



**COMMUNICATION MANAGEMENT IN SPORTS MEDIA: A CASE STUDY OF
KPANDO HEARTS OF LIONS AND HOHOE UNITED FOOTBALL CLUB**

BY

TILDA ACORLOR ELINAM

MADC24050

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DECLARATION BY STUDENT – DISSERTATION

I hereby declare that this research is a result of my own original research and that, no part of it has been presented for another degree in this university or any other higher education institute. I further declare that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

TILDA ELINAM ACORLOR MADC24050

Student Index number Signature Date

DECLARATION BY SUPERVISOR

This Project Work has been prepared and presented under my supervision according to the guidelines for supervision and formatting of Project Work laid down by the Institute of Journalism under the University of Media, Arts and Communication (UniMAC-IJ)

DR. JOSEPH OBENG-BAAH  7/01/2026

Supervisor Signature Date

DEDICATION

To my parents, whose firm belief in education and relentless encouragement has been the foundation of every step I take.

To the brave men and women in sports who lace up their boots hustling every other day, turning passion into performance and inspiring a nation of hopeful people.

And to the loyal fans, your chants, cheers, and unshaken support are the true heartbeat of the game, this is for you.

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ABSTRACT

Effective communication has become a critical management function for modern football clubs, particularly in contexts where fan engagement, reputation, and commercial sustainability are increasingly shaped by digital media. This study examined communication management practices of Kpando Hearts of Lions and Hohoe United Football Club, two regional clubs competing in the Ghana Premier League, with emphasis on communication channels, content quality, crisis responsiveness, and fan-oriented improvement strategies. A mixed-methods approach was adopted. Quantitative data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to 61 supporters of the two clubs, while qualitative data were obtained from open-ended survey responses and semi-structured interviews with club communication officers. Descriptive statistics and thematic analysis were used to analyse the data. The findings indicate that digital platforms, particularly Facebook, serve as the primary communication channels for supporters, although traditional and community-based platforms remain relevant. Supporters placed strong emphasis on clear, timely, and engaging content, especially match-related and player-focused information, while expressing concerns about limited transparency on sensitive issues. Differences were observed between the two clubs in terms of communication structure, responsiveness, and supporter expectations. While cultural and linguistic proximity enhanced engagement, limited formal crisis communication structures posed potential long-term risks. The study concludes that communication effectiveness in regional football clubs depends on balancing digital professionalism with cultural relevance and resource realities. It recommends context-sensitive communication strategies that strengthen content quality, responsiveness, and fan participation to enhance supporter trust and club reputation.

Keywords: Football communication, Ghana Premier League, Volta Region, crisis management, Situational Crisis Communication Theory, media-mix, digital storytelling, fan engagement, local-language content, resource-based view, social-media analytics.

LIST OF ABBREVIATION

GFA – Ghana Football Association

GPL –Ghana Premier League

PRO – Public Relations Officer

KPI – Key Performance Indicator

SOP – Standard Operating Procedure

TV – Television

SMS – Short Message Service

RBV – Resource-Based View

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Communication management has become a central operational function within modern sports organizations rather than a peripheral publicity activity. In contemporary football, effective communication is essential for managing club identity, engaging fans, handling crises, and sustaining stakeholder trust (SOSU, 2025). The increasing convergence of digital media has transformed how football clubs interact with their supporters, shifting communication from one-way information dissemination to continuous, interactive engagement across multiple platforms (Li, 2024a).

Globally, football clubs now operate within a highly mediatized environment where social media, live streaming, and digital storytelling shape fan perceptions and loyalty (Annamalai et al., 2021). Leading football leagues such as the English Premier League, Major League Soccer, and the National Football League demonstrate that strategic communication extends beyond match updates to include narrative construction, emotional engagement, and stakeholder relationship management (Aichner, 2019; Annamalai et al., 2021). These practices highlight communication as a strategic management function embedded within organizational decision-making structures.

In the African context, football communication practices are evolving but remain constrained by structural and infrastructural challenges (Aboul-Dahab, 2022). Although digital platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube provide new opportunities for fan engagement, uneven internet access, limited financial resources, and small communication teams affect the consistency

and quality of content production (Abdul-Rahman, 2014). African football fans also maintain hybrid identities, simultaneously supporting local clubs while consuming European football through broadcast media, which increases competition for attention and loyalty (Maderer et al., 2018).

Ghanaian football clubs operate within this transitional communication landscape. Studies on Ghana Premier League clubs indicate that communication roles are often limited to technical or facilitative functions rather than being integrated into strategic management (Charway et al., 2023). Fan engagement is further influenced by factors such as stadium conditions, officiating quality, and security concerns, which interact with communication effectiveness to shape attendance and support (Abdul-Rahman, 2014). Despite the widespread use of Facebook and radio as communication channels, many clubs lack formal communication strategies and crisis-response protocols.

Within this setting, regional football clubs such as Kpando Hearts of Lions Football Limited and Hohoe United Football Club present a valuable case for examining communication management under resource-limited conditions. Both clubs operate in the Volta Region of Ghana, where internet penetration varies significantly between urban and rural communities. While Kpando Hearts of Lions benefits leadership with public relations and management experience, Hohoe United faces the challenge of building a new organizational identity following ownership and branding changes. These contextual differences influence how each club manages communication, engages fans, and responds to crises (NSA, 2025).

1.2 Statement of problem

Despite the growing importance of communication management in modern football, empirical research on communication practices in regional and lower-tier football clubs in Ghana remains limited. Existing studies largely focus on elite clubs and national leagues, with little attention to how smaller clubs manage communication within resource-constrained and locally embedded contexts.

In practice, many regional clubs face challenges related to weak communication structures, limited crisis communication preparedness, narrow use of digital media platforms, and basic content production that does not fully meet contemporary fan expectations (Aboul-Dahab, 2022). These challenges can result in low stakeholder engagement, reduced sponsorship appeal, and increased vulnerability to reputational risks (ABDUL-RAHMAN, 2014).

Kpando Hearts of Lions and Hohoe United Football Club exemplify these realities as regional Ghana Premier League clubs operating within evolving digital and commercial football environments. However, there is insufficient systematic evidence on how their communication is structured, how crises are managed, how digital media is utilised, and how fans perceive these practices.

This study therefore seeks to examine communication management practices in Kpando Hearts of Lions and Hohoe United Football Club, with particular attention to communication structures, crisis management, digital media use, and fan perceptions, in order to generate context-specific insights relevant to regional football clubs in Ghana.

