Impact of social media on the way marketing is done in football clubs

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Abstract

Background: Sports fans always have a unique relationship with the club that they support or follow. Even if it is on a digital platform or in an offline manner. But there aren’t many studies or papers regarding how fans change the numbers of a club and affect their business model as well. This paper is an attempt to understand how social media is used as a platform for clubs to market themselves and also create an engagement between fans and players. Methods: A survey was conducted online in the form of a Questionnaire. Statistical methods were used to deduce the information which was collected on a primary basis. To determine the reliability of the data, Various statistical methods were also used. SPSS was also used to analyze the data which was collected. Conclusion: This study will make a significant contribution towards that side of the market which was untapped from this perspective. This research concluded that social media engagement has merged behaviours in social media.

Keywords: Social Media, Sports Marketing, Communication, Customer Relation, Football Clubs, Ticket Sales.

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1. Introduction: There is always a unique relationship between a sports fan and his favourite team which he loves the most¹. There are several teams in football which use social media and they do this to connect their fans across their world. Facebook is a platform which is used to create videos, post pictures and people can react to them with a like button and use different kinds of emojis as well. Twitter is a platform where the users can communicate with each other but the number of characteristics is restricted only to 140. It shares features about expressing your views which are there presently, but in the fastest way possible. It has characters similar to that of email, instant messaging, and blogging and so forth². Twitter has grown exponentially over the past few years and this was started off in the year 2006. It is a free microblogging service which allows the user to express his views but only in a limited number of characters. There are very few papers of research focusing exclusively on the sports industry³. As Twitter is growing fast, many companies are opening their accounts on Twitter as a part of the digital strategies to interact with their fans. Social media plays a key role in connecting the team players and management with their fans. These football clubs in their particular website have a dedicated link for their fans and showcase the most loyal fans of the club⁴. Started focusing on both fan motivations and constraints to consume content. However, their model wasn’t successful in predicting constraints. The maximum number of users of social media belong from the age group of 18-35 which mostly consists of the young audience. Because these clubs focus on long term consumers they try to focus on the young people who are the majority of the audience. Relationship marketing is described as continuous cooperative behaviour between the seller and the consumer⁵. In constants, relationship marketing is defined by the attractiveness, growth, and retention of consumers⁶.

Sports organizations encourage supporters to communicate and interact with the players, the club’s licensed products and sponsors. In addition to this, it is observed that clubs have started to use
social media channels as an effective marketing tool when communicating with both stakeholders and fans. Through social media platforms, clubs can advertise and sell tickets and licensed products, and they can make economic contributions both to the club and to the industry\(^7\). Although sports marketing is a new field in marketing, sports have been used as a marketing instrument for a long time. However, in 1978 the concept of sports marketing was used for the first time in the Advertising Age magazine. The magazine used this idea to describe the client’s activities and the use of sports, which are increasingly the means of promoting the marketing of industrial products and services\(^8\). Sports marketing is a means of marketing sports goods, services and other products through sports organizations by the application of marketing concepts\(^9\), and the overall activities to satisfy sports consumers' needs and desires\(^10\). According to another definition, sports marketing is the procedure of evolution and implementation of sporting products' production, pricing, distribution and promotional activities\(^11\). According to Grönroos\(^12\), there are various types and methods to relationship marketing; but, online media provides the opportunity to focus on the top two core competencies, communication and interaction. According to Holmlund\(^13\), conversations start basic; in social media, this could be an invitation to follow the company. Then interrelated communication goes on to become episodes, episodes form together to become sequences, and finally, the sequences combine to become a relationship. The main objective of this research is to find the impact of social media on how marketing is done in football clubs.

2. Material & methods:
This section is used to conduct detailed research analysis and what are the results obtained out of it and how can we understand the result which is deduced. The research methodology includes an interpretation of the research design, techniques of sampling, and instrumentation. Data analysis section covers analysis and hypothesis testing.

2.1 Selection of Subject: The selection of subjects were to be picked who watch football leagues and follow them on social media. The samples included only those people who follow football to have a better understanding. There were a total of 100 subjects out of which 79 respondents were Male and 21 respondents were female. The mean age of males was 23 and that of women was 21 and all respondents who participated in the survey were contacted through Facebook Fanclub pages and through personal contacts as well.

2.2 Data Collection: The primary data of this research is obtained by the means of the questionnaire. The questions in the research were not too complex and asked their opinion and facts about it. In the initial few questions, they were asked about their basic details and other demographics. The questionnaire was made in a funnel approach where first general questions were asked and then the specific questions related to social media followers and marketing aspects related to it. The scale of the answers varied from 1 to 5 where 1 strongly disagreed and 5 strongly agreed. In order to analyze the primary data, various statistical methods were used.

2.3 Statistical Technique: Convenience Sampling method was used to collect the data from various sources and once the responses were collected from participants, the mean value was calculated of male and female respondents. Chi-Square test was also used to examine the differences between the expected and actual values.

