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**SOCIAL MEDIA AS AN ENHANCEMENT TOOL FOR FOOTBALL PUBLICITY (A
STUDY OF SELECTED GHANA PREMIER LEAGUE CLUBS)**

SUBMITTED BY

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**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GHANA INSTITUTE OF
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AWARD OF A MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE IN PUBLIC RELATIONS**

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NOVEMBER, 2021

SUPERVISOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the preparation of this long essay was supervised in accordance with the guidelines for the supervision of dissertations as laid down by the Ghana Institute of Journalism.

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in black ink. The signature is stylized and appears to read 'Ike Tandoh'.

DR. IKE TANDOH

DATE: ... NOVEMBER, 2021

STUDENT'S DECLARATION

I do hereby declare that the work presented is the result of my own effort, original research and findings and that no part of it has been presented for another degree or diploma in this University or elsewhere. All references to other people's work have been duly acknowledged. I am therefore to be held responsible for any error that might be detected in this dissertation.

(Candidate's signature)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'PERE', with a horizontal line drawn through the middle of the letters.

PEREZ ERZOAH KWAOW (MAPR20090)

DATE: ... NOVEMBER, 2021

DEDICATION

This academic piece is dedicated to my mother whose dream has always been to see her boys reach the top. Like I always say, thanks for not leaving us when your husband left you.

I also dedicate it to the Ghana Football Association and the Ghana Premier League Committee. It is my hope that this thesis helps the club in their digitization drive.

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I owe my supervisor Dr. Ike Tandoh a great deal of appreciation for his support, guidance and commitment to helping me produce this academic piece. I'm grateful Sir.

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ABSTRACT

This study set out to explore how social media could be used to enhance publicity of Ghanaian premier league clubs. To achieve this aim, objectives were set to probe the reason(s) Ghanaian premier league clubs use social media, interrogate what Ghanaian premier league clubs understand by publicity and to find out how Ghanaian premier league clubs can employ social media effectively. The study through a qualitative research approach interviewed the Heads of communication/public relations of nine (9) premier league clubs in Ghana. The study found that social media was a significant tool to enhancing publicity for Ghanaian premier league clubs. Also, it was realized that premier league clubs mainly use social media for interaction with fans and as a marketing avenue. While it was advocated that all premier league clubs adopt social media, it was found to be important that they develop social media strategies to guide their prospects. The study recommends that Ghanaian clubs should adopt the use of social platforms to allow fans to interact and communicate with the club. Also, while all this is salient, it is important that premier league clubs develop a social media strategy.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

A positive public image aids in the development of strong client relationships, which boosts an organization's bottom line (Delliote, 2011). Football clubs like many other organizations, in the view of Acquah (2010) require efficient public relations in a variety of methods to maintain a positive and healthy connection with both internal and external audiences. Public relations is regarded as an important component in maintaining an organization's image and delivering its message to consumers, investors, stakeholders, and the general public (Grunig, 2013).

For football supporters, social media fosters participation; with its systems of preferences, retweets, shares, personalization, and upvotes, social media stages are geared at empowering and expanding a participatory culture and a sense of belonging (Clavio, 2011). With its ability to allow involvement and engagement, social media aids in achieving that feeling of unity (Bennett, 2013). Prior to the internet and social media, there was a lack of interactivity due to high ticket prices, geographic restrictions, or the inability to watch the game on television due to broadcasting issues (Penn and Penn, 2020).

These barriers have been overcome, ensuring that fans do not miss any type of communication from football clubs (Helleu, 2017). Every social media platform appears to be essential in some way, including Twitter for live rants, Facebook for messages and thoughts, Instagram for live footage and player images, and YouTube for post-match films, bloopers, and other related content (Haugh and Watkins, 2016).

The way sports players, clubs, and fans connect is changing because to social media. Spectators are no longer merely watching sport, and fans may often obtain news, insights, and opinion directly from the source, thanks to live-tweeting sports, generating caustic memes, and cheerleading from the webosphere (McCarthy, Rowley, Ashworth and Pioch, 2014). Social and mobile technologies are ideal platforms for fueling our sporting aspirations because they are instantaneous, intimate, and participatory. While many fans use social media to express their passion for sports, certain sporting groups and athletes are finding it more difficult.

If social media allows fans to be more active, it also allows athletic professionals to be more accountable for their public comments and how they communicate with their supporters and the larger community (Thompson, O'Boyle and Meany, 2018). Despite their many benefits, social networking networks can be a minefield for some users. Sports authorities and athletes are being questioned in the media and occasionally chastised and penalized as a result of posts and updates that may best be defined as "incautious."

Traditional news journalists are finding it more difficult to gain access to athletes and coaches in this shifting media landscape, when sports organizations can deliver their tales directly to their followers through their own social or digital channels (Monaghan, 2014). The media department of the company often has the final say over who appears, where, and when, and it is becoming more typical for their own channels to win. Even though there could be a case made for social media on its benefits to football, this study intends to explore how it can be used to enhance the publicity of football in Ghana.

1.0.1 Structure of the Ghanaian Football Industry

Football is played by both men and women in Ghana at various levels ranging from amateur to semi-professional to professional (Darby, 2013). Men compete in league and cup (knockout) competitions at the national (first division, termed the Glo Premier League) and regional (second and third divisions) levels, while women compete in a league championship at the senior level. The under twelve (U-12), under fourteen (U-14), and under seventeen (U-17) levels of the sport, collectively known as the “grass root” level, serve as supports for these “upper” levels of the sport for men.

Players are groomed at this level in the hopes of one day playing in the senior professional leagues (GFA, 2021a). This layer of football has mostly served as a placenta during the duration of its U-shaped life span (in terms of levels of development and quality) – constantly supplying the upper levels with the needed talented young as people (Esson, 2013).

Senior men’s football has made football the most popular sport on the planet, out of all of these many strata of the game (Acquah, 2010). International competitions involving Ghana’s senior national team, the Black Stars, as well as league and cup events involving locally created football teams, have all been identified as being of national interest. Ghana’s Premier League is the highest professional football division in the country’s football league system (Ghana Football Association [GFA], 2021).

After the Final Gold Coast Club competition in 1953–54, the League was officially created in 1956. The Ghana Football Association organizes the tournament, which is overseen by the Premier League Management Committee, which is chaired by former Ghana Football Association Chairman Lepowura Alhaji M.N.D Jawula (GFA, 2021b). Asante Kotoko and Accra Hearts of Oak have dominated the competition. The League currently has eighteen (18) clubs, with the

bottom three relegated at the end of the season and three clubs from the second tier gaining automatic promotion to play in the League (GFA, 2021b).

This division, like many others throughout the world, currently serves as a key platform for advertising to promote their services and products to the league's large viewership (Acquah, 2010).

This is part of what is gradually becoming a corporate football system that is surfacing in Ghana.

The Association now only integrates clubs that are registered as corporations limited by shares or guarantee to the Association, after a recommendation by the GFA in the 1990s (GFA, 2021a). That is to say, the Ghanaian football scene is evolving and is no longer merely a source of amusement.