1.3 Aim and Objectives

The aim of this study is to examine the effectiveness of communication management practices of Kpando Hearts of Lions and Hohoe United Football Club from the perspective of their fans, and to propose strategies for improving fan engagement and club reputation. Specifically, it seeks to:

1. To assess the communication channels used by the two clubs and examine fans' perceptions of their reach and adequacy.
2. To evaluate fans' perceptions of the quality, clarity, and engagement level of the clubs' communication content.
3. To examine fans' perceptions of the clubs' responsiveness and preparedness in handling communication during crises or negative events.
4. To identify and prioritise fans' recommended strategies for improving communication management practices of the two clubs

1.4 Research Questions

1. What are the primary communication channels used by Kpando Hearts of Lions and Hohoe United Football Club, and how do fans perceive the reach and adequacy of these channels?
2. How do fans perceive the quality, clarity, and engagement levels of the communication content produced by both clubs?
3. What are the fans' perceptions regarding the responsiveness and preparedness of the clubs when handling feedback or communicating during crises and negative events?
4. What strategies and improvements do fans recommend to enhance the communication management practices of Kpando Hearts of Lions and Hohoe United Football Club?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This research has several contributions to the academic world and to practice. It will firstly add to the scanty body of research on sports communication in developing markets, through an in-depth, comparative case study of two local Ghanaian football clubs. Findings add value to the theoretical frameworks, including the Situational Crisis Communication Theory and the ResourceBased View, displaying their functioning under resource limitations peculiar to sub-elite clubs. Second, the research provides practical findings to club managers, public-relations offiofficers, volunteer communicators. By uncovering holes in media-mix utilisation, crisis management and digital narrative-telling, the study provides these organisations with evidence-based solutions that will help enhance fan engagement, find sponsors, and protect the reputation, without incurring significant expenditures. Third, the findings can be applicable to policymakers and sport-development agencies in Ghana. The identification of the communication difficulties of the club in the region makes it important to emphasize that particular training programmes, small financing systems, and support in infrastructure that may reinforce the overall health of the domestic league are in demand. Lastly, it has social consequences in the study. Good communication makes the clubs more of community centers, which leads to social togetherness, youth empowerment and pride among the locals in the Volta Region. The research helps these clubs narrate their stories in a more attractive way, thus making the Ghanaian football culture more lively and its ability to make people of different backgrounds connect. All in all, the research closes a gap in knowledge, provides practical tools, enlightens the policy, and enhances the cultural influence of local football clubs.

1.6 Scope of study

- The study is dedicated to the communication activities of two major clubs in the Volta Region Kpando Hearts of Lions Football Limited and Hohoe United Football Club. The research paper is time-bound to the 2023-2024 season of the Ghana premier league. The research is focused on three thematic areas:
- **Organizational Communication Structure:** This would include an examination of how the clubs cluster their PR and communication activities, the particular position of the staff or volunteers and the various avenues which are used to access the internal and external stakeholders.
- **Crisis-Communication Management:** This domain looks at the presence or lack of official guidelines of how reputational threat is detected, assessed and addressed. It also investigates the application of such protocols where they are found in real-time incidents.
- **Digital-Content Production and Storytelling:** The analysis is an assessment of the media types produced such as posts, videos, and podcasts. It also evaluates the rate of publication and the nature of narrative techniques that were used to attract fans to the key digital platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube.

There are three key sources of data used to triangulate data on this study. To begin with, the semi-structured interviews with the public relations officers, senior managers, and specified communication personnel of the clubs are held. Second, a quantitative aspect will be contained in a survey of about 60 fans living in the Volta Region to record perceptions and media-consumption behaviors of fans. Third, an official social media post of the clubs, press releases and web material of the clubs published within a period of six months are conducted through a systematic content analysis. The geographical area of the study is limited to Volta Region. Thematically, the study

does not touch upon the larger policies of the league, communication of the national teams, or commercial sponsorship deals, unless they directly impact the communication management of the two chosen clubs. The final objective is to produce context-related insights that can be used to inform communication approach to other regional clubs with similar size in Ghana and other emerging markets of football.

1.7 Limitations of study

The findings of this research may be constrained by a number of factors. Although the comparative case-study design is deep, it restricts the statistical extrapolation of the findings to all the football clubs in Ghana. Moreover, the 12-month time frame of digital content might not represent the seasonal change, that is, the difference between the off-season and peak match-day activities. The limitation in resources also did not allow conducting a bigger fan survey sample, which would have made the engagement estimates more accurate. Lastly, the research is based on the self-reporting of the club officials in the interview which can be affected by social desirability bias. These findings would be further supported in future studies, which would use bigger random samples and longitudinal tracking.

1.7 Definition of Terms

- **Communication Management** – The systematic planning, implementation, and evaluation of an organization’s internal and external messaging to achieve strategic objectives (W. Timothy. Coombs, 2019)

- **Crisis Communication** – The set of procedures and channels used to detect, assess, and respond to threats to an organization’s reputation, aiming to protect stakeholder trust (W. Timothy. Coombs, 2019)

- **Digital Storytelling** – The practice of using digital media (video, audio, graphics, social-media posts) to convey narratives that engage audiences emotionally and reinforce brand identity (Aboul-Dahab, 2022)

- **Stakeholder** – Any individual or group that can affect or be affected by a club’s activities, including fans, sponsors, players, staff, governing bodies, and the local

- **Resource Constraints** – Limitations in financial budget, equipment, and skilled personnel that hinder a club’s ability to execute its communication strategy (Amoah & Osei, 2021).

- **Ghana Premier League (GPL)** – The top tier of professional football in Ghana, organized by the Ghana Football Association, comprising clubs from various regions competing for the national championship (GFA, 2025)

- **Volta Region** – One of Ghana’s sixteen administrative regions, located in the eastern part of the country, serving as the geographical focus of this study.

- **Kpando Hearts of Lions Football Limited** – A regional football club based in Kpando, Volta Region, promoted to the GPL for the 2023-2024 season.

- **Hohoe United Football Club** – A regional football club based in Hohoe, Volta Region, also promoted to the GPL for the 2023-2024 season.

1.8 Organization of the Study

This study is organized into five main chapters, beginning with the first chapter which introduces the research problem, objectives, and research questions while outlining the significance of the study and defining key terms. Chapter Two provides a comprehensive review of the literature on sports communication, crisis management, digital storytelling, and resource constraints to identify existing research gaps and establish the theoretical framework. The third chapter details the research methodology, justifying the use of a comparative case study approach and describing the integration of interviews, a fan survey, and systematic content analysis. Chapter Four presents the research findings, which are analyzed and organized according to the study's core objectives. Finally, Chapter Five concludes the dissertation by discussing the results in relation to existing theory and practice, offering practical recommendations for football clubs and policymakers, and suggesting specific directions for future research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.0 Introduction

Communication strategic management within sports organizations has come to be more of an administrative fringe activity, to the point of operational necessity, especially in the digital convergence era. The chapter is a review of literature that is relevant to communication management in sports media, in this case, in football clubs. This review aims at placing the present research of the Kpando Hearts of Lions and the Hohoe United Football Club in the larger academic conversation with regard to identifying the existing theoretical frameworks and trends in the research and to pinpoint some critical gaps in the context of the current study. This chapter has three major sections, a conceptual review of communication management and sports media, analysis of empirical research conducted in both global and local contexts, and discussion of theoretical frameworks that informed the study which includes the Excellence Theory, Uses and Gratifications Theory, and Stakeholder Theory.

2.1 Review of Related Studies

2.1.1. Theory of Management Communication.

Communication management in sports organizations refers to the planned and organized communication processes between a club and its internal and external publics in the attainment of strategic goals. The focus of scholarship definitions has turned away to perceiving communication as a technical publicity role to an important management pillar that has become part of the organizational strategic core (Erciş, 2025). The current sports communication landscape is

becoming increasingly mediatized where clubs have to take care of their brand image by means of visual narration and data-based personalization to sustain competitive edge in a globalized market (Li, 2024b). Moreover, operational efficiency depends heavily on the quality management of internal communication. This is because high quality communication between technical and medical personnel in elite football has been associated with reduced injury burden and increased player availability (Ekstrand et al., 2019).