3. Results and Discussion:
According to the samples received, most male candidates filled the form who are in the age bracket of 18-26. Majority of the occupation of the people was that they were students and the rest of them were working in a Corporate job. As this survey was related to social media, all the respondents were regular users of social media and they spent about 1.5-2 hours daily on an average basis. Amongst all the social networking sites, Facebook and Instagram were the most popular and
preferred by. A very fewer number of respondents used Twitter which shows that there is a lot of scope in the future as well.

![Updates Regarding the Club](image)

**Figure 1. Results about the Variable – Updates Regarding the club**

The first question of people who said they follow clubs to get news updates were fairly neutral and agreed that they follow it to understand what is happening in the club. 15% of people strongly disagreed that they don’t follow it only for the news updates and they wanted to see more of the club. Few respondents who comprised of 24% were neutral when they were asked that they follow the club to reach their official statements. The number of people who strongly agreed that they follow the team just to read the official statement was as low as 14%. The number of respondents who strongly disagreed to any of the questions were on the lower hand as compared to respondents who were neutral or agreed with the questions.

![Sharing Information](image)
Figure 2. Results about the Variable- Sharing Information of the Club

The next set of questions which were asked were based on sharing of information. The questions were asked to understand the thinking pattern of a football fan. 18% strongly disagreed that they follow the club just to share the match information. The next question was whether they follow the club to form an opinion about it where 22% of the respondents were neutral and 25% strongly agreed. This means that the perception of a club is based on how they project the club and its players on social media platforms. 28% of the respondents said they follow it to watch the highlights or best snippets from the matches held which means that the entire content revolving around the match is very appealing to the fans which glue them to their screens.

Figure 3- Results about the variable- Personal Identity

This set of the variable included questions which were very specific and personal in nature. It focused on the behavioural aspects as to why a fan follows a club and gets attached to it. 12% respondents strongly disagreed that they follow the club to just express themselves and 23% of the respondents were neutral that it helps in bringing self-confidence as it helps to communicate with other fans of the club. 16% of the respondents strongly agreed that they feel less lonely while they follow or watch a sport and changes their mood as well. These factors show the emotional quotient and the kind of relation the fans have with their favourite clubs and the winning of the matches also leads to change in their behaviour as well.

Table 1. Findings of the Values of the Chi-Square Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Chi-Square Test</th>
<th>Significance</th>
<th>Effect Size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Updates</td>
<td>News Updates</td>
<td>0.253</td>
<td>0.995</td>
<td>0.045</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Read About Club</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>0.644</td>
<td>0.160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reach Official Statement</td>
<td>0.713</td>
<td>0.735</td>
<td>0.084</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Events of the club</td>
<td>Events of the club</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.909</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chi-square test compares two variables in a contingency table to see if they are related. A chi-square test statistics will tell you the difference between the original value and the expected value. A low value of chi-square signifies that there is a high correlation between two sets of data and vice-versa. There should be a significant difference between the observed and expected value and the value shouldn’t be zero. The p-value helps in determining the significant results and a value of less than 0.05 signifies that there is strong evidence against the null hypothesis.

In Table 1 we have seen p-values and they are affected by the sample size. If the size of the sample is large then the value is low. Here, in this case, the number of samples is 100 but if it will increase to 150 the p-value will decrease. In the Variable Sharing, the question pertaining to the match information has a value of 0.164 which signifies that there is a relation between variable sharing and match information. p-value which is less than 0.01 will mean that there is evidence against the null hypothesis. There are numerous ways for the organizations to build their reputation and connect with the fans and through this study, a new relation will be established as well. Social media will provide an opportunity for the clubs to work with the fans to enhance their experience and should meet the demands of the consumers accordingly. The clubs should aware the players of the club regarding this information and create a way where the fans interact with the players regularly and this will chip in more engagement as well which would help in associating the brand integration prospects as well.

### 4. Conclusion

In sports management literature, limited attention has been devoted to fan engagement and motivations, particularly within a social media context. This study will make a significant contribution towards that side of the market which was untapped from this perspective. We tend to see that all the fans are connected on social media sites especially Facebook which was started way back in 2007. This research has helped in concluding that social media engagement has merged behaviours in social media. Research has mainly investigated online platforms from the outlook of sports organizations and professional athletes, and limited studies which focus on the fans viewpoint are restricted and diverse through various platforms and perspectives and doesn’t consider for the varied range of behaviours and motivations corresponding with social media engagement. According to the results of focus groups and surveys conducted with the fans, it is
possible to get information about the team's existing or new sales products, to get information about matches and tickets, to communicate with the clubs and footballers and to follow the transfer news. They follow the social media accounts of the club to reach the information and to reach the comments made about the club. This helps the club to receive its feedback and they start analysing all the characteristics and can start working upon. Various Contests can be organized in such platforms to increase the attraction. This will increase both the interest on the club page and the fans' affection for the club. Investigations can then be conducted on the supporters of the different teams to better understand the motivation of the followers for social media teams for subsequent research. A more thorough investigation can reveal more lasting and effective results by examining and following the fans’ social media data. Investigating the buying behaviours and awareness-raising effects of sports clubs on promoting licensed products to fans through social media will bestow upon a finer understanding of sports marketing and social media interaction.

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**References:**