1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The declining standard of football in Ghana, which has resulted in a lack of interest in the local league, cannot be ignored. "Aside from other causes, there is stagnation in the standard of football in Ghana; we used to dominate in Africa and world football, but it is not as it used to be, and the new generation that needs to rebuild the lost image are lost in the country," says Zdravko Lugarusic, ex-head coach of Asante Kotoko (Brenya, 2017). Most of the young football stars of extraordinary skill have joined European teams for the support they deserve, and there is little excitement for the local football league, which is struggling to reclaim its lost reputation (Ayenor, 2020).

Also, aside the infrastructural hurdles and other developmental issues that the Ghanaian football league has, one of the major issues is low attendance at football matches, which results in low revenue for the teams (Kuper and Szymanski, 2018). As a result of their lack of revenue, their problems continue to grow, and the league's standard of play continues to deteriorate.

Again, it has been noticed that European-based players are given preference over local-based players in national team selections (Ayenor, 2020). This explains why the majority of local players

will desire to play in Europe as well. As a result, the local league receives little attention, and its performance continues to deteriorate. As the use of social media increases in various industries, studies are being performed to determine the effectiveness in different industries. At this time, the use of social media in the football arena has resulted in growing interest in academic studies. Thus, this study contributes to new information in both the areas of social media as well as the football industry.

While the voice as well as the face of sport is changing in response to social and digital media, this study sought to evaluate how social media enhances publicity in football. With all of the relationships between fans, sports stars and clubs and journalism shifting, the researcher intended to undertake this study to appreciate how the Ghana Premier League Clubs could employ social media to enhance their publicity.

1.2 RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

As a part of the objectives of the study, the researcher intends;

1. To explore how social media can be used to enhance publicity of Ghanaian premier league clubs
2. To probe the reason(s) Ghanaian premier league clubs use social media
3. To interrogate what Ghanaian premier league clubs understand by publicity
4. To find out how Ghanaian premier league clubs can employ social media effectively to improve their publicity on social media

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTION

The researcher posed the following questions to aid in attaining the study objectives;

1. How can social media be used to enhance publicity of Ghanaian premier league clubs?

2. What is/are the reason(s) Ghanaian premier league clubs use social media?
3. What is the understanding of publicity by Ghanaian premier league clubs?
4. How can Ghanaian premier league clubs employ social media effectively to improve their publicity on social media?

1.4 JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

This study is of importance due to its uniqueness in how it probes social media as a tool of creating publicity in sports. Aside the central theme of football, findings of this study can be employed by other industries to improve their publicity as well. The study continues to be essential as it will help develop a roadmap for premier league clubs on how they can improve fans interaction among other activities on social media.

1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Playing professional football is now an extremely financially rewarding career path. This study enlightens premier league managers on how they can interact with their fans on social media to enhance the publicity of their various clubs. Once the gap of lack of interest in the local league has been bridged with the publicity created by the social media interactions, this can lead to the growth of the league as a whole. This is because the lack of competitiveness and low salaries in the Ghanaian local league is partly hinged on the lack of support from fans compared to leagues such as the English Premier League or Spanish La Liga. The success of this study again will help other premier leagues learn from how the Ghana Premier League could use social media to maximize their publicity.

1.6 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study focused on exploring social media and how it can be harnessed to improve publicity. This enquiry was conducted in the sphere of sports and specifically football. Premier Leagues Clubs from the Ghanaian League were at the center of the discussion as well. In line with this, the study looked at collecting data from resource persons of the selected premier league clubs which will be used for the study.

1.7 ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

The study is divided into five chapters. The first chapter is the introductory chapter which includes the background of the study, the objectives of the study, research questions, significance of the study, scope and the organization of the study. The second chapter presents a review of literature on the study and outlines the theoretical framework underpinning the study.

The third chapter presents the methods through which data was collected for analysis. Aspects of this chapter include the research approach, research design, sample and sampling technique, data collection instruments, data collection procedure and method of data analysis.

The findings and discussions of the data collected were discussed under the fourth chapter of the study. The fifth chapter also presents the summary and conclusion of the findings and made recommendations for further studies.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 INTRODUCTION

With an objective to probe how social media can be used by football clubs to reach publicity, this chapter gives a summary of the sources that were looked into while researching the subject at hand. In order to position the discussion in the context of its contribution to understanding the research problem, it also includes a summary, which is a review of the source's key material. In addition, reviewing literature provides the opportunity to identify any gaps in the material.

2.1 DIFFUSION OF INNOVATION THEORY

Kaminski (2011) espouses the view that the Diffusion of Innovation Theory was first discussed historically in 1903 by the French sociologist Gabriel Tarde (Toews, 2003) who plotted the original S-shaped diffusion curve, followed by Ryan and Gross (1943) who introduced the adopter categories that were later used in the current theory popularized by Everett Rogers (1962). Katz (1957) is also credited for first introducing the notion of opinion leaders, opinion followers and how the media interacts to influence these two groups. The theory is often regarded as a valuable change model for guiding technological innovation where the innovation itself is modified and presented in ways that meet the needs across all levels of adopters. It also stresses the importance of communication and peer networking within the adoption process (Kaminski, 2011).

Researchers have found that people who adopt an innovation early have different characteristics than people who adopt an innovation later. When promoting an innovation to a target population, it is important to understand the characteristics of the target population that will help or hinder adoption of the innovation (Chang, 2010). Even though the theory suggests that there are four

stages of adopting innovation thus; early adopters, early majority, late majority and the laggards, the theory also assumes that the rates of adoption for innovations are determined by an individual's adopter category. In general, individuals who first adopt an innovation require a shorter adoption period (adoption process) when compared to late adopters. This explains why in relations to football, the adoption of social media is not done simultaneously by the football clubs. This causes the adoption periods to differ from one club to the other.

While the theory is relevant, it also has some limitations which are worth of noting. Damanpour (1996) points out that diffusion is difficult to quantify because humans and human networks are complex. It is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to measure what exactly causes adoption of an innovation. Again, the theory according to Dearing (2009) does not take into account an individual's resources or social support to adopt the new behavior. It works better with adoption of behaviors rather than cessations or prevention of behaviors. Again, Rogers (1962) does not take into account an individual's resources or social support to adopt the new behavior. In light of these limitations however, the theory is relevant to this study because it has been used successfully in many fields including communication, sports, business, marketing among others.

2.1.1 Relevance to the Study

In light of these limitations however, the theory is relevant to this study because it has been used successfully in several fields of study including sports. This gives support to Oelrichs' (2020) view that the introduction of technology into the communication enables more accessibility, visibility of information, availability of variety of products and satisfaction. In the technological space, this theory is quite significant and can be seen more often. There are is a growing number of social networking platforms users day in and out. In the case of Ghanaian Premier League clubs, early

adopters of these social networking sites are likely to have had more experience with its usage thereby improving their understanding and handling of content so that they continue to grow in size and or publicity.

The theory can be used to predict how quickly clubs, fans, and other stakeholders will adopt a new product or service in this case, social media. As a result, the theory aids clubs in comprehending how trends emerge, as well as determining the chance of their content and social media strategy's overall success or failure. The league clubs can use insight from the theory to forecast which types of fans would consume their material and develop effective social media campaigns to increase acceptance in each segment. Again, this theory is significant to the study because a better understand of how it works will give the league clubs the urge they need in order to use social media as a catapult to reach publicity in the digital space.