2.1.2. Sports Media and Communication Management.

The connection between sports and the media is in essence symbiotic, as it is commonly referred to as the sports media complex with organizations offering raw material to be viewed by the media and the media offering the visibility that keeps the clubs afloat. This relationship has been escalated by digital transformation which has shifted clubs to a direct-to-consumer model with official mobile applications and social media platforms (Parchment, 2025). The literature of mediatization examines the influence of media logic on the social practice, which establish transnational fanbases that contribute to the support of clubs across geographical borders (PFA, 2025). In the African sense, mediatization would necessitate that its local clubs must strike a balance between local interest and global standards of production in order to compete with massive dose infiltration of European broadcasts of football (Li, 2024b).

2.1.3. The Channels that Football Clubs use to communicate.

In order to evaluate the extent and sufficiency of communication channels, one has to analyze the variety of channels that the clubs use to interact both internally and externally (Aboagye et al., 2021). The traditional communication channels in the company used to be based on meetings, memos, and telephone calls, though with the swift shift to digital products, agile tools like

WhatsApp and team management applications have become an essential part of communication inside the company to facilitate operations (Aboagye et al., 2021). The external interaction is characterized by a mobile first strategy in which social media such as Facebook, Instagram, and X are used as the major tools of disseminating the news and community building (Li, 2024b). In Ghana, studies have shown that Facebook and team specific applications were well received by the fans, but because of the digital participation gap in rural settings, other traditional platforms like the local radio continue to be crucial in terms of making access and reach possible (Oparaugo, 2025).

2.1.4. Relevance, Coherence, and Interactivity of Sports Communication Materials.

To assess the fans perceptions about the communication, it is important to explore the quality of the content and how it produces a given level of engagement, that is , attending a game or buying merchandise (Li, 2024). In African football, the most common content held is community oriented and cultural heritage, and the match related content is highly sensitive to the performance of the teams (Frimpong, 2014).

2.1.5. Empirical Data of Leading Football Leagues.

The studies conducted by leading international leagues give a lead on strategic communication practices. The English Premier League clubs are taking advantage of globalization by using advanced marketing schemes like reverse corporate nationalism to attract far-off fans who want to identity with a different authentic identity (Cocco, 2020). In the Major League soccer, clubs are using Facebook to conduct in depth analysis and interactive watch parties to create a community with an ever-increasing number of fans (Cocco, 2020). The National Football League can use storytelling campaigns such as ‘Football Is Family’ to fulfill the psychological desires of fans to

belong and create a narrative, which demonstrates that good communication management depends not only on updates about the matches but also the desire to evoke emotions (Brattain, 2025).

2.1.6. African Football League Empirical Studies.

Literature on African football emphasizes the increasing possibilities of digital interaction despite the limitations in a structure and context. High-profile clubs like Al Ahly and Mamelodi Sundowns are on the forefront in digitalizing to overcome geographical and financial boundaries, which frequently publish culturally favored content that enhances the emotional attachment (Aboul-Dahab, 2022). Nonetheless, the digital adoption is not evenly spread all over the continent because of digital participation gap, mostly in the rural regions where there is a limited access to the internet. Research has also shown that African fans usually hold on to hybrid identities in that they can continue to support local clubs but also participate in the European leagues transnationally through broadcasting (Akpan, 2020).

2.1.7. Ghanaian and Local Football Club empirical Studies.

An overview of the communication practice in Ghana shows that the area is in the transitional stage whereby professionalization is a major concern. One of the most seminal studies on four Ghanaian Premier League clubs found out that the major role of Public Relations Officers is communication facilitator or technician instead of strategic management (Abdul-Rahman, 2014). Ghanaian fans have one of the most distinctive consumption patterns with 46.2% using Facebook and television respectively but other attributes like poor officiating, hooliganism and lack of proper facilities are major discouraging factors towards attending the stadiums (Frimpong, 2014). In case study clubs such as Kpando Hearts of Lions, the background of the leaders in terms of public relations and management creates some possibility of a more strategically oriented

communication. As a newly acquired company with a new owner and identity, Hohoe United needs strategic communication to construct its new localized brand without losing the legacy of the former (GFA, 2025).

2.2. Theoretical Framework

2.2.1 Excellence Theory of Communication.

The Excellence Theory of Communication is based on the belief that in order to be an excellent organization, the organizational PR should be two-way symmetrical process whose purpose is to understand one another (D. S. Coombs & Osborne, 2012; W. Timothy. Coombs, 2019). In a football scenario, this theory focuses on the fact that the communication management must be a strategic operation which is a part of the dominant coalition of the club. This framework can be applied to consider the third goal of this research by gauging the responsiveness and preparedness of Kpando Hearts of Lions and Hohoe United in case of crisis or negative incidents.

2.2.2. The Uses and Gratifications Theory.

The Uses and Gratifications Theory implies that the audience of media is not a passive receiver but one that chooses to use a certain channel in order to fulfill their psychological and social desire. This theory explains the choice of the fan media by the identification of the motives, including information seeking, social identity, entertainment (Falgoust et al., 2022). To conduct the current study, the first and second targets will be analyzed with the help of this theory, which explains why fans prefer certain communication channels offered by the club and how they assess the sufficiency and quality of the content shared.

2.2.3. Stakeholder Theory

Stakeholder Theory contends that the achievement of organizations rests on the ability to balance the needs and expectations of all the groups that are interested in the operations of the organization (Friedman et al., 2004). In professional football, fans are also described as salient stakeholders, who wield power, legitimacy, and urgency as far as the club performance, and decision-making on management are concerned (Ferkins & Shilbury, 2015). The fourth goal of this theory is essential in determining and ranking the strategies proposed by fans on how to improve the practice of communication management.

2.2.4. Theories applied to the Study.

A combination of these theories gives a varied perspective on how to analyze the variables of the study and explain the perceptions of fans (D. S. Coombs & Osborne, 2012). The structural positioning of the communication function will be analyzed using Excellence Theory with the Uses and Gratifications Theory explaining the reasons of fan turn-up on digital and traditional channels. The Stakeholder Theory will make sure that the recommendations developed by the fans are evaluated as the legitimate claims of a core stakeholder group whose involvement is critical to the sustainability of Kpando Hearts of Lions and Hohoe United.

2.3 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the review of the literature on the communication management of sports media has been systematized, noting the shift towards digital first, models of engagement that are strategically integrated. The review determined that although international standards put more focus on mediatization as well as data driven customization, Ghanaian clubs have distinct structural obstacles such as the digital divide and the lack of resources. With the Excellence

Theory, Uses and Gratifications Theory, and Stakeholder Theory forming the foundation of the study, this review offers the theoretical rigor that Kpando Hearts of Lions and Hohoe United need to work in order to streamline their communication activities to achieve the expectation of the fans and negotiate the daunting sports media environment. This research theoretical and empirical underpinning makes it easy to pass to the methodology chapter where the research design which the research propositions will be tested is elaborated.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter defines the research methodology that shall be used to conduct research on the communication practices in Kpando Hearts of Lions Football Limited and Hohoe United Football Club. The theoretical framework applied in the methodology is the proposed one in Chapter Two; Situational Crisis Communication Theory and Media Richness Theory. The chapter outlines the research philosophy, approach, and design, and explains why a comparative case-study design was selected to learn about the communication dynamics of the two clubs. It also expounds on the research topic, sample, sample methods, and data collection procedures so that the study provides an in-depth understanding on how these clubs deal with limited resources and fan support and engagement. Lastly, the chapter also covers ethics and data analysis plan, presenting a solid framework in answering research questions about crisis communication, the use of the digital media, and the organization.

3.1 Research Philosophy

The research proposed in this study follows an interpretivist research philosophy that focuses on the comprehension of social phenomena through the eyes of the participants (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2019). It aims to investigate how fans, officials and staff in Kpando and Hohoe communities perceive and experience the communication strategies. In contrast to the strictly positivist paradigm, the interpretivist paradigm takes into account the subjective character of fan engagement and the impact of local and cultural settings on the use of media. The complexity of

social relations in the context of football fandom and the perception of communication strategies as effective or ineffective by various stakeholders in a resource-limited setting is why this philosophy is appropriate to this research.

3.2 Research Approach

The research methodology is based on the mixed-method approach, which will comprise quantitative (fan survey) data with the qualitative information acquired through interviews and thematic content analysis. The mixed-methods approach is suitable due to the possibility to explore communication processes in depth, as well as to statistically prove the level of fan satisfaction and engagement (Creswell and Poth, 2018). Combining the numerical data with the first-hand experiences of the club authorities and fans, the investigator may obtain the information about the process of development of the communication strategies, their implementation, and reception. This method fits the interpretivist philosophy since it tries to find out the meanings, participants give to club stories and crisis responses.

3.3 Research Design

The proposed design is a comparative case study where Kpando Hearts of Lions and Hohoe United are the two particular entities that will be used to examine the communication management practices of Kpando Hearts of Lions and Hohoe United. The case study design is selected due to the ability to conduct a detailed, situational study of organizational behavior and gain a clear picture of the strategies implemented and their success (Yin, 2018). The analysis of two clubs, which are similar in their regional setting, but have different histories and structures, offers a sophisticated insight into communication processes but a cross-case comparison of the way the questions of how and why are answered in regional Ghanaian football.

3.4 Study Area

The study area is the Volta Region in the south eastern part of Ghana particularly Kpando and Hohoe districts. According to the Ghana 2021 Population and Housing Census, the Volta Region has a population of 2.1 million, where Ewe is the main language with a complement of Twi. Internet penetration varies significantly between urban and rural areas which plays a big role in determining the dependency of the clubs on the hybrid media mix. The study will be able to mitigate the effects of the regional cultural norms, media infrastructure, and local economic constraints on communication strategies of these football clubs by focusing on this geographically contiguous area.

3.5 Target Population

This research will target the officials, players, as well as registered supporters of Kpando Hearts of Lions and Hohoe United Football Club. In particular, the population can be divided into three large sectors of the club functions: Football Operations (coaches and scouts), Medical and Sport Science, and General Administration (including Public Relations Officers and management). Also, the research is aimed at the wider fan community living in the Volta Region and beyond that has access to digital and traditional channels of interaction with the clubs. Such a diverse population also guarantees the holistic knowledge on internal production of communication and the external consumption by the stakeholders.

3.6 Sampling Technique

In this study, a combination of purposive and stratified sampling techniques was used. The sampling technique was purposive where the club officials and Public Relations Officers were sampled because they have specialized information on the daily running of the clubs and the

communication strategies. The stratified random sampling method was used in the fan based part of the research, which was divided into age groups (18-25, 26-35, 36-45, and 46+). This ensured that the views of the younger, digitally-native fans and the older supporters were represented. The invitations were sent through WhatsApp and SMS with convenience sampling at the match venues to ensure that fans favoring hard-copy interaction are invited.

3.7 Sample

This research will use 61 registered supporters and the important communication officials of the two clubs as the sample. The sample size of the fans is skewed toward males (91.8%), as the sample size represents the largest proportion of match-going fans in the region, and the sample is young; it is estimated that 62 percent of the respondents are less than 35 years old. The sample has club loyalty which is split between Hohoe United (67.2%) and Kpando Hearts of Lions (32.8%). The samples of internal staffs are the Public Relations Officers who are the representatives of 20 and 15 employees of Kpando Hearts of Lions and Hohoe United respectively. The sample size can be handled accordingly within a study that is more qualitative in nature and can be analysed in great detail to determine the patterns of engagement and organizational limitations.

3.8 Data Collection Method

To achieve validity, a triangulation of methods was used to collect data. Interview guides that were created based on existing literature were used to collect primary data through semi-structured interviews with club officials. At the same time, a survey questionnaire was designed based on the existing Fan Engagement scales (Funk and James, 2020) and placed on Google Forms and shared through social media and WhatsApp. In a bid to supplement these, a structured process of content analysis was conducted, through which a coding sheet was used in order to categorise digital posts

according to richness, narrative depth and interactivity. This multi-pronged strategy represents the intricacy of communication activities both on the side of the sender and the recipient.

3.9 Data Analysis Method

The quantitative data in the surveys were entered into SPSS where descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means) and bivariate correlations were calculated in order to determine the correlation between communication clarity and fan satisfaction, where applicable. Thematic analysis was used to analyze qualitative data of interviews and open-ended comments of the survey (Braun and Clarke, 2020). This included transcription of answers, coding of the information to find common themes like local-language use and timeliness and interpreting these themes in terms of SCCT and Media Richness Theory.

3.10 Ethical Issues

The research was focused on ethical considerations. All survey participants gave informed electronic consent and verbal consent was obtained to interview. This was a voluntary process and the respondents were made aware that they could pull out at any point. Anonymity of the fans was ensured through the identification and storage of the data on password-secured computers. Although, it was decided to use the names of clubs with the prior consent of the managers, the privacy and dignity of individual employees were upheld. The consent was obtained to assure the study of institutional norms of studying human subjects.

3.11 Chapter Summary

The chapter outlined a comparative case-study approach based on a mixed-method and a case-study methodology which was applied to examine the practices of communication in Kpando Hearts of Lions and Hohoe United. The study takes a holistic picture of the regional football

communication by embracing an interpretivist encompassing philosophy and applying purposive and stratified sampling. The design is based on the combination of the fan surveys, staff interviews, and content analysis that would answer the research questions in the context of the distinct digital and physical environment of the Volta Region. Although the generalization of the results is restricted by the limitations of the statistical method, the strict data collection and thematic analysis steps are a good basis of the research findings published in the following chapter

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the study on communication management practices at Kpando Hearts of Lions and Hohoe United Football Club. The findings are based on data collected from football supporters through structured questionnaires and from club communication officers through interviews. Quantitative data are presented using descriptive statistics, tables, and figures, while qualitative data from open-ended questions and interviews are analysed thematically. The results are organised according to the study objectives and focus on communication channels, content effectiveness, crisis communication, overall satisfaction, and fan-recommended strategies for improvement.

4.1 Demographics

This section presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents who participated in the study. The characteristics examined include the club supported, age group, gender, and frequency of engagement with club communication. These variables provide background information on the respondents and help to contextualise subsequent analyses. The summary of the demographic data is presented in Table 1.0

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (n = 61).

Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Club supported	Kpando Hearts of Lions	41	67.2
	Hohoe United	20	32.8
Age group	18–25	15	24.6
	26–35	23	37.7
	36–45	20	32.8
	46 and above	3	4.9
Gender	Male	56	91.8
	Female	5	8.2
Engagement frequency	Very often	31	50.8
	Often	18	29.5
	Sometimes	7	11.5
	Rarely	4	6.6
	Other	1	1.6

As shown in Table 1.0, most respondents supported Kpando Hearts of Lions (67.2%), while 32.8% supported Hohoe United. Most respondents fell within the 26-35 and 36-45 age groups. The sample was predominantly male (91.8%). In terms of engagement, most respondents reported engaging with club communication very often or often, indicating a high level of interaction with club communication platforms.

4.2 Communication Platforms Used by Supporters

This section presents the communication platforms used by respondents to follow their respective football clubs. Respondents were allowed to select more than one platform. The distribution of responses is summarised in Table 2.0

Table 2. Social Media Platforms Used to Follow the Clubs (Multiple responses allowed, n = 61).

Platform	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Facebook	60	98.4
Twitter (X)	13	21.3
YouTube	12	19.7
Instagram	9	14.8
Other (e.g., WhatsApp)	12	19.7

As shown in Table 2.0, Facebook was the most widely used platform among respondents. Other platforms used to follow the clubs included Twitter (X), YouTube, Instagram, and other channels such as WhatsApp, though at lower frequencies.

4.3 Fan Ratings of Communication Management

This section presents respondents' mean ratings of communication management aspects, including crisis communication, digital storytelling, and overall satisfaction. Ratings were measured on a five-point Likert scale, with higher scores indicating more positive perceptions. Mean scores are presented by club in Table 3.0

Table 3. Mean Ratings of Communication Management by Club (1–5 Scale)

Club	n	Crisis communication	Digital storytelling	Overall satisfaction
Kpando Hearts of Lions	41	3.44	3.78	3.80
Hohoe United	20	3.59	3.76	3.85
Overall	61	3.49	3.77	3.82

As shown in Table 3.0, the overall mean ratings for crisis communication, digital storytelling, and overall satisfaction were above the midpoint of the scale. Mean ratings for the two clubs were similar across all communication dimensions, with only small differences observed between Kpando Hearts of Lions and Hohoe United Football Club.

4.4 Qualitative Findings from Open-Ended Responses

To complement the quantitative survey results, respondents were asked to provide examples of effective or ineffective communication practices (Question 16) and to suggest strategies for improving communication management (Question 17). A thematic analysis was conducted on 38 substantive responses to Question 16 and 46 substantive responses to Question 17. The findings are presented according to the major themes that emerged from the analysis.

4.4.1 Examples of Effective and Ineffective Communication Practices

Analysis of responses to Question 16, which examined fans' perceptions of the clubs' responsiveness and preparedness in handling communication during negative events or critical situations, revealed several recurring themes. The most frequently cited effective communication practice was the provision of timely match-related updates, including team line-ups, match results, and performance information. This theme was mentioned by 32.8% of respondents. Supporters indicated that updates shared before, during, and after matches, particularly when accompanied by pictures or videos, were perceived as effective.

The second most common theme related to communication of club milestones and achievement stories, accounting for 19.7% of responses. These included promotion achievements, notable match outcomes, and player welfare updates. Such communication was viewed positively by

supporters of both clubs. In contrast, 16.4% of respondents identified ineffective communication in relation to limited information on player injuries, transfers, performance statistics, and management-related issues. Respondents noted that although match-day information was generally available, communication was perceived to be insufficient during periods requiring greater transparency.

A smaller proportion of respondents (8.2%) highlighted the use of local or community-based communication channels, such as WhatsApp groups, radio announcements, and market-centre engagements, as effective ways of reaching supporters.

Table 4. Themes Identified from Fans' Perceptions of Effective and Ineffective Communication

Rank	Theme	Overall n (%)	Hearts of Lions (n=41) n (%)	Hohoe United (n=20) n (%)	Representative Quotes
1	Effective: Timely match-related updates (line-ups, results, performance)	20 (32.8)	14 (34.1)	6 (30.0)	“Spot on with match updates”; “Updates before, during and after games coupled with pictures and videos are very effective”
2	Effective: Club milestones and achievement communication	12 (19.7)	7 (17.1)	5 (25.0)	“Qualification into the topflight league in Ghana”; “I love the team's videos on various activities”
3	Ineffective: Gaps in player injuries, transfers, statistics, and management information	10 (16.4)	8 (19.5)	2 (10.0)	“The line-ups are effective, but communication on players and statistics is ineffective”; “Update on injured players”
4	Effective: Use of local/community communication channels	5 (8.2)	3 (7.3)	2 (10.0)	“They share their stories on Facebook and WhatsApp faster”; “One-on-one contact with people at market centres”
5	Ineffective: Delays and transparency concerns	4 (6.6)	3 (7.3)	1(5.0)	“Ineffective radio communication”; “Ineffective in informing supporters about happenings in team management”
–	No specific example / Blank responses	23 (37.7)	15 (36.6)	8 (40.0)	–

4.4.2 Fan-Suggested Strategies for Improving Communication Management

Responses to Question 17, which sought fans' recommendations for improving communication management practices of the two clubs, were analysed thematically. Several key strategies emerged from the analysis. The most frequently cited recommendation was the recruitment of additional professional communication staff or the strengthening of the communication

department, mentioned by 21.3% of respondents. This theme was prominent among supporters of both clubs.

The second most common recommendation (19.7%) emphasised the need for more timely, frequent, and visually engaging content, including increased use of videos, images, and detailed match-related information. Respondents expressed interest in richer content formats beyond basic text updates. Expansion to multiple communication channels was another prominent theme, cited by 18.0% of respondents. Fans suggested increased use of additional social media platforms, radio stations, and local community communication points alongside Facebook.

Increased fan engagement and interaction was mentioned by 14.8% of respondents. Suggested approaches included fan meetings, interactive posts, prize-based engagement activities, and mechanisms for receiving fan feedback. A smaller proportion of respondents (9.8%) highlighted the need for improved transparency, clarity, and consistency in club communication. Additionally, 13.1% of responses were general or non-specific, including comments encouraging the clubs to “keep it up” or noting that communication “needs improvement.”

Table 4.5 summarises these themes and provides a comparison between supporters of Kpando Hearts of Lions and Hohoe United Football Club.

Table 5. Fan-Recommended Strategies for Improving Club Communication Managememe

Rank	Theme	Overall %	Hearts of Lions (n=41)	Hohoe United (n=20)	Representative Quotes
1	Strengthen communication department / Hire professional staff	13 (21.3)	9 (22.0)	4 (20.0)	“More staffs in the communication team”; “They should beef up their communication department with strong media people”
2	More timely, frequent, and visually engaging content	12 (19.7)	9 (22.0)	3 (15.0)	“More updates”; “There should be more visuals”; “Line-up should be available one hour before match”
3	Expansion to multiple communication channels	11 (18.0)	9 (22.0)	2 (10.0)	“Post highlights on all social media platforms”; “They should use radio more”
4	Increase fan engagement and interaction	9 (14.8)	7 (17.1)	2 (10.0)	“Do more fan engagement posts with signed jersey prizes”; “They should have periodic meetings with the fanbase”
5	Improve transparency, clarity, and consistency	6 (9.8)	4 (9.8)	2 (10.0)	“The communication should be clearer and transparent”; “Proper communication”
6	General positive or non-specific feedback	8 (13.1)	5 (12.2)	3 (15.0)	“Everything is on point so far”; “Keep it up”; “Needs improvement”

4.5 Findings from Interviews with Club Public Relations Officers

To complement the survey data and provide an organisational perspective on communication practices, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the Public Relations Officers (PROs) of Kpando Hearts of Lions and Hohoe United Football Club. The interviews focused on organisational structure, communication channels, crisis identification and response, content production, feedback mechanisms, and operational challenges. The findings are presented by club.

4.5.1 Kpando Hearts of Lions

The Public Relations Officer (PRO) of Kpando Hearts of Lions, who has served in the role for five years, described a defined communication structure within the club. According to the respondent, the communication function is led by a Communication Director and supported by other departmental members. The club reported the use of multiple communication channels. Digital platforms include Facebook, X (Twitter), Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, and WhatsApp Channels. In addition, traditional media such as radio and television are used to reach a wider audience.

Crisis identification was described as a continuous monitoring process involving social media comments, tags, direct messages, WhatsApp group discussions, and observations of fan behaviour during matchdays, including instances of crowd tension or protests. Once an issue is identified, the response process involves determining the cause, engaging affected stakeholders, addressing the issue, and providing assurances to prevent recurrence. The PRO indicated that past crisis-related messages have focused on reconciliation and encouragement.

Content production was reported to follow a goal-oriented approach. Communication objectives and target audiences are identified before selecting appropriate content formats, such as text, images, or videos. Match highlights were identified as the most frequently used storytelling format. The effectiveness of communication activities was assessed primarily through social media

analytics, including reach, engagement, and audience demographics. The impact of traditional media was described as more difficult to measure and was assessed through general audience feedback and perceived public response.

Feedback mechanisms reported by the club included social media interactions, email communication with sponsors and media partners, WhatsApp and SMS messages, surveys, media engagements, and interactions with supporters on matchdays. The main challenges identified included limited financial and technical resources, insufficient trained personnel, weak media relations, and restricted access to professional equipment such as cameras and editing software. Opportunities mentioned included expanding digital reach, developing clearer content plans, and increasing the use of visual content.

4.5.2 Hohoe United Football Club

The Public Relations Officer (PRO) of Hohoe United Football Club, who has held the position for three years, described a less formal communication arrangement. Communication responsibilities were reported to be shared between the PRO and the club Administrator within a hierarchical structure.

The respondent indicated that there were no formal procedures for crisis identification or crisis response at the time of the interview. The club reported that it had not experienced major crises such as salary disputes or allegations of match manipulation. Communication messages are disseminated primarily through social media platforms using basic formats, including text, images, and videos.

Content production was reported to focus mainly on match highlights. The effectiveness of communication activities was assessed informally through audience feedback. The primary feedback mechanism mentioned was the use of open forums involving supporters.

Challenges identified included difficulties in message interpretation by some supporters. To address this issue, the use of the local language (mother tongue) was reported as a key communication strategy. No specific opportunities for improvement were elaborated beyond the continued use of local language communication.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

Effective communication plays a central role in how football clubs build trust, manage relationships, and sustain supporter loyalty. For Volta Regional football clubs in Ghana, this role has become even more critical following their participation in the Ghana Premier League, where expectations of professionalism extend beyond performance on the pitch to include how clubs communicate with their supporters. This study examined communication practices in Kpando Hearts of Lions and Hohoe United Football Club, focusing on communication channels, content quality, responsiveness during crises, and fan-oriented improvement strategies. The discussion that follows interprets the findings in relation to these four areas and situates them within existing literature.

5.1 Summary of Key Findings

5.1.1 Communication Channels and the Digital Transition

This study found that most supporters relied on digital platforms, particularly Facebook, as their main source of information about their clubs. Other platforms such as WhatsApp groups and, to a lesser extent, traditional media like local radio were also used, especially for match-related updates and community discussions. This pattern indicates a clear shift towards digital communication while retaining elements of traditional media use. This specific finding implies that digital platforms now play a central role in supporter communication for regional football clubs. Facebook's dominance can be explained by its accessibility, familiarity, and ability to combine

text, images, and videos in one space(Dwamena et al., 2016). However, the continued relevance of WhatsApp and radio indicates that digital reach alone does not guarantee complete audience coverage, particularly in communities where digital literacy and internet access vary.

A comparison of the two clubs shows no sharp contrast in platform preference, as supporters of both Kpando Hearts of Lions and Hohoe United identified Facebook as their primary information source. However, qualitative responses suggest that Hohoe United supporters rely more heavily on WhatsApp groups and local discussions, while Kpando Hearts of Lions supporters expect more frequent updates on official digital platforms. This reflects differences in organisational structure and perceived professionalism between the clubs. These findings are consistent with (Sarkodie Owusu and Pokumensah, (2020), who observed that digital media has become the dominant communication channel for sports fans in Ghana, while traditional platforms continue to serve complementary roles.

5.1.2 Quality of Content and Clarity of Communication

Beyond the choice of communication channels, this study found that supporters placed strong emphasis on the quality and clarity of content shared by their clubs. Fans expressed interest in match highlights, player-related updates, and information that provides context about club activities. At the same time, there were concerns about limited or unclear communication on sensitive issues such as player injuries, management decisions, and internal challenges. Communication channels determine how far information travels; however, content quality determines how it is received and trusted (Berezan et al., 2016). Supporters are not only seeking updates but also explanations that help them understand decisions made by the club. Where communication lacks depth or transparency, dissatisfaction may emerge even when information is shared frequently.

Comparing the views of the two clubs, supporters of Kpando Hearts of Lions demonstrated higher expectations regarding content detail and presentation, likely reflecting the club's more formal communication structure. In contrast, Hohoe United supporters appeared more tolerant of basic content formats, prioritising regular updates over production quality. This difference highlights how organisational capacity and recent performance can shape supporter expectations.

These observations align with Lee, Lee and Kang, (2025) and Pedersen (2013), who argue that effective sports communication is not limited to information dissemination but involves storytelling that reinforces fan identity and emotional attachment.

5.1.3 Responsiveness and Crisis Communication

The study also explored how clubs respond to challenges and potential crises. Findings showed notable differences between the two clubs. Kpando Hearts of Lions operates within a more formal communication hierarchy, which supporters perceived as structured but sometimes distant. Hohoe United, on the other hand, lacks formal crisis communication procedures but relies on direct engagement, often using the local Ewe language to address supporters.

These findings suggest that responsiveness is shaped not only by formal structures but also by cultural and linguistic proximity. Supporters of Hohoe United did not express strong negative perceptions regarding crisis communication, partly because the club had not experienced major crises and because communication felt personal and accessible.

Comparatively, while Kpando Hearts of Lions appeared better prepared institutionally, the perceived distance between management and supporters may reduce the emotional effectiveness of communication during difficult moments. This highlights a trade-off between formal

preparedness and relational closeness. The findings are consistent with Achen, Lebel and Clavio (2017), who emphasise that sports communication on social media is fundamentally relational.

For regional football clubs, this means that cultural resonance can enhance communication effectiveness, but it should complement rather than replace basic crisis planning to ensure long-term brand protection.

