunt

INTRODUCTION

Despite having a long history full of notable successes stretching back to 1884 (Lincoln City Football Club, 2018), LCFC (The Imps), were described as 'languishing in the National League when Danny Cowley arrived in 2016' (Bate, 2018). In the time between Cowley's arrival and the writing of this report, LCFC's well-documented success on the pitch has resulted in promotion to Sky Bet's League Two, getting to the quarter finals of the FA Cup, and winning the Checkatrade Trophy (Lincoln City Football Club, 2018). This success has led to a significant growth in the club's fan base, with a rise in match day crowds 'from the 2/3000 mark to near full-capacity numbers that nearly surpass 10,000' (Saunders, 2018), and in the levels of support for events like the Checkatrade Trophy final, which saw 27,000 supporters travel to Wembley to watch the match (Lincoln City Football Club, 2018). There has also been an upturn in the number of high profile corporate sponsors, which include University of Lincoln and the Lincolnshire Co-op (Lincoln City Football Club, 2018).

LCFC has always made important social and cultural contributions to the City of Lincoln, but the recent success of the club has also led to a much higher profile in the media including television, newspaper, radio, and online coverage (Saunders, 2018). As LCFC has benefitted from this success it has started to form strategic partnerships to ensure Lincoln's economy benefits from increased numbers of people visiting or finding about the city through enhanced media coverage. A key relationship is with Community Interest Company and Destination Management Organisation 'Visit Lincoln', who have sought partnership opportunities with influential businesses in the city to boost the city's profile and brand, and to help Lincoln become a top tourism destination in the UK with international significance (Visit Lincoln 2018 and Murray, 2018).

LCFC Chief Executive Liam Scully, summed up the importance of this relationship when he explained that:

'As Lincoln City FC continues to grow on and off the pitch, we believe it will have a positive impact on the local economy; not least with the travelling away fans and local home fans, but also with other commercial opportunities that will be presented by having a vibrant football club within Lincoln'. (Murray, 2018)

The initial brief for the report was to ascertain the positive economic impact of LCFC on Lincoln, however secondary and primary research highlighted that this data does not currently exist. This is most likely because whilst LCFC has a long history and

an important place in the life of the city, its economic contribution has not been captured before in economic surveys. This resulted in us changing our approach to undertake empirical research to gain an insight into economic activity associated with the club, and to explore the potential of LCFC to impact positively on the branding and economy of the city going forward.

Research Methodology

It is within the context of the club's recent successes that staff from the Department of Marketing and Tourism, based in the Lincoln International Business School (LIBS), which is one of the four Colleges of the University of Lincoln, were approached by the club to examine the current and potential contribution of LCFC to Lincoln's economy and brand development (University of Lincoln, 2018).

We utilised this opportunity for international students studying on our MSc programmes to engage in real client-based research; something that we are passionate about as it ensures that we offer a great student experience, contributes to the success of our graduates whilst creating research with impact, and developing and maintaining strong partnerships and employer engagement (University of Lincoln, 2016). We also took the opportunity to work with a colleague, Dr Michael Duignan, based at Coventry Business School, Coventry University, who has written extensively about the local, regional, national, and international economic and social impact of sporting events (Coventry University, 2018).

Twenty four LIBS postgraduate students engaged in visits to LCFC to familiarise themselves with the nature of the club and to meet Ritchie Bates, Commercial Director. A fan zone survey was developed by students and authors, encouraging the development of a 'student as producer' activity. The students then conducted the survey at a home game against MK Dons collecting 240 survey responses. In parallel, 5 student groups were formed and challenged to investigate the economic impact of LCFC success on Hospitality and Food outlets; Retail; Accommodation and Transportation. Each group were mentored throughout the process and made final presentations to LCFC representatives. The students then submitted their final reports for assessment and it is from the primary research and additional desk based secondary research that the Authors have produced this report and its accompanying presentation.

The Report

The report acknowledges where LCFC makes a positive contribution to 'Brand Lincoln' and the economy, but also seeks to offer suggestions on how they might enhance and develop this for the benefit of the club and the city. It is written in a style that we feel matches the enthusiasm and dynamism of LCFC both on and off the pitch, which arguably captures what Saunder's describes as *'best atmosphere in the division, hardly surprising given the feel-good factor around the place'* (Saunders, 2017). It is exploratory in nature and rather than reporting only on numerical evidence of impact, which is scant at this point in

time and an initial investigation as produced here was required to ascertain which areas to examine, it seeks to consolidate knowledge about the current contribution of LCFC on 'Brand Lincoln' and the wider visitor economy and to suggest ways in which this could be enhanced and developed.