2.1.2 Researcher's position

Football has overtime evolved from a hobby to a business venture. To maintain a competitive advantage in today's tumultuous business environment, all companies must reinvent their products, services, or strategies (Lundblad, 2003). Identifying determining elements to determine what drives an organization to embrace an innovation has been the focus of a lot of innovation adoption and dissemination research. However, as Wolfe (1994) pointed out, previous research in this area lacked a systematic method to identifying determinant elements of organizational adoption. Furthermore, the explanatory power of determinant factors was lacking. Early studies (Hage and Aiken, 1967; Hage and Dewar, 1973) in this field, for example, concentrated on a single set of determining factors.

League clubs can benefit from the theory they can develop content to motivate or inform a group of individuals by first determining their stage of adoption. The theory is a great tool for League clubs since to stay relevant, communicating with an interactive audience is key. This task falls within the remit of the public relations or communications heads of the League clubs because social media management is a very significant function in the modern business environment. While it is undisputable these professionals work for the clubs, these clubs as well operate in an environment which comprises a mix of stakeholders or audiences. This awareness segues in Anani-Bossman's (2020) argument which suggests that strategic public relations practice should therefore begin with research to help assess and segment the stakeholders into the most appropriate components so that public relations efforts can be effectively carried out.

In order to adopt this theory, the clubs have to spend resources selectively in building relationships with particular components of their environment, under resource constraints as Jiang, Kim, Liu and Luo (2019) suggests. Because sports management literature has not given public relations the attention it deserves (Goldman, 2011), it is therefore important to note how necessary it is to gain competitive advantage when it comes to commercialization of the game. In a broader sense, it however seems that football still battles to define the functions and the role of public relations, let alone positioning the discipline. With the aim of this study to investigate the role that public relations plays within the selected football clubs in the Ghana Premier League, this theory per the researcher's assessment is relevant to the study.

2.2 SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is a computer-based technology that allows people to share ideas, emotions, and knowledge by forming virtual communities and networks. Social networking is Internet-based by nature, allowing users to share content quickly through electronic means (Greenwood, Perrin and

Duggan, 2016). Personal details, records, images, and photographs are all included in the material. Users interact with social media through web-based software or applications on a computer, tablet, or smartphone. Although social media is widely used in the United States and Europe, Asian countries such as Indonesia are at the top of the list. Social media is used by over 3.8 billion people (Anderson and Jiang, 2018).

Social media began as a way to connect with friends and family, but it was quickly embraced by companies looking to reach out to consumers using a common new communication tool (Fuchs, 2021). The ability to communicate and exchange knowledge with everyone on the planet, or with a large number of people at once, is the power of social media. There are over 3.8 billion social media users worldwide. Users of social media are, on average, younger, according to the Pew Research Center. Between the ages of 18 and 29, nearly 90% of people used some form of social media (Perrin, 2015). New social media apps like TikTok and Clubhouse appear every year, joining the ranks of existing social networks like Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and Instagram.

In relation to sports, social media offers fans new landscapes of fandom and an additional mean to engage with their favourite teams and clubs, while at the same time allows sport organizations to strengthen fan relationships (McCarthy et al., 2014; Stavros et al., 2014). Customers become co-owners and co-creators of brands (including club brands) on social media, and they play a powerful, empowering role in establishing brand reputation and image (Williams and Chinn, 2010). Most clubs, though, continue to face the challenge of trying to maintain control over their brand while still cultivating a strong relationship with their fan base. Nonetheless, while the opinions expressed by certain “activist” fans (Hollebeek, 2011) on social media may not always be what sport management want to hear, clubs who refuse to relinquish some control and engage

with their followers may be limiting the possibility to strengthen relationships with their fans (Vale and Fernandes, 2018).

2.3 FOOTBALL AND SOCIAL MEDIA

All sports organizations require effective media relations and direct customer communication. Successful sports managers must have a thorough understanding of how ICT works in order to effectively manage the communication process (Siguencia et al., 2017). For sports clubs, social media may be a highly focused visual advertising channel. Most people nowadays utilize social media and have a profile on one or more social networking sites. For this reason, nowadays, clubs must compete on a variety of levels, with publicity being one of the most common areas of competition (Nicholson, Kerr and Sherwood, 2015). To build a positive image, they often use social media this is especially finalized to inform their youngest fans on the club life reaching them online.

Sport organizations are well-positioned to gain from social media as an engagement tool, given their existing fan networks and their level of sport fandom (McCarthy, Rowley, Ashworth, and Pioch, 2014; Williams and Chinn, 2010). The way fans interact with sports teams, athletes, and other fans has altered as a result of social media (Ioakimidis, 2010). The majority of sports enthusiasts are highly involved, and sport plays a significant role in many people's daily life (Popp et al., 2016).

Clubs are increasingly investing substantial time and resources to create online interaction, utilizing the highly active character of their followers, thanks to the popularity of social media (Filo, Lock, and Karg, 2015). However, there appears to be a lack of genuine effort to get to know their fan base, and many clubs continue to battle with the conflict of wanting to maintain control

over their brand while also creating an engaging presence with their energized fan base (McCarthy et al., 2014). Despite their significant investments, most teams have gradually progressed toward genuine social media engagement with their fans.

As a result, fan engagement research has received limited attention in the sport management literature (Stavros et al., 2014), particularly on social media (Wallace, Wilson, and Miloch, 2011) and from the fan perspective (Mahan, 2011). In fact, despite the fact that research on football consumer engagement has spanned nearly 30 years, the majority of studies have been conducted offline and have focused on transactional behaviors (Yoshida et al., 2014), while the few conducted online have failed to consider the full range of behaviors and motivations associated with social media engagement, resulting in a lack of theoretical depth (Yoshida et al., 2014). Clubs, on the other hand, need good direction on how to manage their online presence, specifically through getting greater insights into their supporters' motives and behaviors, in order to use social media efficiently.

2.4 FOOTBALL AND PUBLICITY

Over the years, sports have become one of the most popular leisure activities for people all over the world, evolving from a purely social activity to a major economic phenomenon, with football dominating global and African sports (Dittmore and McCarthy, 2014). Football began as a primitive mob activity, a violent and unorganized game with few rules and an unlimited number of players representing entire towns in a tense competition (Morrow and Howieson, 2014). Overtime however, football has evolved into a well-organized sport with rules and regulations for both on and off the field processes. Football, according to Jozsa Jr (2010), is more than simply a beautiful game; it is a global and highly visible business whose clients are fiercely devoted to their preferred brand.

The combined revenue of all 20 English Premier League (EPL) clubs is projected to be around 6.2 billion euros in the 2020/21 season (Wagner, Preuss and Könecke, 2021). Teams in the top division in England are expected to generate more than two billion euros more than their counterparts in Spain and Germany, who rank second and third respectively (Quansah et al., 2021). Based on the above, it is clear that football's economic benefit as a business enterprise is enormous. However, the world of business is characterized by fierce competition, and in order to win new customers and retain existing ones, organizations have to distinguish themselves from the competition while creating and maintaining positive image at the same time (Gregory, 2011).

In this regard, public relations plays an important role in the survival and successful operation of sport organizations (Stoldt, Dittmore and Branvold, 2012). Kolyperas (2014) also maintain that public relations should be part of sports organization and administration process at all levels, whether handling major sponsorship and media rights deals, events, promoting stars, promoting team unity, among others. Public relations is equally important to a sports organization as it is to the athletes, coaches and general managers and owners (Jordan and Smith, 2013). Unfortunately, however, relatively little attention seems to have been given to the role of public relations in football clubs.