5.1.4 Fan-Oriented Strategies for Communication Improvement

Finally, the study found growing expectations among supporters for greater involvement and interaction with their clubs. Fans expressed interest in participatory communication practices such as interactive discussions, feedback forums, and opportunities to engage beyond passive consumption of information. This suggests a gradual shift towards fan-driven communication, where supporters see themselves as stakeholders rather than mere audiences. However, these expectations differed between the two clubs. Supporters of Kpando Hearts of Lions, associated with higher on-field success, expected improved production quality and more detailed communication. In contrast, Hohoe United supporters prioritised consistency and accessibility over sophistication.

These differences reflect what Pandita and Vapiwala, (2023) describe as the rise of fan-centric communication in sports, where engagement strategies must align with supporter identity and context. At the same time, fans appeared aware of the financial and technical constraints facing regional clubs, echoing observations by (Aboagye et al., 2021) on resource limitations in Ghanaian football. For regional clubs, this means that communication improvement strategies should be context sensitive. Rather than adopting uniform professional standards, clubs should balance growing expectations with available resources while gradually building capacity to close the gap between what supporters expect and what clubs can realistically deliver

5.2 Conclusion

This study examined communication management practices of Kpando Hearts of Lions and Hohoe United Football Club, focusing on communication channels, content quality, responsiveness, and fan-driven improvement strategies. The findings indicate that effective communication has become an essential part of club professionalism for regional football clubs competing in the Ghana Premier League.

The study concludes that digital platforms, particularly Facebook, are the primary means through which supporters receive club information, although traditional and community-based channels remain important for wider reach. Supporters place high value on clear, relevant, and transparent content, especially on match-related and player-focused issues. Differences in expectations between the two clubs suggest that organisational structure and recent performance influence how communication is evaluated by fans.

The findings further show that responsiveness and cultural proximity, including the use of local language, play a significant role in shaping supporter perceptions, even where formal crisis structures are limited. Finally, supporters increasingly expect more interactive and inclusive communication practices, while recognising the resource constraints faced by regional clubs.

Overall, the study concludes that regional football clubs must adopt context-sensitive communication strategies that balance professionalism, cultural relevance, and available resources in order to strengthen fan engagement and club reputation

5.3 Recommendations

The findings and the insights obtained after the conversations with the supporters as well as the club officials provide the following recommendations, which can be proposed to improve the communication management practices of the regional football clubs in Ghana:

5.3.1 Football Clubs Recommendations.

Standardize Crisis Communication Procedures: Clubs need to step out of ad-hoc communication by ensuring they come up with written crisis management manuals. These must map out particular response plans and existing message templates to be utilized when there is a performance downturn, a management conflict, or even when there is a player / misconduct to provide rapid and uniformity (W. Timothy. Coombs, 2019).

Facebook is a powerful means, yet clubs must invest in more media rich forms on TV platforms such as YouTube and Instagram. Priority should be placed on short form video content, behind-the-scenes, player led shows, and live question and answer shows in order to minimize the narrative gap and maximize fan identification.

Also, Clubs need to switch their one-way broadcasting to two-way symmetrical communication. Co-creation can be supported by organizing monthly virtual fan forums or interactive polls through WhatsApp and Telegram, which will help the fans to feel that they are active stakeholders but not passive observers.

To keep the competitive advantage over bigger urban clubs, the regional teams are still advised to keep on using local languages (Ewe or Twi) in their digital storytelling. This enhances the relatability and augments the relationship between the club and its main geographic base.

5.3.2 Policy and Industry Recommendations.

Capacity Building of the GFA/GSA: Ghana Football Association (GFA) and Ghana Sports Authority (GSA) ought to conduct regional specific communication and digital marketing workshops to regional club media officers in order to narrow the technical skills gap.

To handle the value-gap, the clubs are advised to adopt simple forms of digital analytics (example is the Facebook Insights) to deliver sponsors with measurable numbers of reach and engagement, which will help to professionalize the process of sponsorship communication.

5.4 Suggestions for Future Research.

This paper was limited to a geographic area and 12 months period. A longitudinal study should be taken into account by future research to monitor the development of communication strategies with the increase of the experience of regional clubs operating in the top-flight league. Moreover, the comparative study would be conducted on a larger scale and would include the clubs representing other regions of Ghana to get a more general picture of the effect various cultural norms have on the interactions between fans and the club on the national scale.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX I: INTERVIEW GUIDE AND SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Appendix I(a): Interview Guide

Title: “Interview Guide on Communication Management in Sports Media: A Case Study of Kpando Hearts of Lions and Hohoe United Football Club”

Purpose of the Interview

The purpose of this interview is to explore communication management practices in two Ghana Premier League clubs in the Volta Region, with specific focus on communication structures, crisis management, digital media production, and resource constraints. The information obtained will be used solely for academic purposes to inform recommendations for improving communication management in regional football clubs.

Consent Statement

Before recording the interview, the following statement was read to participants:

“You are being invited to participate in a research study about communication practices in regional football clubs. Your responses will be kept confidential and will be used only for academic purposes. Participation is voluntary, and you may stop the interview at any time.”

Interview Questions

1. Role and Communication Structure

- Can you describe your role at the club?
- How is the communication function structured?
- Who do you report to, and who reports to you?
- How are messages coordinated within the club?

2. Crisis Communication

- How does the club prepare for and respond to crises (e.g., player disputes, match-day incidents)?
- Does the club have a written crisis communication protocol?
- Who is involved in crisis response and decision-making?

3. Digital Platforms and Content Production

- Which digital platforms does the club use most frequently?
- Why were these platforms selected?
- Who is responsible for creating communication content?
- What types of digital content are produced (e.g., text, images, videos, live streams)?
- How often is content produced?
- What resources are required for content production?

4. Monitoring and Evaluation

- How does the club measure the effectiveness of its communication efforts?
- What metrics are used (e.g., likes, shares, comments, attendance, fan feedback)?

5. Challenges and Constraints

- What are the main challenges faced in communicating with fans and stakeholders?
- Are these challenges resource-related, technical, organisational, or a combination?

Appendix I(b): Survey Questionnaire

Title: *“Fan Engagement and Media Consumption Questionnaire”*

Section 1: Demographic Information

1. Age

- 18–24
- 25–34
- 35–44
- 45 and above

2. Gender

- Male
- Female
- Other
- Prefer not to say

3. Match Attendance

- How often do you attend the club's matches?
 - Never
 - Occasionally
 - Regularly

Section 2: Media Consumption

4. Platforms Used

- Which of the following platforms do you use to follow the club? (Select all that apply)
 - Facebook
 - Instagram
 - Twitter (X)
 - YouTube
 - WhatsApp
 - None

5. Frequency of Viewing Digital Content

- How often do you view club-produced digital content?
 - Daily
 - Several times a week
 - Weekly
 - Less than weekly

Section 3: Fan Engagement

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements using a 5-point Likert scale:

1 = Strongly Disagree 5 = Strongly Agree

6. I feel connected to the club through its social media posts.
7. The club's communication makes me want to attend matches.
8. I would recommend the club's digital content to other fans.

Pilot Testing Note

The questionnaire was pilot-tested with 30 football fans. Minor wording adjustments were made based on feedback to improve clarity and comprehension before final administration.