The student researchers presented detailed methodologies and factual findings in their presentations to LCFC staff, so we have aimed to spark discussion between LCFC's Executive Management Team about new ways of capitalising on the club's success and making a positive contribution to the city's visitor economy.

We start by examining the current and potential contribution of LCFC to the city of Lincoln through engaging with cultural programming, working in partnership with fans, utilising fan zones, and the concept of the last mile in sporting events and venues. We then examine the current and potential economic benefits to the hospitality and leisure sectors in Lincoln, looking at food and beverage outlets and accommodation, and then retail and transportation, within the context of meeting the physiological and safety needs (Maslow, 1943).

Finally, we consider the potential for further partnership research between LCFC, The University of Lincoln, and Coventry University, as we believe there is further research potential in this area.



The Current and Potential Contribution of Lincoln City Football Club on ‘Brand Lincoln’ and the Wider Visitor Economy:

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT, CULTURAL PROGRAMMING, PARTNERING WITH FANS, FAN ZONES AND THE LAST MILE

Michael Duignan

INTRODUCTION

Significant evidence to date identifies the numerous ways sports organisations, including football clubs and their ‘match days’ have on local, regional and national economies (EY, 2017). For this section of the report, we focus on both local and regional impacts with respect to the visitor economy and on ‘Brand Lincoln’, as both sports and related cultural activities play a major role in driving economic growth not only in the UK but internationally (Visit Britain, 2018). We suggest that by evidencing and/or planning for wider local, city-wide and regional impact LCFC can strengthen a case for continued/increased public and private sector support, alongside relationship with local stakeholders, like the hosting and near-by communities (Duignan et al, 2018). Therefore, this section of the report outlines a range of current and potential future ways LCFC can contribute to ‘Brand Lincoln’ and the visitor economy and opportunity areas and strategic actions outlined across the following section could be central to realising benefits.

Strategic alignment between LCFC and Visit Lincoln

As ascertained from our secondary research, LCFC and Visit Lincoln have already embarked on a strategic partnership as LCFC have joined Visit Lincoln as a Corporate Partner, which has already resulted in the production of a Visiting Supporters' Guide by Visit Lincoln and corporate sponsorship of the 2018/19 Lincoln Loves Kids booklet by LCFC (Visit Lincoln 2018). However, if the club wishes to strengthen its relationship with the wider city, specifically in terms of contributing to 'Brand Lincoln' and visitor economy benefits, we suggest that LCFC should strategically align with the objectives of Visit Lincoln. As argued throughout this section, strategic alignment is at the core of key growth opportunities. Indeed, greater alignment will principally help drive and boost visitors to the city, club and immediate areas. Both fans and non-fans can provide LCFC with an opportunity to reach non-fan markets at the regional and national domestic level and international visitors, for example students in the city and inbound European/International visitors. These longer-term destination development focused impacts will complement the existing 'immediate' business opportunities stimulated on match days.

This research and report focussed on LCFC and the city of Lincoln, at the client's request, but future development might include thinking about strategic alignment with Visit Lincoln's mandate to benefit **'everyone who lives and works across Lincolnshire'** (Visit Lincoln 2018) and whilst the literature on the

potential of this is currently limited, widening the scope of LCFC to make a positive contribution to the regional economy across Lincolnshire and the East Midlands by developing a wider cultural offer that targets an international market.

Adjoining LCFC's sporting offer with the wider 'Brand Lincoln' cultural offer

A productive, symbiotic relationship and affiliated marketing opportunities between LCFC and Visit Lincoln could increase the derived demand of both the sporting and cultural offer. Simply put, for those visiting the city to engage in fan activity, for example both home and away fans going to the Fan Zone and match-day, could potentially be encouraged to engage with the city and region, including both retail, hospitality and entertainment industries. Yet, there is little evidence in existence that illustrates the specific financial impact on these different geographic areas and different sectors. Further work is needed to examine visitor spending, for both home and away fans, particularly in relation to their average spend and the location it takes place in to extrapolate economic benefit. This could either done as a snap shot in the current year, or could be looked at longitudinally including a period of time before and after the watershed of 2016.

With this limitation in mind, LCFC might consider working with Visit Lincoln and other key stakeholders in the city's visitor economy to link the sport and cultural offer in line with the city's cultural programme throughout the seasons and based on seasonality.

For example there is the potential to link to major events such as the Light Festival and the Christmas Market and in offering two day offer' tickets which include entertainment activities such as dinner or the theatre. Additionally, LCFC may think about how they link in with ongoing cultural activities like Lincoln Business Improvement Group's (BIG) urban-city space animation efforts and cultural walking tours (Lincoln Business Improvement Groupa, 2018). Of course, the club might also consider linking with attractions in the city such as Lincoln Castle, Lincoln Cathedral, and other heritage sites.