2.5 STAKEHOLDER MANAGEMENT

Stakeholder management is the process of maintaining good relationships with the people who have the most impact on the organizational initiatives (Carroll and Buchholtz, 2014). The strategic management process comprises the basic long-term goals and objectives of an enterprise, and courses of action and the allocation of resources (Fassin, 2012). Ewurum (2018) asserts that by incorporating the stakeholder concept into the strategic management process, an organization's primary objective is creating as much value as possible for stakeholders.

It processes involves identifying all individuals who have an interest in the overall organizational outcome. A stakeholder can be one individual or multiple individuals as in the case of large public infrastructure projects (Colleen, 2015). A key way to manage stakeholders is to develop a stakeholder map. In carrying out a stakeholder mapping strategy, there is the need to identify and examine key factors including proximity to an initiative, demographics, interest in the development, needs and concerns, expectations of an initiative and any previous public statements. Copper (2017) stresses that stakeholder mapping is very important in strategic stakeholder management. It is essential for the successes of a business since most projects involve several stakeholders. Once the stakeholders have been mapped, it will help in better managing their expectations.

By mapping key stakeholders, Eskerod and Jepsen (2013) further point out that this helps managers to get invaluable insights. The insights that the stakeholders will share regarding the project will prove invaluable in a successful project outcome. Moreover, mapping the stakeholders will result in an increased perception of success. This is because stakeholders whose expectations are micro-managed through stakeholder mapping are far likely to perceive the project as a success. However, Carroll and Buchholtz (2014) states that the process of stakeholder mapping can be viewed as a form of risk management.

Philips (2018) argues that working with stakeholders by adopting the proactive mitigation approach also helps improve buy-in, credibility on the part of the stakeholders. Johnson-Cramer, Berman and Post (2017) argue that the use of proactive mitigation is important as the old adage of 'prevention is better than the cure' rings true regarding a proactive strategy, and this can apply to an entire host of occupations that possess a risk management plan. Freeman and Moutchnik (2013) concludes that ideally, the effective approach to risk management lies in anticipating and planning

risk solutions. To do so, organizations today need to migrate away from traditional, reactive risk management and toward technology-supported proactive risk management strategies.

2.6 EMPIRICAL REVIEW

After noticing that football clubs all over the world are realizing that using social media to improve and expand their business is the way of the future, Kuzma, Bell, and Logue (2014) decided to investigate whether this phenomenon is for marketing purposes or as a means of directly communicating with their fans. Kuzma, Bell, and Logue (2014) used a qualitative discourse analysis approach to conduct their research. Despite the fact that the majority of European clubs studied have a social media presence, the researchers discovered that the effectiveness with which social media was employed varied among leagues. The findings also showed that most football clubs have a social media presence, as evidenced by the number of Facebook likes, Twitter tweets, and YouTube videos they have. However, the data suggest that well-known international clubs do not always leverage this financial potential as efficiently as they could, and that teams with less clout use social media more effectively to promote to their fan bases.

With social media, specifically social networking sites, offering organizations direct access to a significant amount of personal information about their consumers, Hopkins (2013) sought to examine how a professional football club in Australia had adopted Facebook and Twitter to improve the level and quality of communication they have with their fans. An end of season, a quantitative survey conducted indicated that the club did not perform well in the area of communication, and a project team was formed to identify how improvements in the club's social media capabilities could be leveraged to improve communication. Whilst the level of success of the case was measured in terms of consumer investments; *consumer behaviours that are linked to social media*, such as traffic, time spent on an application, and comments gained, etc., Hopkins

(2013) points out that a growth in membership sales, match day attendances, ticket sales, TV audiences and merchandise sales were also experienced in the period following the improvements made to the club's Facebook and Twitter presence.

The purpose of Aichner's (2019) study as well was threefold: to measure and compare the degree of social media use (SMU) by football clubs, to assess football fans' engagement with content posted by football clubs (FCs) and to evaluate differences in user engagement with commercial social media advertisement targeting football fans, based on the advertisements' appeal. To achieve this, Aichner (2019) employed three approaches; first, by using the corporate social media use (CSMU) model to analyse 20,954 Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and Twitter postings from 78 European FCs, secondly, by developing a categorisation for social media postings and using ANOVA and Scheffè tests to conduct a pairwise comparison and third, employing a fictional hedonic low-involvement product (chocolate bar) to conduct an experiment by creating a Facebook advertising campaign with three advertisements that are manipulated regarding their general appeal. The findings from Study 1 demonstrated that individual FCs show big differences between their degree of SMU. There are, however, no differences between European leagues, social media platforms, or more/less successful FCs. The results of Study 2 also indicated that social media users like, comment and share postings by FCs independently of the content of the posting. Study 3 as well revealed that both user engagement and reach of advertisements can be substantially increased by employing football-related appeals.

Also, with Vale and Fernandes (2018) identifying that research on sport fan engagement is still limited in relation to social media, the purpose of their study was to understand why and how sport fans engage with clubs on social media. Following the Uses and Gratifications approach and the Consumers' Online Brand-Related Activities framework, seven motivations (Information,

Entertainment, Personal Identity, Integration and Social Interaction, Empowerment, Remuneration and Brand Love) and three dimensions of online engagement behaviours (Consumption, Contribution and Creation) were considered. Vale and Fernandes (2018) further utilized a web-based survey among football club fans of a major UEFA league on Facebook, resulting in 562 responses. The need for Information, Empowerment and Brand Love mainly drive Consumption, Contribution and Creation, respectively, while the need for Integration and Social Interaction emerged as the second most important motivation overall. This study contributed to the emerging research on social media use in the sport marketing literature, thus revealing additional opportunities for managers to engage their fan base online.

2.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter gave a summary of the sources that were looked into while researching the subject at hand. In order to position the discussion in the context of its contribution to understanding the research problem, it also included a summary, which is a review of the source's key material. In addition, reviewing literature provided the opportunity to identify any gaps in the material.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents an overview of the methodological approach the researcher will employ in order to further the aims of study.

3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

According to Sileyew (2019), the research design is intended to provide an acceptable structure for a research work. Myers, Well and Lorch Jr (2013) add that the research design process involves several interrelated decisions. Durrheim (2006) goes on to establish that there are three (3) types of research methodologies: qualitative, quantitative and mixed approaches to methods. In line with the objectives of the study, the qualitative method will be much prudent. This is because according to Bickman, Rog and Hedrick (2009), the qualitative method is used to gather in-depth details about a certain issue, assuming that a single individual reflects a person's group feelings and emotions, which are overlooked by the quantitative method.

Maxwell (2012) further explain that qualitative researchers question positivism's basic assumptions and are instead driven by constructivism's paradigms, which assume that no empirical information can be generated that is free of interpretation, making truth and reality subjective terms. This method is typically utilized by the interpretive approach, as other authors such as Bradshaw and Stratford (2010) have clarified, it is ideal for when researchers intend to examine or observe an environment in order to build a hypothesis.

3.2 STUDY POPULATION

In line with Roller and Lavrakas' (2013) assertion that a population as a group or class of subjects, variables, concepts or phenomenon which Boddy (2016) add on as a collection of units aimed to be investigated by the research effort this study's population will comprise of resource persons from the Ghanaian premier league clubs because they would be in the right position to give information that will help actualize the objectives of the study.