APPENDIX II

INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

Public Relation Officer of Kpando Hearts of Lions

Interviewer (I): Thank you for agreeing to speak with me today. Before we start, I'll read the consent statement. You are being invited to participate in a research study on communication practices in regional football clubs. Your responses will be kept confidential and used solely for academic purposes. You may stop at any time. Do you consent to being recorded?

Participant (P) Yes, I consent.

I: Great, let's begin. Can you describe your role and the communication structure at the club?

P: I'm the communication officer here at Kpando Hearts of Lions. My official title is "Communications & Media Officer." I'm responsible for managing all external messaging – press releases, social-media posts, and any public statements. The structure is pretty flat because we're a small club. I report directly to the club president, who signs off on any official statements. Day-to-day content is handled by a part-time social-media assistant, and we outsource graphic design to a freelancer. The marketing manager, who also wears the sponsorship hat, works closely with us to align promotional material with our communication schedule.

I: Who else is involved in creating content or approving messages?

P: The head coach provides team news and match-day updates, and the captain sometimes records short video messages for fans. The president, as I said, gives final approval for anything that goes public, especially during a crisis.

I: Speaking of crises, how does the club prepare for and respond to a crisis, for example a player dispute or a match-day incident?

P: After the transfer scandal in 2022 we sat down and drafted a one-page crisis-communication guideline. It outlines the chain of command: the president is the primary spokesperson, I draft the initial statement, the social-media assistant posts it after the president's approval, and the marketing manager coordinates any media inquiries. We also have a media-contact list so we can reach out quickly if we need to issue a statement. The guideline isn't a formal SOP, but everyone knows their role.

I: Do you have a written protocol that you can share?

P: The document is internal, but I can summarise the key points if that helps. Basically, it says: identify the issue, assess impact, draft a holding statement within 30 minutes, get presidential sign-off, post on all platforms, and monitor reactions.

I: Which digital platforms does the club use most frequently?

P: Facebook is our primary channel – most of our fans are there, and it's where we get the highest engagement. We also post short clips on Instagram, especially for behind-the-scenes content. Occasionally we livestream training sessions on YouTube, but the viewership is modest. We have a WhatsApp broadcast list for urgent updates, like match-day changes.

I: Why those platforms?

P: Facebook because it's the most accessible for our rural fan base; many of them don't have reliable data for Instagram or YouTube. Instagram is good for visual content, and WhatsApp is useful for direct communication with a smaller, more engaged segment of supporters.

I: Who creates the content for these platforms?

P: I write most of the copy and coordinate with the graphic designer for visuals. The social-media assistant schedules posts and monitors comments. For video, we usually use footage captured by the assistant on a smartphone, and I edit it with a simple app. The head coach records brief messages, and the captain sometimes does a quick interview after matches.

I: What types of digital content does the club produce, and how often?

P: We aim for three main posts per week: a match-preview graphic with a short text, a post-match highlight video (about 30 seconds), and a fan-spotlight featuring a supporter interview. On match days we do live updates on Facebook – short text updates, occasional photos, and a halftime video clip. During the season we also produce a monthly “behind-the-scenes” video that we upload to YouTube and share on Facebook.

I: How do you measure the impact of your communication activities?

P: We rely on Facebook Insights for likes, shares, and comments. We also track the number of people who click through to the club’s website from social posts. For events, we compare the number of fans who engage with a match-day post to actual attendance figures. It’s not a sophisticated analytics system, but it gives us a sense of what resonates.

I: What are the biggest challenges the club faces in communicating with fans and other stakeholders?

P: Internet connectivity is a major hurdle – our office is in a rural area, so uploading videos can be slow and sometimes fails. We also lack a dedicated video-production team, so we rely on volunteers and basic equipment. Budget constraints limit how much we can invest in professional graphics or ads. Finally, keeping the fan base engaged during the off-season is tough because there’s less news to share.

I: Are there any other issues you'd like to mention?

P: Just that we're trying to be more proactive with our storytelling – using short videos to showcase player personalities, that kind of thing. It's a work in progress, but we're learning what our fans want.

I: Thank you very much for your time and for sharing these insights.

P: You're welcome. Good luck with your research.

TRANSCRIPT (CONTINUED)

Interview with Communication Officer, Hohoe United.

Interviewer (I): Thanks for your time with me. I'll read the consent statement: You are being invited... Do you consent to being recorded?

Participant (P): Yes, I consent.

I: Great. Could you start by describing your role and how communication is structured at Hohoe United?

P: I'm the Public Relations Officer. My main job is to maintain the club's public image, handle media relations, and coordinate all external communications. We have a small team: myself, a social-media coordinator, and a part-time graphic designer. The club's chairman signs off on major statements, but day-to-day posts are managed by the coordinator. We also work closely with the marketing manager for sponsorship activations and the head coach for team news.

I: Who else contributes to content creation?

P: The head coach provides match previews and post-match analysis. The captain occasionally records a short video message for fans. We also get input from the youth development officer when we feature academy players.

I: How does Hohoe United prepare for and respond to a crisis, say a referee controversy or a fan incident?

P: After a referee dispute last season, we formalised a crisis-communication protocol. It outlines a three-step chain: (1) the PRO drafts a holding statement within 15 minutes, (2) the chairman reviews and approves, (3) the social-media coordinator publishes across all platforms. We also have a pre-approved media list for rapid outreach. The protocol is documented in a one-page sheet that all staff keep on their phones.

I: Which digital platforms do you use most often?

P: Facebook remains our primary channel because the majority of our supporters are there. We supplement with Instagram for visual storytelling and use Twitter for real-time updates during matches. We've started short YouTube highlights, but engagement is still low. WhatsApp is used for urgent notices to a select group of senior supporters.

I: Why those platforms?

P: Facebook is the most accessible in our region, especially in rural areas where many fans live. Instagram works well for younger fans who prefer images and short videos. Twitter helps us reach journalists and regional sports outlets quickly.

I: Who creates the content for these channels?

P: I write the copy and approve the tone. The social-media coordinator schedules posts and monitors comments. Our graphic designer produces visuals, and the video content is usually shot by the coordinator on a smartphone and edited with a basic app. The head coach records brief video messages when needed.

I: What types of content do you produce and how frequently?

P: We aim for four posts a week: a match preview graphic, a post-match highlight reel (30 seconds), a fan-spotlight, and a “behind-the-scenes” story. On match days we provide live text updates on Facebook and share quick clips on Instagram Stories. Monthly we release a longer “coach’s corner” video on YouTube.

I: How do you measure impact?

P: We track Facebook Insights for reach, likes, shares, and comments. Instagram Insights give us impressions and story views. For events, we compare social-media engagement with ticket sales and attendance. It’s a simple metric set, but it gives us a clear picture of what resonates.

I: What are the biggest challenges you face?

P: Internet bandwidth is a constant issue—uploading videos from the stadium can be painfully slow. We also struggle with limited staff; one coordinator handles both scheduling and community engagement. Budget constraints limit paid promotions, and we sometimes get mixed messages from different departments that need clearer coordination.

I: Anything else you'd like to add?

P: We're working on building a stronger storytelling pipeline, maybe doing more player interviews and fan-generated content. It's a work in progress, but we're excited about the direction.

I: Thank you for your time.

P: My pleasure. Good luck with your dissertation.