The data collected by students at the match against the MK Dons indicated that most away fans are willing to undertake significant travel to watch a match at Sincil Bank, Lincoln. This suggests that there is the potential to place and emphasis on promoting 'Brand Lincoln' to 'inbound' visitors. Work on this has already started with the production of the Visiting Supporters' Guide (Murray, 2018), but could be extended by working with respective 'away team' communication officers to promote the city and encourage overnight stays and engagement with other activities by twinning sport and other culture in Lincoln.

The Fan Zone

As LCFC are aware, encouraging fans to stay longer in and around the venue and wider city is central to boosting the visitor economy. The Fan Zone is an excellent way of doing this, and has an important role in the visitor experience to a match and the city of Lincoln. The zone is an area for

home and away fans and is not only a safe and friendly space where **'football fans from rivals clubs [can be seen] happily rubbing shoulders'** (Whiley, 2017). This is in direct contrast to English football's reputation and the general public's perception about the atmosphere at matches, and therefore might be viewed as a key tool for ensuring a positive contribution to the brand image of Lincoln and the club continues. The Fan Zone also offers brands an advertising opportunity, maximised by people spending some time in the zone. A growing business opportunity around such spaces has been around the deployment of 'mobile street food' culture (e.g. FoodPark: <http://www.foodparkcam.com/>). Simply put, by having a designated gathering and a captive market: mobilising local vendors, or inspiring the development of an offer to showcase local food, drink and indeed the people of Lincoln, offers a unique economic and social development opportunity. Inviting locals in to football club and sport spaces supply chain is a critical way to support local development as well as provide a unique, authentic and highly distinctive tourist offer for away fans (Pappalepore and Duignan, 2016). And, of course, for home fans to engage with their own place. It is another opportunity for third stream income: ventures like FoodPark pay for the privilege to access captive consumer markets and LCFC can benefit from commission based structures based on units sold of products and services on offer. Capturing fans en-route to the games and encouraging them to dwell locally is of vital importance and there must be a strong food and culture based offer to do this.



If done well, like FoodPark and associated FoodPark Night Markets (<http://www.foodparkcam.com/night-market.html>), organisers can use venue and spaces adjacent to the venue as recognisable cultural hubs and animated spaces that can not only generate economic and social benefit immediately before and after the game, but play a critical role in Lincoln's city brand and drive regional tourists to the city: attractive to a mix of locals, fans and families.

The Perceptions of Brand Lincoln in the Media

Although case study evidence from Ham et al (2016), Edensor and Millington (2008) and Rowe and McGuirk (1999) illustrates the link between club success and an improvement in the perception of a brand, awareness and brand image of the host city is hard to discern, beyond the fans as a social group, in relation to the wider destination development effects the club's success has had on 'Brand Lincoln'.

The student researchers were able to establish that 177 of the 240 (74%) of respondents to a survey on their perception of the impact of LCFC on Brand Lincoln believe the club has a positive impact on the reputation and branding of the city, and 24 of the 240 respondents (10%) believe the club has a slightly positive impact on the reputation and branding of the city. This work could be extended by further surveys of fans and non-fans to understand the home and away fan view of the city and non-fan view of the club and before and after perceptions of the city could be examined.

It is clear that LCFC's success has generated media coverage since 2016 and has had a direct impact on 'Brand Lincoln'. For example, student researchers identified a direct correlation between the broadcast of two live matches on the BBC in January and February of the 2017/18 season with a significant spike in the number of visitors to the Visit Lincoln website. This increased interest in the city as a destination may indicate a level of interest in watching a match live by those viewing the match on TV. However, we believe that more research is required in terms of media viewing figures, and the place marketing used when projecting images of the city.

The fan perspective, positivity and "Supporter Liaison Officers"

Capitalising on 'civic pride' of fans is a great asset. LCFC fans appear to be very supportive of the club, according to the research data. Here, we can make a reasonable assumption that the individual fan, who is positive, will act as an ambassador of the city when communicating and networking with those outside of this fan network. As a result, individual and collective fan groups are central to strengthening Brand Lincoln. LCFC could do further work to recognise the contribution such 'fans-as-ambassadors' could make to championing locality, city and region in a number of ways such as personal networks, like friends and family (VFR), and incoming away fans to Lincoln. Locals, especially those with a vested interest in the city, can be considered gatekeepers and/or key informants who may well play a key role in introducing those outside traditional

LCFC fan networks to the city. Indeed, the same can be said for Support Liaison Officers (SLOs) too, who are on hand and tasked to assist fans and gain feedback which will be passed on to the club. These roles may wish to link up with Lincoln's Business Improvement Group's "Ambassadors" scheme, and/or this groups' ambassadors may work in tandem with LCFC to do some fan engagement work to promote the city and beyond (Lincoln Business Improvement Group⁹, 2018). We believe that strategic links between LCFC, BIG and Visit Lincoln, are key for sharing positive information about the city and club, and that there is the scope to develop the role within the football context.