3.3 SAMPLING TECHNIQUE

To come up with a sample for the study, the non-probability sampling method will be employed. Non-probability sampling, according to Marshall et al. (2012), is a group of sampling methods that help researchers select units from a population they are interested in researching. From here, the next step will be to employ the purposive sampling approach to arrive at a sample for the study. With Sim et al.'s (2017) argument that this technique is acceptable and the only method accessible in certain instances that justifies its adoption for this study. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling methodology with the goal of providing a sample that can be logically assumed to be representative of the population, where the target sample will be selected in a non-random manner using expert knowledge about the population (Blaikie, 2018).

3.4 SAMPLE SIZE

In qualitative research, samples are often small to allow for the depth of case-oriented analysis that is essential to this form of inquiry (O'reilly and Parker, 2013). Van Rijnsoever (2017) also emphasizes that qualitative samples are purposive, meaning that they are chosen based on their ability to provide richly textured information relevant to the phenomenon being studied. Blaikie (2018) asserts that sample size is the number of individuals or observations included in a study. Choosing a sample size is a crucial decision for any study, while being a simple notion. The study

will identify nine (9) resource personnel from public relations and communication outfits of Ghanaian premier league clubs, in keeping with Onwuegbuzie and Leech's (2007) argument that this technique is heavily reliant on the researcher's judgement. A breakdown of the respondents' allocation is tabulated below.

Table 1.0 Breakdown of League Clubs

NO.	LEAGUE CLUBS
1	DREAMS FOOTBALL CLUB
2	EBUSUA DWARFS FOOTBALL CLUB
3	GREAT OLYMPICS FOOTBALL CLUB
4	INTERNATIONAL ALLIES FOOTBALL CLUB
5	KARELA UNITED FOOTBALL CLUB
6	KOTOKO SPORTING CLUB
7	LIBERTY PROFESSIONALS FOOTBALL CLUB
8	MEDEAMA SOCCER CLUB
9	LEGON CITIES FOOTBALL CLUB

Source: Field Data, 2021

3.5 DATA COLLECTIONS PROCEDURE

Qualitative research interviews, according to Roulston and Choi (2018), aim to understand the world from the subjects' perspective, to unravel the meaning of people's experiences, and to uncover their lived world before scientific explanations. In the adoption of this data collection tool, the study will make use of semi-structured interview guides. Baker and Edwards (2012) espouses the view that the semi-structured interview allows for discovery, with space to follow topical

trajectories as the conversation unfolds, while generally following a guide or protocol that is devised prior to the interview and is focused on core topics to provide a general structure.

This will give the researcher the opportunity to ask follow-up questions based on the answers obtained during the interview. The interviews will most likely be conducted in the premises of the respondents' organizations or any other predetermined location agreeable by the researcher as well as the respondents. During the interview session, consent will be sought from the respondents so that the session is recorded. From here, the data collected will then be transcribed and analyzed using thematic analysis.

3.6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

While research is a process of discovery that leads to new ideas that are effectively communicated, Roberts (2015) opine that this explains why ethics are so important in the research process. Researchers must deal with a variety of ethical dilemmas at various stages of the research process (Arifin, 2018), who believe that ethical considerations might arise at any stage of the research process. The researcher will inform the respondents of the study's goals and get their consent before presenting the data using pseudonyms. Again, precautionary steps recommended by the Health Services in light of the COVID-19 pandemic will be upheld for which reason innovative means of collecting data such as video calls or conferences, would be explored if it is not possible to meet in person. Also, all secondary materials used in this study will be duly acknowledged and cited as well.

3.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented an overview of the research approach the researcher would employ in furthering the aims of study. This includes explaining the study's research design, as well as the study's population and sample, among other significant topics.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the findings obtained from the field data that would help the study achieve its objectives. The purpose of this chapter is to analyze the data acquired, after which the researcher interprets the data to make it easier to understand. Due to the overall importance of the study, units of analysis were included so that the researcher could appreciate what was being explored and as well as its accompanying elements. The unit of analysis was the individuals manning the public relations and communication outfits of Ghanaian premier league clubs, which was in keeping with the study's aims. This exercise is carried out in the order in which the data collection instrument posed the questions. The respondents are identified by pseudonyms “RP” an abbreviation for Research Participant; thus RP 1, RP 2, RP 3, RP 4, RP 5, RP 6, RP 7, RP 8 and RP 9. This is in accordance with the study’s sustained dedication to maintaining the anonymity of the participants.

4.1 THEMES

This section delves into the topical themes that emerged from the responses of the research participants. The table below shows an overview of the developed themes, along with the codes that go with them:

Table 1. Themes from interviews

THEMES	CODES
Use of social media	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reason for using social media

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media usage in football • Clubs usage of social media
Understanding of publicity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding of publicity • Disadvantages of publicity • Positive effect of publicity
Employing social media effectively	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clubs' social media presence • Social media strategies
Enhancing publicity of premier league clubs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adoption of social media • Effective use of social media by clubs • Enhance publicity with social media

Source: Researcher's field data 2021

4.2 UNDERSTANDING OF SOCIAL MEDIA

The initial task was to gather the respondents' view on what they understood to be social media. RP3 pointed out that "*social media is actually a tool for communication*". This view was supported by RP4 who as well indicated that it "*...is an avenue to get information and content to people*". RP7 however had a rather odd view noting that "*social media is establishing a certain level of presence*", a view which was distinct from the opinions being expressed by other respondent.

That notwithstanding, RP9 explained that

"Social media is being used as a means of increasing customer interaction.

Football clubs use the platform to connect and market to a wider range of

audiences. The social media platform is being used because it offers practical interaction space for parties involved.”

4.3 USAGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN FOOTBALL

While knowledge of social media has been established, then next subject on the itinerary was to explore the use of social media in football. Interestingly, all respondents were in support of the statement that social media could be used in football. RP3 for instance elaborated on the opinion by asserting that

“Obviously I think that yes, in a greater view social media has one way or the other can be used for sports and entertainment. So, sports, football is actually under sports and since it is there, I think we can use social media for our sporting activities.”

On the issue of how social media could be used proper in football, RP1 shared a view encompassing a significant amount of view expressed. The assertion was that

“Football clubs are also companies and entities so if you want to communicate externally, it is one of the channels you can use. It is becoming more important because of the demography of individuals and how football fans are evolving over time. Back then football fans were more of stadium goers. They were more loyal and more of on sight fans but now because of Generation which is the current generation which is more tech and internet oriented and are football lovers. You get to communicate with such generation who grew up watching football and growing up on the internet and mobile phones. Football is a must on the internet.”

RP4 alluded to an interesting opinion that

“...with football going beyond the pitch because you need to market yourself and your club and there’s no centralized avenue that is better than social media at the moment. The benefit social media gives cannot be matched in any other media platform. It fits into the football industry because the football industry is about the eyes and ears and social media has centralized all those areas into one platform.”

In all, the views captured in the responses can be said to significantly positioned to address the question posed. This implies that social media has a wide range of usage options for organizations or entities who employ it.

