

## **BLOG REPORT**

# **Trump Tariffs & Eroding Revenues: Data, AI and Cybersecurity Provide the Lifeline for Europe's Football Elite**



# The Echoes Of Trade Wars: Trump's Tariffs And The Future Of European Football In 2025

The singing in the stadium, the electric anticipation of a goal, the global reach of a televised match – European football has long been a titan of entertainment, a cultural phenomenon transcending borders. However, as we look at 2025, the landscape is shifting dramatically.

The aftershocks of President Trump's trade tariffs, risk casting a long shadow over the financial stability of the top 20 European football clubs. These tariffs, aimed at reshaping global trade flows, have inadvertently created a ripple effect, impacting consumer spending and, consequently, the lifeblood of football: matchday revenue, broadcasting rights, and commercial sponsorships.

## Traditional Revenues Are Under Siege

The Deloitte 2025 Football report <sup>1</sup>, a vital compass for understanding the industry's trajectory, paints a picture of evolving revenue streams and the increasing importance of digital engagement. In this context, the sustained pressure from trade tariffs is exacerbating existing challenges, forcing clubs to confront a stark reality: traditional revenue models are under siege.

The impact on matchday revenues is palpable. With rising inflation and reduced discretionary income, global sports fans are becoming increasingly selective about their spending. The once-assured sell-out crowds may dwindle as fans prioritize essential expenses over football tickets. This trend is particularly concerning for clubs reliant on stadium attendance for a significant portion of their income. The atmosphere, the shared experience, the very essence of football is threatened by economic constraints. A negative backlash and 'glass ceiling' is rapidly approaching where hiking ticket prices will no longer be tolerated by fans who may walk away from attending matches in the stadiums.

Broadcasting revenues, another cornerstone of football finance, face similar headwinds. Paywall subscriptions, once a guaranteed source of income, are now vulnerable to consumer budget cuts. Fans, grappling with financial uncertainties, may opt for cheaper entertainment alternatives or forgo subscriptions altogether. This poses a significant risk to the long-term sustainability of broadcasting deals, potentially leading to renegotiations and reduced revenue streams.

Commercial sponsorships, the third pillar of football finance, are also feeling the pinch. Companies, facing their own economic pressures, are becoming more cautious in their marketing budgets. The lucrative sponsorship deals that once flowed freely may dry up, forcing clubs to seek alternative revenue sources or accept lower valuations.

Chelsea is an example of a top 10 European football club that failed to start the 24/25 season with a shirt sponsor. This worrying trend may start to impact other top clubs as a direct downstream impact of the 'Trump tariffs'.

US mega-events like the 2026 World Cup and 2028 Olympics present major sponsorship opportunities. However, Trump's trade tariffs are causing businesses to reconsider. Companies like Hyundai, leveraging FIFA sponsorships, face potential sales barriers. Sportswear giants like Nike and Adidas, reliant on Asian manufacturing, are also impacted by rising import costs, leading to stock declines.

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<sup>1</sup> [Deloitte Football Money League 2025](#)

European football is unlikely to avoid the cooling economic impact confronting their future potential sponsorship and kit manufacturer partners.

## Unlocking Revenue Diversification Through Digital Becomes Key

The combined effect of this revenue erosion is a looming financial crisis for many clubs. The pressure to maintain competitive squads, fueled by escalating player wages, remains relentless. The elite players, the stars that draw fans and drive viewership, demand ever-increasing salaries. This creates a precarious situation: dwindling revenues and rising expenditures.

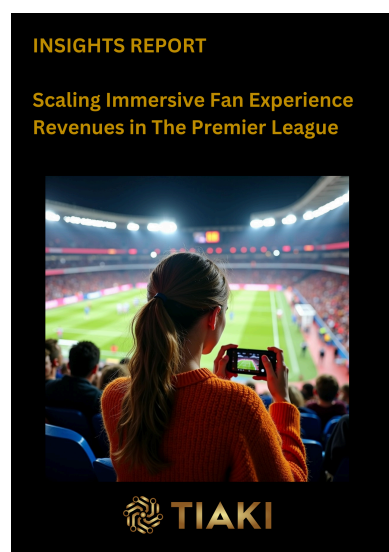
The Deloitte report emphasizes the need for clubs to diversify their revenue streams and embrace digital innovation. In the face of trade-induced economic challenges, this imperative becomes even more critical. Clubs must find new ways to engage their global fan base and unlock untapped revenue potential. So far, they have failed to monetise digital value at scale, despite their huge social media fan bases that are the envy of the USA franchises in NFL, NBA, MLB, NHL and MLS.

## Mobilising the Data, AI and Cybersecurity Paradigm Shift

The sheer scale of the global football fan base presents a unique opportunity. The top 10 European clubs alone boast a combined social media following of over 2 billion. This vast audience represents a potential goldmine, waiting to be monetized through innovative digital experiences.

The key lies in shifting from passive engagement to active participation. Clubs must create compelling immersive digital experiences that resonate authentically with fans on a personal level. This could involve immersive retail fan experiences during a live streaming game, interactive fan forums, personalized AR interviews with their favourite stars, AR jerseys and gamified shared experiences with friends. The goal is to transform fans from spectators to actively engaged, digital participants in the club's ecosystem.

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In our separate Insights Report, [Scaling Immersive Fan Experience Revenues in the Premier League - TIAKI](#), we highlight the potential digital immersive revenues that could be realised at the Top 9 Premier League clubs in season 2025 - 2026.