Leveraging the 'Last Mile' for 'immediate' business leveraging and space to influence visitor behaviour and consumption

LCFC may consider how they further develop, alongside stakeholders, a locally focussed offer across the 'Last Mile' from transport hub(s) to the venue. The 'Last Mile' is a space that could be transformed to host start-up food and drink entrepreneurs in particular, which may work based on the student researchers' finding that 46.6% of match day spending is on food and drink. This approach is commercially lucrative and celebratory, and thus opens up opportunities for hedonistic spending. Organisers of the 'Last Mile' may consider how they encourage longer stay and 'dwell time' to encourage consumption (Duignan and McGillivray, 2019; Duignan, Down and O'Brien, 2019). The 'Last Mile', also provides a unique area to encourage fan

interaction and families to come together to engage in cultural consumption; a space which LCFC has started to leverage through the 'Fan Zone'.

Additionally, we suggest further work is needed to think about the 'gaze' of visitors to and from the venue. More specifically, it appears as though car parks could be usefully strategically leveraged to do this along with the 'Last Mile', the Fan Zone, and as wayfinding points that link to and from central and peripheral spaces in the centre of the city. Taking this one step further, within the sports clubs, pubs etc. usually frequented by home and away fans could be used as spaces for 'place imaging' too.

Liam Scully also identified that the 'Last Mile' might, in fact, be the 'First Mile', as fans leave the ground after a match. This offers the club significant potential to encourage fans to engage in further cultural consumption as they leave the venue. This could include selling more food and drink, but also capitalising on wins by selling a range of souvenirs.

Conclusions and Summary of Recommendations

LCFC have already entered into a mutually beneficial strategic partnership with Visit Lincoln, but we believe this could be enhanced through the alignment of strategic objectives and that there is the potential to take a regional approach in linking football and tourism with Visit Lincoln. We suggest that there is the potential to work with Visit Lincoln so that football becomes part of the city's cultural offer, and that this can be utilised to encourage wider engagement

with the city's cultural offering, longer stays, and influencing the development of 'Brand Lincoln' and the visitor economy. The Fan Zone is an excellent opportunity to keep people in the immediate area longer and is key in ensuring a positive visitor experience and could be harnessed to promote a positive club and city brand image. The continuation of a strong media presence is also important in brand awareness and it is clear that the coverage given to the club could promote visits to Lincoln. Fans are the clubs most powerful ambassadors and there are schemes in the city that could be joined or replicated to ensure there are ambassadors to support home and away fans and to promote 'Brand Lincoln' and the club.

Finally, there is the space to develop and apply the 'Last Mile' concept to develop the sense of occasion and encourage more visitor consumption at Sincil Bank. Indeed, with higher footfall breed opportunity for target marketing: whether that be national or regional level firm advertising. Therefore, physical and digital advertising billboards et cetera could be used. These spaces can have a significant impact on visitor experience and the visitor economy. Undoubtedly, clubs have transformed sports spaces to house cultural events and festivity (e.g. live gigs, food festivals et cetera) at time when match days are not on, or out of season. Investing in the development and maintenance of 'Last Mile', or 'First Mile', areas adjacent to house cultural programming would generate additional revenue *and* strengthen LCFC's commitment toward contributing to city's tourism offer too. Cities across the country are increasingly



branding themselves as 'event' or 'festival' cities: this could help contribute to this growing movement, particularly as event tourism is the largest sub-sector of tourism growth in the UK and globally (Getz, 2007).



The Current and Potential Economic Benefits of Lincoln City Football Club to the Hospitality Sector in Lincoln:

MAKING THE MOST OUT OF PHYSIOLOGICAL AND SAFETY HUMAN NEEDS

Nick Taylor

INTRODUCTION

In 1943 Maslow suggested that humans are motivated by a hierarchy of needs that start at the most basic level with our physiological needs, of which food and drink are a part of. This section explores the relationship between LCFC and the food and drink providers in the city. The research was conducted in a variety of outlets between 22nd September and the 6th October 2018 and included two match days and non-match day comparisons in trade. Face to face interviews were conducted with staff or managers of seven pubs and five restaurants to assemble the information about their match day trade and the possibility of building relationships between the pubs/restaurants and LCFC. Regarding the sampling method, pubs were selected based on their distance to the ground and type of outlet including The Cardinal's Hat, The Strait and Narrow, Walkabout, The Square Sail, The Sports Bar, The Hop and Barley, Treaty of Commerce and Golden Eagle. Restaurants were chosen based on nations including Italian, Chinese, Japanese, Kurdish and Polish restaurant as well as fast food take-away restaurants.