4.4 UNDERSTANDING OF PUBLICITY

A further enquiry had to do with the respondents’ understanding of publicity. While respondents like RP1 were modest and said *“publicity is making sure you sell what you have...”*, RP9 was ostentatious to point out that

“...it is a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics. Essentially, public relations specialists manage an organization’s public image and reputation.”

Ultimately however, the prevalent view shared bothered on any such action or activities which could result in creating a buzz for an individual or entity. In other words, attention was at the heart of publicity.

4.5 PUBLICITY AND DISADVANTAGES

When asked if publicity came with any disadvantages, all respondents but RP4 said it did interestingly. This is more curious because to qualify the assertion, the justification was that

“I do not think there are disadvantages to publicity because it’s a tool that you use market what you want to market. You decide the narrative and content. You decide what and how you want people to perceive the product. The negatives is the lack of it. So if you are not doing the publicity right. My understanding of publicity from the angle who is producing it is that inherently there not negatives.”

However, by indicating publicity came with any disadvantages, RP5 was of the view that

“Sometimes you might have information that you do not want in the public being posted and when this is done unfortunately, might create a negative image in the minds of people when your name or your club’s name is mentioned.”

RP1 again shared an insightful view by pointing out that

“Lack of content control, risk of offline message, ROI risk and getting bumped amongst others. Public relations is not a magic pill – it must be worked and managed like other marketing tools and tactics. But if done well, it can help clubs break through the clutter and give a presence far greater than anticipated.”

Oddly, even though RP3 was in agreement that there are disadvantages, the manner of expression seemed to suggest that even in that unfortunate state, there was an upside to it.

“...yes, one way or the other the only disadvantage with publicity is making your competitor or opponent aware of some little things you do in secret to make your product better.”

While some opinions seemed rudimentary, other on this issue were astute indicating a good grasp of the phenomenon.

4.6 EFFECT OF PUBLICITY ON FOOTBALL

As to whether publicity could have a positive effect on football in Ghana, RP1 started on the preamble that

“...while publicity means you are putting yourself out there and making sure you are popular and once you put yourself out you should be prepared for backlash”

RP2 subscribed to the assertion by indicating that

“100% I it is my view that publicity can have a thousand percent impact on football. When you look at the English Premier League, Germany, Spain Italy. In fact, they have quality football, technically when you look at Spanish football English football has adopted publicity and made it its hobby so that it looks good.... I mean that's the way to go. Neglecting publicity now in our sports is going to have a toll order of degradation if you want to, or discordancy on your club.... Publicity has come to stay and I feel if you do it right it sells your product.”

RP3 as well was of the notion that *“...the advantages are enormous”* which buttresses RP8's opinion that *“...publicity can have a very good effect on Ghana football”*. RP5 as well stressed that

“Hitherto in England or London people remember Ghana because of Essien, and the world at large got to know Ghana more because of our exploits in the world cup in 2006 and 2010 when the whole world got to know that a country like ours had qualified to the quarter finals of the world cup.”

These views gave life to the statement as examples of positive effects borne out of publicity were referred to put the argument in context. Per these arguments, the impact of publicity could as well be seen in the Ghanaian case if adopted.

4.7 SOCIAL MEDIA PUBLICIZING FOOTBALL

On the issue of whether social media was essential in publicizing football in Ghana, the general sentiment from respondents resonated with the statement. Recanting a practical scenario this situation manifested, RP1 reported that

“For us, we had been on since we were in division one and we had done very well. When we started you had little clubs on it but now every game that is played, you realized that videos are everywhere. You were here when young guy scored a goal and we realized that videos were everywhere.”

Talking from experience, RP3 also pointed to a recent incident where the role of social media in football resulted in publicizing football.

“I can say for a fact and I can say it on authority that last season’s league was interesting because of social media and because of the rivalries of the clubs and because of their activeness on social media really boosted the Ghana Premier League and has placed it at the pedestal that it needs to be or get to.”

RP2 as well shared a spirited view indicating that

“100%, we have moved from the old age. The moment you neglect publicity and the presence of social media you are still in the old age and before you realize you’ll be in Ghana but the German Bundesliga, the Spanish league and all these leagues will overshadow you in your own country.”

RP8 also was of the view that “...we live in a world where social media has become the primary source of information used by many...”. This means that in this day and age, the importance of publicity and social media cannot be under estimated. This is because it has been the most important tool that has ensured that publicity as far as the Ghana league is concerned is up there.

4.8 SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE

When asked if the various clubs had social media presence, the answer was unanimous as all respondents indicated they did. RP2 for instance pointed out that

“...on twitter we are having over 40k following, we have over eight thousand on Facebook and we are trying to gather numbers on YouTube and Instagram.”

RP7 also shared that

“We are not doing badly, we have a large number on twitter, our Facebook followers are growing as well as Instagram and you tube but it can be better.”

In light of this, staying off social media would be a no brainer as a depiction of being out of touch. This is because no matter how minimal their followership, every club is striving to gain a market share in the space. RP8 affirmed this position stating

“I think our presence has been fairly good on social media, we have taken inspiration from other clubs...We are planning to add tiktok and get our YouTube Chanel back on track.”

4.9 PURPOSE OF THE SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE

While all the clubs indicated they used social media, the reason for social media presence and usage differed. RP8 indicated that

“...we have a social media account and we set it up to basically reach out to our supporters because that is a medium through which you can interact with your supporters and you can reach out to more and more supporters...”

Whereas RP3 chipped in that

“...currently we can boast of being the most vibrant club on social media per the award by the Ghana Football Awards”

RP9 as well was of the view that

“...it allows the club to connect with its fans rather than have their words filtered through the media. That direct relationship also allows players with large followings to affect social change. Social media benefits clubs, fans and players by allowing them to amplify their messages, discuss and interact with fans and listen to what they are saying in an ongoing way. It also allows them to reach a wider audience than just local people and that could be national or international.”

RP1 held a rather sophisticated view of why clubs use social media by asserting that

“...now it has become a means of revenue generation. So that is one thing that as a club we always look forward to. We are not a traditional club, a Hearts of Oak or Kotoko but if you the right thing and use the right approach, social media can become a platform you can generate money.”

RP4 had a business inclined reason for being on social media

“For us, we basically use social media to promote our players. We are a selling club. The DNA of the club is to produce and transfer them to Europe or any place where proper football is being done. For us, the main purpose of social media is to stay relevant n the discussion about football and by so doing we are also promoting and furthering our mission.”

This to an extent indicates that the clubs are embracing technology and the sophistication it comes with it. This development points to the direction that technology is being harnessed to give the clubs a competitive advantage of the competition.

4.10 SOCIAL MEDIA STRATEGY

With social media playing a significant role in football publicity, it was essential to ascertain if the club sampled had a social media strategy. RP2 indicated that the club had a social media strategy which informed its actions

“...there was an approach last season for example to target our audience or to target our numbers on Facebook and on twitter and of course tried getting them gradually on Instagram and YouTube trying to create content to have our fans to keep in touch with the club. So, there is also an approach and a strategy for example we chose an approach to use our social media platforms

as the right means to send information out there using our twitter and our Facebook for releases and all those things.”

RP5 was of the indication that working with its social media strategy,

“We use a lot of infographics that is we share a lot of pictures a lot of videos with regards to the activity that we are undertaking. We also have our graphic designers who help create infographics which we also share. Going forward we plan to share more pictures and videos than we have done and share every match update ahead of the season.”