We compare 2024 Revenue actuals with forecast Immersive Revenues, based on 20 immersive fan experience applications that charge a 'season ticket' fee. The potential is ground-breaking with just a 0,5-1% conversion of social media followers.

However, for monetisation to be realised, the 1st party data consisting of 100 million+ social media followers per club must be resiliently secure against the AI-powered cybercriminal.

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## Small Transaction Immersive Experiences Offer A Compelling Avenue For Revenue Generation

Micro-transactions for virtual merchandise, exclusive digital content, and interactive games can generate significant income when multiplied across millions of fans. The convenience and affordability of these transactions make them appealing to a broad audience, regardless of their geographical location or economic circumstances.

Clubs that embrace this paradigm shift early will gain a significant competitive advantage.

To effectively monetize their global fan base, clubs should look to prioritize and implement robust data, AI, and cybersecurity strategies. Embracing 1st party data propensity modelling with 2nd party data and synthetic data can provide valuable insights into fan behavior, preferences, and engagement patterns. It can dramatically shaped hyper-personalised outbound marketing campaigns to Gen Z and Alpha sports fans. AI-powered personalization can deliver tailored experiences that resonate with individual fans, increasing engagement and driving revenue.

## Turbo-Charging Data Centricity At The Clubs

The need for data-driven decision making is more crucial than ever. Clubs need to understand their fans, their preferences, and their spending habits. This requires data centricity embedded in the business strategy and executed in all key decision making at the club. This is not a transformation for the 'light-hearted'. It's incredibly challenging but essential.

Whilst the Data & AI lead at a club continues to remain hidden in middle management, reporting to the CIO, real progress is doomed to fail. Insist on recruiting the best Chief Data & AI Officers from the private sector and have them report directly to the CEO. Make data & AI a critical boardroom imperative that does not get delegated.

In-house skills alone will not be enough. Embrace the right strategic partnerships with experts that bring deep knowledge and value across data, AI & cybersecurity with a single minded focus on the sports vertical. Reject generic consulting frameworks or vague commitments on future value outcomes. Find the right ecosystem partners, invest, prioritise and move confidently at 'lightning pace' to achieve first mover advantage to monetise the global fan base.

## Cybersecurity Becomes Front And Centre For Revenue Enablement And Risk Reduction

Cybersecurity should be a top priority for clubs. Protecting 1st party fan data and ensuring the security & resiliency of digital fan engagement platforms is critical. Similarly, removing digital vulnerabilities across the physical stadium / IoT infrastructure and digital ticketing ecosystem cannot be ignored. This is essential for maintaining trust and protecting the club's reputation to global fans, investors, sponsors and ecosystem partners.

Cybersecurity is no longer a compliance 'tick in the box' cost burden which gets delegated. There is significant urgency for the leading clubs to shift to market best practice or risk further revenue erosion and brand damage from AI-powered cybercriminals.



Many clubs still lack a Chief Information Security Officer reporting to the CEO and do not have comprehensive, enterprise-wide cybersecurity strategies in place. This is now paramount in 2025 where digital revenues become the essential growth play for the leading clubs, in the era of a looming economic global trade war.

Clubs must also be vigilant in protecting their intellectual property. Ransomware attacks targeting player data for coercion and sports betting industry manipulation is increasing dramatically. AI copyright infringements and non compliance with data / AI regulatory compliance is set to become significant disruptive challenges for the clubs in the next 18 months. This requires implementing comprehensive data, AI & cybersecurity strategies to address all aspects of digital risk.



In our separate Blog Report, **Protecting the Digital Fan Goldmine: Safeguarding Immersive Revenue in the Age of AI Cybercrime** [Protecting the Digital Fan Goldmine: Safeguarding Immersive Revenue in the Age of AI Cybercrime - TIAKI](#), we highlight 5 potential AI attack vectors and the potential impact on the top 10 European football clubs, and their fan base of 2.3 billion social media followers.

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## Conclusion

The impact of Trump's trade tariffs in 2025 is creating a challenging environment for European football clubs. The erosion of legacy revenue streams necessitates a shift towards digital innovation and fan engagement. Clubs must embrace data, AI, and cybersecurity strategies to unlock the potential of their global fan base and achieve digital monetisation scale.

The clubs that adapt and innovate will not only survive but thrive in this new landscape. They will build stronger relationships with their fans, create new revenue streams, and secure their place as leaders in the global sports industry. The future of European football lies in its ability to embrace the digital revolution and create immersive, engaging experiences that resonate with fans around the world. The clock is ticking.

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*David is the Founder & Managing Partner at TIAKI, a niche consulting practice helping executive leadership in sport make confident, informed decisions on their risks, investments and business outcomes powered by secure 'data-at-scale'. He collaborates with bold and determined leaders in the sports ecosystem to define their data, AI and cybersecurity strategies to deliver sustainable value.*

*David's vision for TIAKI is to empower sports franchise CEOs, leadership teams, sports media broadcasters and investors in the global sports industry with strategic advisory frameworks to deliver secure, pioneering digital fan experiences and new ecosystem business models to achieve breakthrough returns.*

*David has over 20 years of strategy and technology enabled business transformation experience, providing consulting expertise in cloud native technologies, data strategy, digital business enablement and cybersecurity strategy. He is passionate about helping talented leadership teams succeed in securely growing their differentiated business models in the data-driven, digital sports economy.*

*Based in Stockholm, David previously worked for IBM Consulting, EY, Accenture Strategy and Orange Business. He studied Chemistry at Durham University and holds an MBA from Trinity College, Dublin Business School.*