Pubs

It was observed that the sports pubs (The Square Sail, Walkabout) were busier on match days compared to the other types of pubs. This also includes pubs on the High Street leading towards the ground. An interview with the Treaty of Commerce indicated an increase of between 200-300% in trade on Saturday match days, with the pub being busy from 1pm to 2:30pm. After-match trade is also high on match days. The impact for Tuesday night games was still significant, but was not as high as the Saturday match trade. Other pub retailers such as The Strait and Narrow and The Cardinal’s Hat emphasised that their target segments are not football fans, so they don’t expect any changes in the flow of customers between match days and non-match days. Additionally, an interview with The Sports Bar, Brayford confirmed they are not affected by match day trade. Companies did not provide our student researchers with the monetary value of this increase in trade, However a further, focussed, research project may be able to unlock this information and consider the spend in the city’s pubs on a match day. This work might link to established behaviours, or fan rituals, already recognised by the club, and may be used to inform how more economic activity can be generated from initiatives such as coupons for season ticket holders.

Restaurants/Fast Food

The restaurants that the students’ looked at were classified into three categories.

Type A - Fast Food chains (KFC/ McDonalds etc.)

Type B - Small local Fast Food (Fish & Chip/ Kebab shops etc.)

Type C - Café shops (Costa etc.)

The large fast food chain eateries (Type A) experience the biggest effects in sales compared to the other types. Outlet managers in seven of the eight restaurants interviewed reported an increase in sales on match days, with KFC suggesting that sales are also up on last season.

As expected, the eateries closest to the stadium along the High Street, tend to have a larger increase in sales. For example, one eatery (KFC) which is located around the ground reported a 100% increase in sales on match day, further away from the ground, a Burger King representative reported a 10% increase in food sales.

For the promotions, only one eatery (Papa John’s Pizza) has a partnership with LCFC. Others only have general daily promotions for public but no specific promotion for fans. However, McDonalds in the city centre said they would take specific promotion plans into consideration in future. As for LCFC’s impact, six eateries think they experience a positive effect in terms of trade and brand image for Lincoln. One eatery also commented on concerns over security.

For Type B, small local fast food eateries - an interview with Rzyaz Indiantakeaway revealed a significant increase in match day trade with an estimated 60% increase in sales on match days.

This category believed there was little difference between last year’s trade and the current season. Most owners still consider those eateries which are near the ground on the High Street experience more trade. Generally, there is a positive effect for the Type B eateries and scope for the club to develop joint promotions/sponsorship. Some owners reported concerns regarding traffic delays and one again raised concerns over security.

Type C eateries are café shops and they are a supplement to this research. Interviews were conducted with three outlets. One café shop (Cafe Nero in St Marks) has a moderate increase in sales, others are not sure. Two shops have busier work, but one (Costa in the St Marks) has less work. Café shops which are located closer to the high street tend to have a positive effect on their business. None of the sample approached had promotions for fans, however they still consider the performance of the LCFC is related with the changes in their business.

In general, on every match day nearly half of football fans would choose to have fast food and this is believed to bring a huge business opportunity to the local business community.

When referred to the impact of LCFC on the city, most fans and business owners believe that the performance of LCFC helps to improve the City’s reputation and economy. Again these results suggest that further, detailed research on average spends could take place. They also suggest that these businesses benefit financially from LCFC activities



HEAT MAP 1

and are generally supportive of receiving the custom. This does raise the potential of offering match day ‘specials’, creating advertising opportunities, and developing sponsorship opportunities with companies that do particularly well from this business. The concerns over security are interesting as this is also a key need in relation to human motivation, and perhaps if considered alongside the commentary in Michael Duignan’s section could be easily addressed through the LCFC communications team.



The status quo can be maintained in relation to food choices, but more radically there is the opportunity to totally re-think the offer in relation to sustainability and the visitor experience and to offer more slow food. It was identified by the student researchers and secondary research that fan families are an important part of the LCFC fan base, and they are a key demographic that engage with the slow, local, movements. This allows an alternative food and drink offer, dedicated to the interests and price point of the fans and can contribute to supporting SMEs and entrepreneurs from Lincoln and the wider county. The Fan Zone and the 'Last Mile' offer the club the opportunity to bring new food and drink vendors to the area, and for innovators in street food to work with LCFC to open new supply chain routes. Indeed, this has both 'immediate leveraging' and local economic opportunities over fans spending cash in national chains (leading to economic leakage), and would help showcase LCFC, and what Lincolnshire has to offer in terms of food, drink, and innovation; something that has been suggested in recent research as an antidote to the 'clone town' (Duignan et al 2017, and Duignan et al, 2019). The student researchers' findings suggest there is significant opportunity to develop the 'local' food and drink offer, as the average spend on food is £21 per match day.

Accommodation

This section explores the relationship and impact of LCFC on the accommodation market. The study method included semi-structured interviews with some of the accommodations in the city of Lincoln.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with three partnership hotel managers and one non-partnership budget hotel. The findings suggest that there is a mild impact attributed to a match day event. It is unclear whether football club supporters bring more economic activity to the local accommodation business. Also, there is no significant difference in terms of the accommodation capacity on match days. Although, some managers reported difficulty in differentiating football fans from casual visitors to their hotels. In addition, the season ticket discounts for food and beverage were reported to have a limited impact. These results might occur because of several factors, such as the distance that away fans travel and the way they travel, with many fans choosing club sponsored coaches.

It is clear from our research that a more strategic approach to encourage longer overnight stays by both non-local fans and non-fans (i.e. families, friends) could be beneficial. Strategic alliances with 'locally' orientated accommodation services like B&B's and Airbnb's through to hotels is key to this through discounted rates, symbiotic relationships and joint marketing efforts.

The student researchers identified that 15% of fans travel either 50 or over 50 miles to the match, which does present an opportunity for a pre or post-game stay with, or without, family.

The partnership with Visit Lincoln may be key in developing relationships with providers or they may be able to broker these for LCFC.

In exploring partnership benefits, we found that the club could mainly benefit the accommodation industry by attracting more football fans to visit the city for tourism. There are recommendations for LCFC to work with other local facilities. This may increase the possibility of establishing a new relationships with the local accommodation and encourage non-local football fans to stay in the city of Lincoln in order to induce more impact on the local community. A further idea is for the club to cooperate with other operators to improve the benefits of the club and increase possibilities to form new relationships. It is suggested that the club could have an all-in-one package for football supporters that includes discount for a tour around Lincoln, the accommodation for a night, and a football match ticket.

Retail

This section explores the relationship and impact of LCFC to the retail market in the city. The study method includes primary research with some of the retailers in the City of Lincoln. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a number of retailers to assess match day impact.

The research activity utilised a classification approach for retailers:

- A – Large shops (Tesco, Primark, Sports Direct)
- B – Tangible shops (Convenience stores)
- C – Intangible shops (Barber, Betting Shops)

The most significant impact is on the B-type,

convenience stores. They experience more customers on a match day and those customers tend to spend more. One owner reported an increase of between 200-300 customers on a match day. The Fan Zone survey suggested that 7.3% of fans use convenience shopping either before or after a match. The retail research reveals that the majority of this spend is in local convenience stores.

Two opportunities emerge - how to develop partnerships with local stores and how to capture this spend at the stadium. One idea for developing partnerships with local stores was to strengthen the relationship of the fans and community. The convenience stores can be utilised to set up a 'Match-day-meal-deal'. Similar to the popular 'Meal Deal' to build up on its popularity and could be branded as a 'Red Imps offer'. As part of the research, all retailers were asked if they followed the club and had an interest in the club's performance. The highest response to this was from B types where nine out of 11 retailers were actively engaged. This, by comparison, falls to almost zero for our type A stores. Type A stores reported no measurable change in business during match days. However, sports outlets did identify with a higher footfall, but this tended to be looking rather than buying. Type C retailers reported an increase in trade, especially betting shops along the high street. Interestingly, they also experience more trade after the match if the club have won. The key opportunity for LCFC from the retail study is to work with the Type B convenience store trade.

Transportation

This section explores the relationship and impact of LCFC on the Transportation market. It includes different sectors such as cars, buses, coaches, trains and taxis. The key findings reveal cars are the main means of transport for fans travelling to games. Secondly, South Common Car Park and street parking are the most favourable choices for fans to park their cars during match days. Overall, the impact of the club on the use of cars as a means of transportation for fans can be seen as the most significant, while taxi companies are the least impacted than other means of transportation. The use of cars can be linked to the location of fans, as evidenced by other research commissioned by LCFC. The Heat Map below, produced by another researcher, provides a picture of where fans are based.

From the report, the club should focus on improving the service quality and the visual appeal of South Common Car Park as well as further investigation on the impact on trains, buses and coaches. Firstly, the success of LCFC has a significant impact on the number of people using cars when travelling to the match. Therefore, it is necessary for the club to focus on the car parking services provided. Meanwhile, different sectors of transportation such as trains, buses and coaches show a stable number of people using their services. Taxis can be considered the least affected factor.



HEAT MAP 2
Lincoln City Football Club 2019



Means of transportation used by the fans

Means of Transportation	Number	Percentage (%)
Walk	35	14.6
Bike	3	1.3
Car	149	62.1
Bus	27	11.3
Coach	18	7.5
Train	8	3.3
Total	240	100

The frequency analysis identifies cars as the most favourable choice for people travelling to the match with 149 respondents which accounts for 62.1%. People who walk represent the second largest group with 35 people which accounts for 14.%. People using buses or coaches represent the third and fourth largest group of respondents with 27 and 18 respondents.

Car Park Usage

Car park	Number	Percentage (%)
South Common	19	8.9
Town Centre Car Park	28	13.1
Street Park	77	36
Other	75	35
None	15	7
Missing values = 26		
Total	240	100

Comparison between South Common and National Car Park

	South Common	National Car Park
Price	£4	£6
Time	Before and after the match	2-3 hours
Distance to the stadium	0.3 mile	>1 mile
Capacity	250 vehicles	210 vehicles

The student researchers conducted observations together via interviews with staff members of South Common Car Park and National Car Park. South Common is an open area which was recently planned by the City of Lincoln Council to officially be the parking place for football fans on match days. Observations and discussions indicated that fans like parking at the South Common as it will take only

five minutes to walk to the stadium which is shorter in comparison to the National Car Park. However, the service quality and the visual appeal of South Common Car Park should be improved as a way to strengthen the reputation of the club. Moreover, the staff member from the National Car Park suggested that there is almost no change in the number of people using their service on match days compared with normal days. This comment does not align with our research findings. He also believed that football fans will prefer using South Common or other street parking as they are more convenient.

Conclusions and Summary of Recommendations

There is clearly a significant rise in trade at pubs and food outlets on match days and there is the potential to do more research into the average spend at these places. There is the potential of developing more food and beverage offers, advertising, and sponsorship opportunities with these companies. There does seem to be some concern over security, but this could be addressed by the communications team. Whilst the current situation is agreeable, there is an opportunity to re-think the offer in relation to sustainability and the visitor experience and to offer more slow food to enhance the visitor experience and to engage with local food producers from the wider region. A more strategic approach to developing overnight stays in the city is needed and could be achieved in partnership with Visit Lincoln. The percentage of fans travelling for 50 miles or more suggests there is the potential to



do this. The club could build their relationship with providers or ask Visit Lincoln to broker this for them, and should consider creating tourist packages with accommodation providers. The biggest engagement by fans with retail is with local convenience stores. This offers the opportunity to create match day meal deals and the opportunity to engage with business owners as they are more likely to have an interest in the club and how they've played. It would appear that most people drive to matches and park on the South Common. This is not surprising in light of poor transport links in the region. There is the scope to develop car parks as a key area for marketing the rest of the city, perhaps through the visualisation of place and ambassadors, but also to ensure a positive experience and maintenance of the reputation of the club and its facilities.



Case Studies:

SHOWING THE BENEFITS OF PARTNERSHIP WORKING

Abigail Hunt

LCFC has many existing relationships with companies that benefit the fans, the sponsor, the club, and the city. We have provided two vignettes that we deemed not to be commercially sensitive to exemplify how these relationships have contributed to Brand Lincoln and the local economy; these can be replicated by LCFC in relation to any key partnerships. We have purposely picked new projects as these also exemplify how key messages can be transmitted when there is little hard data. As the data on the impact is generated it can be added to the vignettes for further income generation purposes. What these two examples demonstrate is the enterprising nature of LCFC, their innovation, willingness to work on very different types of partnership, and the desire to benefit Lincoln and its people as well as the club. This could develop into a key narrative for the club.



The University of Lincoln

LCFC have a close relationship with the University of Lincoln and have worked with the organisation in a range of ways. One example of this is the partnership working between LCFC and the University's Sports Sciences students and staff. The partnership has resulted in the club recruiting graduate students from the courses not only to the First Team, but also to the Youth Academy as both part time and full time employees (Lincoln City Football Club, 2019). The significance of this should not be underestimated as one of the most important roles for a university is local graduate job creation through partnership working. Universities have a key economic role to play in

their host cities and an important aspect in Lincoln's case is to contribute to a workforce that meets the need of the city and contributes to its growth socially, culturally, and economically. It is clear from this example that partnership working between LCFC and the University of Lincoln has resulted in highly trained graduates staying in the city on completion of their degrees. The economic benefit of graduates staying in the city will impact on the housing, retail, and leisure economies. In terms of branding, it supports the growing identity of Lincoln as a traditional UK university city, which will attract more students to the University.



The Lincolnshire Co-op

LCFC has a long-standing, positive, relationship with the Lincolnshire Co-op, which has resulted in innovation to benefit Brand Lincoln and an SME in the city. LCFC, The Lincolnshire Co-op and the Lincoln Tea and Coffee Company recently partnered to develop and market a LCFC themed coffee, which is being served in Legends Lounge, VIP Lounge, and hospitality boxes at Sincil Bank. In addition to this the coffee is 'currently available to buy in almost 40 Lincolnshire Co-op stores in and around the Lincoln area' and income generated will help fund Lincoln City Foundation (LCF) community activities (Lincolnshire Co-opa, 2019, Lincolnshire Co-opb,

2019, and The Lincoln Tea and Coffee Company, 2019). This links to the branding of Lincoln and Lincolnshire in terms of food and drink tourism, which is a strong theme for the city and region. It also demonstrates how LCFC are pivotal in generating income for SMEs, which is important as the county's economy is reliant on these businesses. There is clearly social benefit from the income created through sales of the coffee, because of the LCF link.

FURTHER RESEARCH

Michael Duignan and Abigail Hunt

Undertaking this research has highlighted some interesting gaps in primary data that could be collected longitudinally (rather than producing a current snap shot) and used for research and business development in Lincoln and beyond.

Some of the areas we feel could be looked at in more detail by the Universities of Lincoln and Coventry to produce academic publications and white papers, which could be used to inform LCFC's strategic management and stakeholder engagement, are:

- Research/Intelligence to outline Economic Impact and Visitor Behaviour
- Research/Intelligence to outline indirect spend
- Research/Intelligence to outline Visitor Interests
- Understanding 'visitor dispersion'
- Explicit strategic alignment with Visit Lincoln
- Deriving demand for cultural attractions and creating a 'bookable product'
- Going beyond traditional consumer markets
- Identify sport and LCFC in the cultural offer
- Leveraging the fan perspective, positivity and SLOs
- Leveraging the Last Mile as a space for influencing visitor behaviour and consumption
- University of Lincoln Football Summer Camp
- Away Team Communication



We would suggest a long term partnership between the two universities and LCFC to produce and apply this research. Some might be achieved by us building the work in to Masters modules at both institutions; Some by continuing work by key academics as part of their research interests; And the longitudinal economic work could form the key component of two DBAs or PhDs, that are partially based at LCFC and partly at the University of Lincoln and Coventry University. We have Sports Business Management Teams at both universities and a next step would be to work with them to develop a SMART research plan based on LCFC's priorities. Leon Davis (Programme Leader for proposed MA Sports Business Management) and Dr Julie Donald (Programme Leader for BA (Hons) Sports Business Management) could lead on this and Dr Abigail Hunt (Head of Department) is happy to agree an allocation of work load time to facilitate this at no cost to LCFC. In the first instance we would suggest a three year plan to start to build up data sets to help the club measure their economic impact. We would suggest replicating the work the university does for the Lincoln Christmas Market as there is an established methodology and the potential to build it into the post graduate Research Methods module.

An example of how this works on the consultancy module we offer at Masters' level would be to produce a specific piece of work around the design and development of animated 'Last Mile' spaces. This is a critical area of focus: How they are designed? Who supplies? Logistical details like, how long they open for? Who can access them? A specific piece of work around the leverage of these spaces and the venue itself for cultural programming: e.g. gigs, festivals etc, might also be beneficial. To achieve this, live briefs could be created and integrated in to learning outcomes aligned against the topic. The module structure would allow up to three projects a year, and each would include some form of data gathering centred around: i) impact, ii) visitor experience and behaviour, iii) evaluation and future areas for development. We would suggest using the DELPHI method: where you invite a roundtable of key stakeholders together to review the report and next steps: then determine the priority areas that overlap aligned against all stakeholders' strategic objectives. These reports could then be used to create a priority list for policy and development. This type of project might be particularly apt for International Tourism Management, Events Management, and Sports Business Management Masters students. This would be at no cost to LCFC.

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ABOUT US



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The Student Researchers

Twenty four international postgraduate students conducted empirical research as part of their presentation and written report assignment for their Consultancy module. They were:

Ke An, Van Bui, Mohit Bulchandani, Linh Chu, Kate Daniels, Philipp Drave, Jiahua Huang, Hoang Le, Anh Le, Tianyi Li, Zhaoyan Li, Sven Marohn, Thi Nguyen, Hai Nguyen, Hang Nguyen, Duc Nguyen, Watcharavit Rodpunya, Krispira Rutanatumsri, Fabiola Schnier, Jiawei Shen, Xini Shou, Wensheng Tong, Sy Truong, Bo Wang, Chuangi Zang.