RP1 was also able to give a relatable breakdown to how it utilizes its strategy

“...we have a strategy, it’s a must to have a strategy because that is what will serve as the plan. The strategy will serve as the target. Last season our target was to become the third most followed clubs on social media and reach our 60,000 mark, That is what helped us drive content in that regard. We did analysis and realize that our presence interaction comes mainly from Facebook so we needed to build on it and consolidate. Now we have twice the number of the persons behind us so that is what strategy means for us.”

RP8 as well had this to share

“Different seasons come with different strategies. Some seasons you might want to do a lot of engagements in the community and in other seasons you might want to do some engagements with your followers.”

While most sports managers believe their social media efforts are proficient or expert, and most have a clear social media plan, Leask, Hassanien, and Rothschild (2011) highlights that some are substantially less confident and have no established social media strategy. However, with the findings indicating that for the clubs sampled, they were not rolling with the tide but well informed with the objectives and goals it intended to attain before making any efforts on social media. This implies that the Ghanaian case is apprised of the space and how to operate.

4.11 GHANAIAN PREMIER LEAGUE AND SOCIAL MEDIA

As to whether all Ghanaian premier league clubs should be encouraged to get on social media, there was an overwhelming view buying into the suggestion. RP3 noted that

“...it is a very big place to be, sometimes you would even want to post something and you will like to tag a club and then you are unable to tag the club because they are not visible on that platform.”

With RP5 arguing that

“We are in a global world and football is capital intensive so some of the ways you can market your club is to let people know about your club. For us we have some sponsorsso the more you market your club the more people get to know about your club and the more the world gets to know.”

RP2 was straightforward and asserted that

“I will advise every football club in Ghana to join social media because it is the way to go and it is the best way to sell Ghana football.”

While RP4 was also of the opinion that

“Yes, they would have to hop on it because whiles we were chasing a sponsorship deal which is one of the biggest in the Ghana Premier League, they were wowed by our social media following, so one of the benefits you get from social media.”

The encouragement and zeal associated with the possible benefits of being on social media indicates that with no time, this action would become a necessary norm more than a choice for football clubs. This may as well be informed by the fact that social media offers fans new landscapes of fandom and an additional mean to engage with their favourite teams and clubs, while at the same time allows sport organizations to strengthen fan relationships (McCarthy et al., 2014; Stavros et al., 2014). Siguencia et al.’s (2017) assertion also comes to bear as indeed all sports organizations require effective media relations and direct customer communication. Successful sports managers must have a thorough understanding of how ICT works in order to effectively manage the communication process.

4.12 EFFECTIVE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Even on social media, there is still the possibility of being ineffective because of lack of comprehension of the dynamics. Due to this possible roadblock, the respondents’ was sought on the issue. RP5 was of the view that

“You have got to understand how the space works and you have to employ people with knowledge regarding social media because you need to know your brand and you need to know the kind of people who follow you and the demography of your fan base. It tells you what kind of information to put out there.”

RP2 also noted that

“...number one; they should have a media strategy; they should have a strong PR and they should involve the PR in major conversations and decisions that the club makes. And of course, they should know what sort of information is consumable for the fan base.”

Being as direct as possible, RP6 proposed that

“By employing professionals and creating channels that must be made the sole if not the major source of club communications”

This agrees with literature (Nicholson, Kerr and Sherwood, 2015) as most people nowadays utilize social media and have a profile on one or more social networking sites. For this reason, nowadays, clubs must compete on a variety of levels, with publicity being one of the most common areas of competition. It has been realized also that to build a positive image, they often use social media this is especially finalized to inform their youngest fans on the club life reaching them online.

4.13 ENHANCING PUBLICITY OF GHANAIAN PREMIER LEAGUE CLUBS

With the success stories shared on social media and its effect on publicity, in relation to enhancing the outlook of Ghanaian premier league clubs, there were some thoughtful ideas meted out. A view highlighted by RP4 in this regard pointed that

“The problem is that there is a lack of plan and that affect content creation so to address that there have to be content plan to set the ball rolling. Once there is content and there is a deliberate effort to push the content on social media, there will be benefits. The impact will be huge on social media and it

will have the attention of people on social media and the whole country. We can then use the numbers to promote the club and the league.”

RP1 as well was of the opinion that

“You always have to make a conscious effort to use social media to promote your activities and also develop your club. For us as a football club, one of the easiest ways of selling your product is by using social media. Social media is the easiest and cheapest ways of highlighting our product.”

RP5 adds that

“Set up a plan, What about your club do you want to promote? You market the players, and market the club itself and also share critical information and also let your supporters know the ins and outs of your club. There things that are not okay for public consumption so you keep that between the clubs and there are certain things that supporters need to know, you let them have that. So there should be a plan, you market the club, market your sponsors and then especially market your players because they are the product.”

RP9 supported the fray suggesting

“Ghanaian clubs can use social platforms to allow fans to interact and communicate with the club. Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and even YouTube are creating more fans now more than ever before as its opening fans up to a collection of content provided by players and football clubs on demand.”

Another view pointed out was that of RP7

“...it’s the case of using social media to touch on the positives. Once we are able to touch on what we stand for and what we can offer then we are confident that it can attract a certain level of attention and then over time it gets better.”

Due to the popularity of social media, clubs are increasingly investing significant time and resources to generate online connection, leveraging their following' extremely engaged nature (Filo, Lock, and Karg, 2015). However, it appears that there is a lack of genuine effort to get to know their fan base, and many clubs continue to struggle with the tension of trying to maintain brand control while simultaneously developing an engaging presence with their enthusiastic fan base (McCarthy et al., 2014). Despite their large investments, the majority of teams have steadily advanced toward true social media connection with their supporters. It is therefore essential that the clubs adopt measures like developing social media strategies to guide their online operations.

4.14 DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.14.1 How Social Media Enhances Publicity of Premier League Clubs

Overall, it was found that social media places a significant role enhancing publicity for the premier league clubs. This is because based on various examples and scenarios given, social media could not be discounted in the discussion of publicity. This emanates from the respondents own accounts buttressing the assertion. Yoshida et al. (2014) however point out that Clubs, need good direction on how to manage their online presence, specifically through getting greater insights into their supporters’ motives and behaviors, in order to use social media efficiently.

Further, it was found that social media was a critical part in the popularity of contemporary football space of Ghana. Interestingly, Nisar, Prabhakar, and Patil (2018) indicates which clubs that perform well or are in a higher “Champions League pool” do not engage with their fans any better than clubs in lower pools. This conclusion implies that, when used properly, social media may be a successful form of marketing and can be useful in attracting viewers to a sporting event, as asserted by Reed (2011). This is because social media has presented a level playground for teams to compete for based on their own efforts especially as new media is getting all the attention. In this regard, even “newer” clubs can have a semblance of popularity which was the preserve of otherwise “traditional clubs”. This throws light on Hutchins and Rowe’s (2012) assessment that football-related events are progressively being reinvented for its growing diverse audiences, as is the case with many conventional sports.

While the world continues to evolve, so is football and so should the premier league clubs in Ghana. This is because as Jozsa Jr (2010) puts it, football is more than simply a beautiful game; it is a global and highly visible business whose clients are fiercely devoted to their preferred brand. This means that with the publicity granted premier league clubs by social media, they can market and promote themselves by putting together good social media strategies which ties into their corporate objectives. In sum, the opportunity presented by social media has helped put premier league clubs on the world arena because of the viral ability of social media.

4.14.2 Reasons Ghanaian Premier League Clubs Use Social Media

It was found that because social media is an avenue to get information and content to people and has come to stay, have as well taken advantage of this avenue. This is because social media among the numerous uses it presents, sports and football to be specific is not left out. This is a finding which was made from the study as well validating Thorpe’s (2017) argument that the growth of

new media technologies is becoming increasingly crucial in the continued development of talents among athletes and committed recreational players, as well as in the building of a sense of community among enthusiasts and audiences. Also, because football is nothing without supporters and supports is about branding and so with social media you can attract much more members than you can actually get physically.

In football industry, it was found that social media could be used to promote players which could attract signings which is the business side of football. Based on this finding, it is clear that football's economic benefit as a business enterprise is enormous. Also, it was found that social media was an avenue through which premier league clubs could interact with their fans as well as augmenting its brand awareness. This supports Gregory's (2011) position that the world of business is characterized by fierce competition, and in order to win new customers and retain existing ones, organizations have to distinguish themselves from the competition while creating and maintaining positive image at the same time. By mapping key stakeholders, Eskerod and Jepsen (2013) points out that this helps managers to get invaluable insights. These insights that the stakeholders will share regarding goes a long way to prove invaluable in a successful project outcome. In football terms, this could be the feedback obtain from social media on content uploaded for instance.

4.14.3 Ghanaian Premier League Clubs Understanding of Publicity

Publicity was found to be a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics. These processes essentially bothered on any such action or activities which could result in creating a buzz for an individual or entity. In other words, attention was at the heart of publicity. Oddly, even though publicity was found to have disadvantages, there was a contrary view suggesting that even in that unfortunate state, there was an upside to it.

That notwithstanding, it was as well found that publicity had a positive effect on football in Ghana. The case was made that the rest of the world got to know Ghana more because of our successes in the World Cup in 2006 and 2010, when the rest of the world learned that a country like ours had qualified for the quarterfinals. In the same vain, the resounding point was that publicity while tricky was a tangible asset if managed well.

4.14.4 How Ghanaian Premier League Clubs Can Effectively Use Social Media

The initial step in this regard as per the findings was to establish as social media presence. This is because through this initiative, the clubs can reach out to its supporters because that becomes a medium through which they can interact with supporters and reach out to even more supporters. The top division in England, for instance, is projected to produce more than two billion euros more than the second and third divisions in Spain and Germany, respectively (Quansah et al., 2021). Based on the foregoing, it is apparent that football has significant economic value as a business enterprise. However, the business world is defined by severe competition, and firms must differentiate themselves from the competitors while simultaneously building and maintaining a positive image in order to acquire new consumers and retain existing ones (Gregory, 2011).

That direct relationship also allows players with large followings to affect social change. Social media benefits clubs, fans and players by allowing them to amplify their messages, discuss and interact with fans and listen to what they are saying in an ongoing way. It also allows them to reach a wider audience than just local people and that could be national or international. Also, while all this is salient, it is important that premier league clubs develop a social media strategy. This is because it is what will serve as the plan and that the strategy will serve as the target. Because we are in a global world and football is capital intensive some of the ways to market a club is to let people know about the club which is why all premier league clubs have to sign on.

4.15 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter discussed the findings obtained from the field data which would help the study achieve its objectives. The purpose of this chapter was to analyze the data acquired, after which the researcher interprets the data to make it easier to understand. In accordance with the study's sustained dedication to maintaining the anonymity of the participants, pseudonyms were used.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATION AND CONCLUSION

5.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter contains a summary of the study, recommendations, and a conclusion based on the study's findings as well as information gathered from other sources.

5.1 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This study set out to how social media can be used to enhance publicity of Ghanaian premier league clubs. To achieve this aim, objectives were set to probe the reason(s) Ghanaian premier league clubs use social media, interrogate what Ghanaian premier league clubs understand by publicity and to find out how Ghanaian premier league clubs can employ social media effectively. The study through a qualitative research approach interviewed the Heads of communication/public relations of nine (9) premier league clubs in Ghana. The study found that social media was a significant tool to enhancing publicity for Ghanaian premier league clubs. Also, it was realized that premier league clubs mainly use social media for interaction with fans and as a marketing avenue. While it was advocated that all premier league clubs adopt social media, it was found to be important that they develop social media strategies to guide their prospects.

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study recommends that Ghanaian clubs should adopt the use of social platforms to allow fans to interact and communicate with the club. Also, while all this is salient, it is important that premier league clubs develop a social media strategy. Because public relations plays an important role in the survival and successful operation of sport organizations premier league clubs can invest in that. Again, because publicity could come with disadvantages, while on social media, the premier

league clubs have to avoid any such scenarios. Additionally, since the study was confined to only nine (9) Premier League clubs, it is recommended that any future research on this topic expand the sample size, assess the study from the perspective of supporters, and, if necessary, employ alternative methodologies.

5.3 CONCLUSION

Football, like the rest of the world, is evolving, and so should Ghana's premier league clubs. Football has evolved into more than just a sport and is now a global and highly visible company with fervently loyal customers. This means that premier league clubs may sell and promote themselves by putting up strong social media plans that align with their corporate aims, thanks to the exposure provided by social media. In conclusion, due of social media's viral nature, the opportunity presented by social media has helped put premier league teams on the global stage. Further, Premier league clubs must reorient themselves of the need adopt to public relations because it is significant to sports organization and administration process at all levels, whether handling major sponsorship and media rights deals, events, promoting stars, promoting team unity, among others.

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APPENDIX

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Dear Respondents,

I am a graduate student of the Ghana Institute of Journalism (GIJ) undertaking an academic study on the topic **SOCIAL MEDIA AS AN ENHANCEMENT TOOL FOR FOOTBALL PUBLICITY (A STUDY OF SELECTED GHANA PREMIER LEAGUE CLUBS)**.

The researcher will be grateful if you assist by granting an interview on the following sub-themes. This exercise is strictly for academic purposes hence, the researcher guarantees that every information provided will be treated with utmost confidentiality. Please note that if you feel uncomfortable at any point, you can inform the researcher of your inability to continue.

Part 1: Reason(s) Ghanaian premier league clubs use social media

5. In your view, why is social media used?
6. In your opinion, can social media be utilized in football?
7. How is social media used in football industry?
8. Does your club use social media and why?

Part 2: Ghanaian premier league clubs understanding of publicity

9. What is your understanding of publicity?
10. Are there any disadvantages to publicity?
11. Is it your view that publicity can have a positive effect on football in Ghana?
12. Would you say social media is essential in publicizing football in Ghana?

Part 3: How Ghanaian premier league clubs can employ social media effectively

13. Does your club have social media presence and why?
14. What would you say is the purpose of the social media platforms?
15. Does the club have a social media strategy?
16. What is your reason for the answer above?

Part 4: Enhancing publicity of Ghanaian premier league clubs

17. Would you advise all Ghanaian premier league to get on social media?
18. How do you think Ghanaian premier league clubs can use social media effectively?
19. How social media can be used to enhance publicity of Ghanaian premier league clubs?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME