

A Study of the Use of Social Media Marketing in the Football Industry

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ABSTRACT

Football clubs across the globe are realizing that the use of social media is the future in terms of improving and expanding their business, whether this be for marketing purposes or as a medium for directly communicating with their fans. Although this study found that the majority of European teams researched have a social network presence, there was a difference in how effectively social media was used between the various leagues. This study demonstrates that most football clubs have some social media presence, such as the number of Facebook likes, Twitter tweets and YouTube videos. However, the findings indicate that well-known world-wide clubs don't always use this commercial potential as effectively as they might and that teams with lesser prominence sometimes use social media in a more effective way in order to market effectively to their fan base.

Keywords: *football, social media, Facebook*

1. INTRODUCTION

Social media has been growing tremendously and has delivered astronomical numbers of users in less than 10 years [1]. The application of social media for increasing commercial profitability and increasing customer numbers is now well established in many worldwide firms and industries. The objective of this study was to determine the use of social media in the football industry. It aimed to ascertain if football teams are using social media sites in an effective method when communicating with their global fan base.

The study provides an in depth look of how each team in four different leagues use social media. There are three research questions to answer in this study:

1. Are European football teams using social media sites?
2. If so, what functions in various social media sites do they use and to what extent?
3. Do teams use cross channel marketing to promote their social media pages on their official website?

This study first reviewed which social media functions each team used for their communication and interactions with fans. The second part analyzed the statistics for each team to provide an overall picture of the various leagues to determine the effectiveness of league use of social media functions. This data may help leagues and teams gain an understanding of what various teams use and how it may help increase communications with fans.

Reviewing the current literature surrounding the use of social media by football teams and leagues highlights impacts this new technology has on the teams and stakeholders. The review gives insight into various social media platforms and how the industry could effectively utilize it for communications. Although a

literature review search found a plethora of studies reviewing social media in various industries, the studies of social media usage in the football industry is scant. Thus, this study is one of the first to give an insight to what football teams are doing to adjust to this new era and the advent of social media.

2. GROWTH OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Recently, social media has become a phenomenon being used by consumers around the world. With the emergence of social media it is now possible for one person to communicate with hundreds or even thousands of other people about products and the companies that provide them. Thus, the impact of consumer-to-consumer communications has been greatly magnified in the marketplace [2]. According to Lewis, the typical Internet user is no longer a passive consumer of media messages; they now have the ability to create, public and produce interactive media. This media have changed from on-way communication to tools to facilitate dialogues among Internet denizens [3]. Broughton states that sports fans are increasingly choosing to interact with leagues and teams through social media rather than just receiving information via traditional media [4].

The major benefit of social media is convenience; social media tools such as YouTube, Twitter and Facebook are all free and don't require special software [5]. Because of the free nature of these sites and its ability to connect people, Pew Research states that 74% of online adults use social media sites [6]. Businesses cannot afford to ignore the benefits that social media offers firms to connect to consumers and build lasting relationships [7]. Various industries can use social media for consumer interaction, and this is also true of the football industry, where clubs may be able to use it for building lasting relationships with their fans.

The number of social media sites has grown tremendously over the past decade and there are a multitude of these types of sites that football clubs could

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use for their communication campaigns with over 200 popular social networking sites [8]. Many of the most popular sites, such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube are especially popular among younger consumers. One of the most popular, Facebook, has over 500 million worldwide users with the core of the 18-24 year old base growing at 74% per year [9]. Although the millennium generation has enjoyed using social media for a number of years to communicate, it should not be assumed that social media outreach is limited to this generation for the sole purpose of social interaction.

3. USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA MARKETING IN THE FOOTBALL INDUSTRY

Using social media has enabled football clubs to have a two-way relationship with its fans. Peate states Facebook and Twitter give fans a direct link to the club in between match days [10]. The sites allow clubs the chance to reward fans for their loyalty with exclusive offers and competitions as well as news and updates direct from the stadium and training ground. Peate states that engaged fans will pass on information and offers, visit the club website more frequently. When leveraged properly, social media can allow sports/football organizations to build fan participation and interaction, drive traffic to their official website and even develop sponsor programs to increase revenue [11].

Media is one of the largest sources of revenue for team organizations, soccer especially. According to Harris, broadcasting, distribution, publication, and licensing rights sell for a pretty penny all over the world. An example is NBC Universal's new 3-year \$250 million TV rights deal with the Barclay's Premier League. TV is still the number one media for sports, but it's getting caught up rapidly. The article states that the average sports fan now spends 1-2.5 hours a week following their teams via social media [12]. These statistics would appear to indicate that football clubs around the world should implement social media campaigns to interact with their fans.

4. REVIEW OF TOP SOCIAL MEDIA SITES

Social networks have become a rapidly developing alternative medium in sports against traditional media such as newspaper and television [13]. Although there are a myriad of social media options, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube are the most common types found on most sports teams' websites [14].

In 2014, Facebook is seen to be the largest online social network with over 1.31 billion users with many communications and integration options available for its users [15]. Facebook has a wide variety of options that consumers can use such as chat, tagging photos, creating an event, and adding users as friends [16]. Facebook is not only a tool for individual users; it can be an effective option for organizations to improve communications. A 'like' for a business on Facebook can be worth

approximately \$8, showing that Facebook presence is important for any business wanting to improve income and branding [17]. With its variety of methods to communicate with users Facebook can be ideal for football teams to enhance their brand.

Twitter is a free social networking and micro blogging service where users can send and read messages known as 'tweets.' Tweets are text-based characters of up to 140 characters displayed on an author's profile page and delivered to author's subscribers, known as 'followers' [18]. Hutchins states that there has been a rapid increase in the use of the micro-blogging platform Twitter by sports clubs, teams and fans [19]. Tweets can be used to communicate instantaneously with fans, thus bypassing the gate-keeping functions of traditional media.

By using Twitter, sports leagues may take advantage of Twitter's capabilities and functions by keeping fans aware of team events and keep connected to its brand [14]. The authors mention that Twitter can aid in building stronger relationships between the organization and fans to build brand strength.

YouTube is a video-sharing website that began in 2005, with over 1 billion unique users and 6 billion hours of video watched each month [20]. According to Pritchard & Stinson, YouTube represents a technology that sport organizations must use to create a presence and use it effectively [21]. The way that a firm can use YouTube is through the creation of specific channels to showcase their brand. The authors imply the channel will allow the team to interact and engage with their ordinance via videos in which they can watch anytime. Pritchard & Stinson then states that to develop a channel properly a sports organization must consider that the content being shared is adding value to the community, it must be relevant to the audience and viewers need to be given a reason to view and want to share the video [21]. This is an important consideration, as football teams need to ensure fans consider the videos relevant in order to gain revenue from advertising.

5. PRIOR STUDIES

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 few academic studies. Thus this study contributes to new information in both the areas of social media as well as the football industry.

Although there is limited number of studies in football, there have been studies in other sporting areas in which the concepts of social media communication could be applied across various teams. O'Shea examined ways in which three professional sports clubs blended traditional and social media marketing techniques to build customer relationships [22]. The author found it imperative to use new technologies, such as social media, to enhance communications with sport consumers,

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although the rapid change of technology makes this difficult to achieve.

McLean & Wainwright performed a study on digital culture on football supporters through analysis of official and unofficial websites and media reports. They found technology and digital social sites have enabled more communication among football fans [23]. However, they also found that ideal speech situation a long way off, and football supporters are viewed as 'consumers' and ultimate power remains with the large football clubs and media conglomerates. Zimmerman (et. al.) examined whether sports organizations could use sites such as YouTube to practice agenda setting through the posting of videos. Their results showed that use of sites like YouTube can not only work on a small scale, but also can potentially be accomplished on a larger scale by using YouTube as if it were a traditional mass medium [24].

Thus, studies of other sports areas show that the use of social media is of benefits to firms in terms of increasing customer interaction. These studies can be applied football clubs who may find that integration with social media gives them a better chance to connect and market to a wider range of fans.

6. METHODOLOGY

The aim of this study is review the use of social media to support the communication function in the football industry in four European leagues. Criteria were applied to choose teams from four leagues and to determine which social network sites would form the basis of comparison.

When selecting worldwide leagues and teams, it was difficult to find an apples-to-apples comparison due to the differences among the types of leagues as well as the number of teams within leagues. Therefore, it was decided to use leagues with a viable number of teams in Europe:

- Premier league (20 teams)
- Bundesliga (18 teams)
- Serie A (20 teams)
- La Liga (20 teams)

For each league, each football team in the league would be analyzed for their use of social media communication. Although there are now hundreds of worldwide social media websites that consumers and business can use, it was important to choose ones that would present a common set of factors for reviewing business-to-consumer communication ability. The site eBiz MBA lists the most popular social sites based on web traffic [25]. Using this information, Facebook and Twitter were chosen as the initial two sites to analyze, as they were very large sites with a large core audience that would be attractive to fans in the football industry. Although YouTube was not listed in the top 15 social networking sites by eBiz MBA, its unique nature of allowing businesses to produce video content as well as

the visual aspect of the site was deemed an important factor for marketing communication for this study, so it was also chosen.

The next part of the study was divided into three phases:

1. Determining social media presence
2. Measuring social media presence
3. Cross channel marketing

Each of the three social media sites was analyzed to determine if there was an official team presence. Thus, for Facebook, a search of 'Nottingham Forrest' on the Facebook search facility established if an official page for that team was included in Facebook. The same methodology was applied to Twitter and YouTube.

The second stage involved a comparison of the detailed social media functions used by each football team across the three social media networks.

- Facebook: Each football team that had a presence was re-visited recording the number of likes their page had, how many people were talking about it, recording how often they post over a week and finally what city were the most popular in.
- Twitter: The same was done for twitter by re-visiting every team that has a presence on this site. The number of followers was recorded as well as the number of tweets each team has tweeted since being on that site.
- YouTube: If the football team had a presence on this site then it would be revisited; the data collected would be, the number of subscribers each channel had as well as how many views they were getting and finally how many weekly videos were posted.

The third stage consisted of analyzing each team's official website to see if they promoted their presence on social media. These results would indicate how well each club uses cross channel to communicate with their fans.

There were two challenges encountered with collecting this data. First, care must be taken when ensuring the proper 'official' team site is counted on the social media networks. Often, there are various unofficial fan pages that may have a similar look and feel to the 'official' team-produced page. A second challenge was that there were issues with incorrect spellings of a team name, especially among foreign teams.

7. RESULTS

The results collected from the searches above are shown in nine separate tables representing each three main areas of findings:

1. Teams without social media presence (Table 1)
2. Facebook presence (Tables 2 through 5)

3. Twitter and YouTube presence (Tables 6 through 9).

Table 1 columns indicate which social media sites that the various teams did not have a presence: Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube). In addition, the final column indicates if a team did not have a link to social media sites directly on its home page.

Results of the team's official website analysis show that all teams but one (West Ham United in the Premier League) had links to social media in their official website. This result shows that cross-market channeling is being effectively applied by over 98% of the teams.

Table 1: Teams without Social Media Presence

League	Team	Facebook	Twitter	YouTube	Website
Premier	Arsenal			None	
Premier	Manchester United			None	
Premier	Sunderland			None	
Premier	West Ham United				None
Bundesliga	TSV Eintracht Braunschweig			None	
Serie A	Catania	None		None	
Serie A	Genoa			None	
Serie A	Livorno	None	None	None	
La Liga	Getafe	None			
La Liga	Rayo Vallecano	None			
Total		3	1	7	1

Table 1 shows the results for Facebook and Twitter presence were 100%. What was a surprise was that only 85% of Premier league clubs had a YouTube channel, with three clubs without.

The clubs in the Bundesliga followed the same trend as the Premier League with every club having a presence on Facebook and Twitter. There was a surprise

One note of interest was that Livorno did have any social media pages but yet they did cross channel marketing in a unique way. Instead of linking directly to an official Facebook page, they have a Facebook/Twitter share app on their official site. With this app, fans can share their official site on their own page to gather interest from their friends.

though that German clubs had more of a presence than English ones with having 94.4% on YouTube with only one team not having a channel. Serie A and La Liga do not have a complete presence on Facebook. Results in this table indicate that most teams do have a social media presence, but the extent of this presence differs among leagues and teams.

Table 2: Premier League Facebook Information

Team	Total likes	Discussion numbers	Posts	City
Arsenal	22,392,084	1,069,227	43	Bangkok
Aston Villa	1,776,859	40,379	87	Birmingham
Cardiff City	259,374	19,423	71	Cardiff
Chelsea	25,854,253	1,855,573	47	Bangkok
Crystal Palace	157,770	8,988	26	London
Everton	933,508	44,482	78	Liverpool
Fulham	520,750	16,639	76	London
Hull City	593,035	27,564	42	Cairo
Liverpool	17,052,058	2,188,216	31	Bangkok
Manchester City	10,620,715	536,830	76	Bangkok
Manchester United	44,312,313	2,152,784	69	Bangkok
Newcastle United	1,025,241	32,703	56	Newcastle
Norwich City	270,921	21,274	44	Norwich
Southampton	244,499	25,751	84	Southampton
Stoke City	183,587	9,405	25	Stoke
Sunderland	270,234	22,096	33	Sunderland
Swansea City	507,440	20,428	28	Swansea
Tottenham Hotspur	4,514,779	109,016	59	Bangkok

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West Bromwich Albion	229,324	14,247	36	Birmingham
West Ham United	658,100	27,405	65	London
Total	132,376,844	8,242,430	1076	N/A
Average	6,618,842	412,121	53.8	

Tables 2 through 5 show results of Facebook information for each of the teams within each league. The first column is the name of the team, followed by the number of likes, then the average the number of posts the club has made in a week. The fifth column indicates what city the page is most popular. This will reveal if the club has a higher presence outside of its city of domicile.

Results in Tables 2 through 5 indicate that the Premier League and La Liga have the highest average number of likes (6,618,842 and 5,970,409). Bundesliga (1,578,904) and Serie A (2,115,919) are significantly lower

in the average number of Facebook likes. However, care should be taken when reviewing the 'average' score, as it may be somewhat misleading. All four leagues are dominated by two teams each that overshadow the other teams in the sheer number of likes. For example, Table 5 in the La Liga League shows that Barcelona (58,872,395 likes) and Real Madrid (55,025,326) far outstrip their fellow teams. The average number of discussion numbers was similar to the figures for the number of Facebook likes, the numbers were dominated by the Premier League (412,121) and La Liga (271,888), while the averages for Bundesliga (95,938) and Serie A (80,636) lagged far behind.

Table 3: Bundesliga League Facebook Information

Team	Total likes	Discussion numbers	Posts	City
Bayer Leverkusen	719,186	20,611	29	Leverkusen
Bayern Munich	13,788,986	902,749	36	Cairo
Borussia Dortmund	7,723,237	393,048	114	Dortmund
Borussia Monchengladbach	566,370	42,859	49	Monchengladbach
Eintracht Frankfurt	321,180	19,239	31	Frankfurt
FC Augsburg	125,373	12,555	15	Augsburg
Hamburger SV	624,461	52,422	29	Hamburg
Hannover 96	264,305	21,388	25	Hanover
Hertha Berlin	196,339	9,447	52	Berlin
Mainz 05	109,464	13,108	62	Mainz
Nurnberg	252,009	14,631	26	Nuremberg
SC Freiburg	132,644	22,198	12	Freiburg
Schalke 04	2,013,754	102,850	50	Gelsenkirchen
TSG Hoffenheim	112,823	4,676	23	Heidelberg
Eintracht Braunschweig	111,977	13,334	40	Braunschweig
Vfb Stuttgart	381,466	37,917	29	Stuttgart
Vfl Wolfsburg	230,370	7,672	35	Wolfsburg
Werder Bremen	746,343	36,191	17	Bremen
Total	28,420,287	1,726,895	674	N/A
Average	1,578,904	95,938	37.4	

Table 4: Serie A League Facebook Information

Team	Total likes	Discussion numbers	Posts	City
AC Milan	20,654,368	240,727	8	Cairo
Atalanta	52,310	6,878	57	Bergamo
Bologna	75,735	4,764	22	Bologna
Cagliari	134,666	10,621	69	Cagliari
Catania	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
AC Chievo Verona	34,738	2,383	42	Verona
Fiorentina	457,437	65,111	38	Florence
Genoa	112,275	6,129	7	Genova
Inter Milan	3,569,294	103,496	73	Milan
Juventus	11,092,976	781,766	30	Milan
Lazio	246,346	20,241	16	Rome
Livorno	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Napoli	2,299,833	152,857	80	Naples

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Parma	69,915	14,092	209	Parma
Roma	3,055,041	168,481	62	Rome
Sampdoria	92,225	9,700	80	Genova
Sassuolo	69,603	6,783	21	Sassuolo
Torino	90,425	7,545	28	Turin
Udinese	103,094	4,615	246	Udine
Verona	108,105	6,543	67	Verona
Total	42,318,386	1,612,732	1,155	N/A
Average	2,115,919	80,636	57.8	

Table 5: La Liga League Facebook Information

Team	Total likes	Discussion numbers	Posts	City
UD Almería	95,787	18,943	30	Bangkok
Athletic Bilbao	305,019	11,464	34	Bilbao
Atletico Madrid	2,672,045	143,050	22	Madrid
Barcelona	58,872,395	2,051,910	79	Bangkok
Real Club Celta de Vigo	75,225	8,004	30	Vigo
Elche	46,242	5,466	62	Elche
Espanyol	135,954	10,165	51	Barcelona
Getafe	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Granada	47,702	4,694	21	Granada
Levante	129,048	2,397	6	Valencia
Málaga Club	497,788	15,878	35	Málaga
Osasuna	18,510	2,677	30	Pamplona,
Rayo Vallecano	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Real Betis	154,495	28,640	59	Seville
Real Madrid	55,025,326	2,965,009	40	Mexico City
Real Sociedad	293,708	37,309	54	Mexico City
Real Valladolid	49,509	7,387	21	Valladolid
Sevilla	267,315	53,832	85	Seville
Valencia	1,331,903	57,416	33	Valencia
Villarreal	134,693	13,527	19	Mexico City,
Total	119,408,184	5,437,768	711	N/A
Average	5,970,409	271,888	35.6	

Table 6: Premier League Twitter and YouTube Results

Team	Tweets	Followers	Subscribers	Views	Weekly Videos
Arsenal	30,400	3,640,000	N/A	N/A	N/A
Aston Villa	24,000	259,000	6,257	1,248,355	7
Cardiff City	20,300	109,000	4,353	833,117	4
Chelsea	33,900	3,550,000	311,224	72,046,281	9
Crystal palace	26,200	93,300	8,523	6,725,711	1
Everton	34,400	355,000	15,100	2,858,475	11
Fulham	16,900	214,000	5,978	6,370,066	4
Hull city	17,600	83,700	2,958	774,954	10
Liverpool	30,900	2,480,000	227,862	31,404,034	3
Manchester City	57,500	1,600,000	254,242	118,209,515	17
Manchester United	5,096	3,130,000	N/A	N/A	N/A
Newcastle United	20,400	357,000	4,193	469,761	0
Norwich City	26,000	185,000	3,426	1,141,378	19
Southampton	26,200	200,000	11,876	3,787,832	9
Stoke City	7,263	181,000	2,337	209,045	2
Sunderland	28,700	217,000	N/A	N/A	N/A
Swansea City	9,830	9,830	7,143	2,489,482	15
Tottenham Hotspur	9,830	788,000	69,276	17,207,824	5
West Bromwich Albion	12,100	129,000	4,685	2,067,471	10
West Ham United	21,200	272,000	5,926	780,640	4
Total	458,719	17,769,214	945,359	268,623,941	130

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Average	22,936	888,461	47,268	13,431,197	6.5
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The average number of posts for the league yielded a surprising result. It might have been anticipated that the Premier League and La Liga Leagues would dominate, similar to the average likes and discussion numbers. However, Serie A (57.8) showed the highest average posts, followed by Premier League (53.8), Bundesliga (37.4) and La Liga (35.6).

Tables 2 through 5 show results for the most popular city where fans are located via Facebook.

What is interesting is that some of the teams are not as popular in their home domicile compared to another city. In the Premier League (Table 2), seven teams have the majority of fans located in sites outside

their city. It is surprising that for several of these teams, the majority of fan base comes from Bangkok. In the Bundesliga League (Table 3) all teams except for Bayern Munich have the majority of fan base in their home city. Bayern Munich's Facebook likes are dominated by fans in Cairo. Serie A (Table 4) shows similar results as Bundesliga with one team – AC Milan- having a strong fan base in Cairo. La Liga (Table 5) shows surprising results, with five teams having large fan bases in both Bangkok and Mexico City instead of their own regional areas. example, a search for an official team name of "Tottenham" may not produce results, whereas one would need to ensure the full name of "Tottenham Hotspur" would need to be used in the social media search results.

Table 7: Bundesliga League Twitter and YouTube Results

Team	Tweets	Followers	Subscriber	Views	Weekly Videos
Bayer Leverkusen	7,169	66,400	153	3,003	1
Bayern Munich	10,700	979,000	146,461	25,873,877	18
Borussia Dortmund	16,100	834,000	65,838	11,262,907	7
Borussia Monchengladbach	2,796	72,700	9,684	3,061,803	3
Eintracht Braunschweig	2,161	18,900	5,945	1,334,779	0
Eintracht Frankfurt	8,194	43,800	1,568	375,104	5
FC Augsburg	2,070	28,000	14,978	3,947,964	1
FC Nurnberg	13,300	53,300	6,431	2,595,494	4
Hamburg	7,347	112,000	9,779	3,434,695	12
Hoffenheim	1,762	31,600	809	111,252	1
Mainz	3,367	33,500	6,447	2,328,442	6
SC Freiburg	682	36,700	4,434	1,703,973	7
Schalke	14,500	167,000	39,132	10,933,888	0
Stuttgart	8,488	63,500	1,757	271,558	4
Werder Bremen	15,100	101,000	N/A	N/A	N/A
Wolfsburg	13,100	50,300	9,148	2,413,843	3
Hannover 96	7,746	61,300	712	150,083	0
Hertha Berlin	6,640	44,400	15,326	4,304,185	5
Total	141,222	2,797,400	338,602	74,106,850	77
Average	7,845	155,411	18,811	4,117,047	4.3

Table 8: Serie A League Twitter and YouTube Results

Team	Tweets	Followers	Subscribers	Views	Weekly Videos
AC Milan	27,800	1,840,000	218,251	100,353,712	8
Atalanta	7,377	33,100	1,611	406,465	2
Bologna	774	36,800	2,019	1,829,647	2
Cagliari	2,729	33,800	1,230	40,049	0
Catania	3,638	26,200	N/A	N/A	N/A
Chievo	10,100	30,500	2,755	N/A	11
Fiorentina	8,761	107,000	7,953	2,402,859	8
Genoa	9,938	51,300	N/A	N/A	N/A
Inter Milan	43,900	497,00	115,587	24,786,411	17
Juventus	14,500	1,060,000	257,759	64,378,097	3
Lazio	5,147	93,300	20,509	2,851,004	2
Livorno	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Napoli	8,426	288K	36,542	2,558,939	1
Parma	12,200	39,800	2,962	1,685,224	9
Roma	17,000	344,000	76,083	10,093,817	1
Sampdoria	13,100	43,100	6,180	4,588,630	1

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Sassuolo	3,238	27,200	1,345	645,085	4
Torino	3,269	50,900	6,087	1,748,958	10
Udinese	16,200	43,200	967	142,276	4
Verona	4,849	4,849	2,977	1,468,887	13
Total	212,946	3,865,049	760,817	219,980,060	96
Average	10,647	193,252	38,040	10,999,003	4.8

Tables 6 through 9 show results of Twitter and YouTube research. The first column in these four tables is the name of the team, followed by a column with the number of Twitter tweets. The third column is the number of Twitter followers. The fourth column indicates the number of YouTube subscribers each team's YouTube channel contains. The fifth column shows the number of views while the final column indicates how many weekly videos have been uploaded to communicate with the fans.

Results in Tables 6 through 9 indicate that the Premier League and La Liga have the highest average number of tweets (22,936 and 23,002). Bundesliga

(7,845) and Serie A (10,647) are significantly lower in the average number of tweets. This overall statistic was similar to the overall Facebook 'like' results. While Manchester City dominates the numbers at 57,500, there are a significant number of teams that have over 20,000 tweets, so the statistics are distributed across a wide range for the Premier League. For the Bundesliga League, six teams have over 10,000 tweets, and there is not a clear dominate team. Serie A League (Table 8) is dominated by Inter Milan, with 43,900 tweets, while the second place team – AC Milan – is far behind at 27,800 tweets. In the La Liga League (Table 9), there are 10 of teams over 23,000 tweets with a range of numbers.

Table 9: La Liga League Twitter and YouTube Results

Team	Tweets	Followers	Subscribers	Views	Weekly Videos
Almeria	10,400	45,600	170	14,436	0
Athletic Bilbao	35,700	268,000	6,963	1,349,599	13
Athletico Madrid	25,800	645,000	44,306	6,558,214	3
Barcelona	23,600	11,300,000	1,295,355	234,094,679	65
Celta Vigo	11,400	92,800	865	33,567	0
Elche	15,500	50,200	830	139,630	4
Espanyol	16,700	78,800	3,066	2,408,400	11
Getafe	6,941	19,900	424	15,776	1
Granada	15,000	80,300	917	139,799	2
Levante	27,100	75,400	2,982	1,613,170	5
Malaga	19,500	243,000	4,728	1,542,835	9
Osasuna	22,300	73,000	1,160	145,831	5
Rayo Vallecano	10,100	81,300	2,624	764,271	6
Real Betis	32,900	183,000	9,379	2,160,881	14
Real Madrid	39,300	10,500,000	1,122,438	140,373,916	28
Real Sociedad	38,400	134,000	5,585	2,336,040	20
Real Valladolid	14,800	75,300	1,030	793,979	0
Sevilla	24,500	213,000	7,888	3,964,060	17
Valencia	43,300	364,000	11,253	3,690,106	28
Villarreal	26,800	109,000	4,199	560,630	4
Total	460,041	24,631,600	2,526,162	402,699,819	235
Average	23,002	1,231,580	126,308	20,134,990	11.8

The average number of YouTube subscribers for La Liga League (126,308) surprisingly far exceeds the number for subscribers for the Premier League (47,268). Far behind in YouTube average subscribers are Serie A (38,040) and Bundesliga (18,811). Part of the reason for this is for two teams (Real Madrid and Barcelona) which each have over one million subscribers each (Table 9). The average number of views is also dominated by La Liga (20,134,990) and Premier League (13,431,197). Again, the results could be skewed for La Liga because of the substantial numbers displayed by Real Madrid (140,373,916) and Barcelona (234,094,679) while the third place team - Atletico Madrid – was far behind at 6,558,214 views.

The average number of weekly videos uploaded ranged from a high of 11.8 (La Liga) to a low of 4.3 (Bundesliga). Again, with La Liga, there was substantial dominance of one team – Barcelona – with 65 weekly videos; while other teams had, no video uploads. Premier League ranged from a high of 19 (Norwich City) to several without YouTube channel (Table 5). Bundesliga (Table 6) ranged from 18 videos down to zero, and Serie A (Table 7) was spread between 17 and zero.

8. IMPLICATIONS AND DISCUSSION

The results indicate that some types of social media usage show a large difference between various leagues and teams. The first research question was to

determine if European football teams are using social media sites. In terms of official presence, Twitter was the surprise social network to have the widest spread usage, as every team bar one used it to communicate with fans. Facebook usage was also good, but there were four teams in the European leagues that did not have an official Facebook page. YouTube gave the most varied results with seven teams not having a YouTube presence. Overall, the research statistics showed that most teams do have some social media presence.

Another research question was to determine if teams use cross marketing to promote their social media pages on their official website. This study found that all teams but one had cross channel marketing on their official websites. This would appear to indicate that football teams do have at least a basic understanding of methods to market their brand and to communicate with fans.

The aim of the final research question was to review which social media functions the teams used and to what extent. Facebook results showed that there were more fans using the 'like' function than Twitter had followers, and do football teams use the most. Facebook fans also have the ability to interact on the comments section, which may result in a domino effect of fans talking to others about team aspects. The findings from the study do suggest that the majority of footballs across the world are using the power of social media to reach a greater audience and increase the national, international and global profile of the club. This is supported by the Facebook results showing that some teams are more popular in foreign cities than in their own, together with the amount of people that talk about a particular club. Results of the Premier League show they most likes and the greatest number of people talking about teams that play in the league. However, it is Serie A that gives the most interaction with their fans by posting the most during the week. Thus, various teams in the leagues do show different methods for utilizing Facebook functions.

The Twitter functions: tweets, followers and subscribers, all show a positive usage by most of the teams in the four leagues. La Liga is the most dominant league using Twitter, with the most followers and subscribers. However, the results of Twitter usage throughout all leagues shows a very wide range of results, with several teams (especially in La Liga and Premier League) dominating the results. Although most teams appear to have basic Twitter presence, many teams have only a basic usage, and could therefore be missing a prime opportunity to establish a more effective communication approach with their fans.

With regards to YouTube, once again La Liga takes the title with its teams posting the most videos in a week; they gain the most views and have a significant number of subscribers. Similar to the Twitter results, the YouTube findings indicate that the views and weekly video uploads are dominated by only a few teams within each league. Not all teams appear to use YouTube to its fullest with regards to marketing and fan communication.

For the teams that are effectively using the three social media sites, the challenge is to continue with their strong media presence in order to keep their social sites active and continue to grow, while keeping their current fan base. For those teams with minimal social media presence, they may need to seek more opportunities to fully engage in the full functionality available on these three major social media sites, as well as establish robust social media and marketing campaigns to gain more fans and communicate effectively with their current fan base.

9. FUTURE WORK

The research for this study could be further expanded into other aspects of social media marketing and communications within the football industry. First, the number of social media sites reviewed could be expanded, such as with sites such as LinkedIn, Google+ or Pinterest. It may also be advantageous to review social media sites that are not necessarily so prominent in Europe, and expand to those more common in other geographic areas where football is popular. Another area for expansion would be to determine the correlation between social media campaigns versus increase in sales. The study could be conducted over the course of a regular football season to analyze any effect that social marketing may have on team sale.

10. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to explore the use of social media amongst European football teams in the Premier league, the Bundesliga, Serie A, and La Liga. The research analyzed 78 team to establish to what extent social media was being used by teams and how well they were utilizing various functions among each social networking site. The results showed every team but one used one of the three social media sites studied.

The results varied depending on the league, with some teams who are internationally recognized having a considerable amount of more likes, followers and views compared to the less popular teams. There was a wide disparity among various teams with the numbers of follower's tweets and video usage, with most leagues dominated by only a few of the top teams. This research can be used by teams in the football industry to develop more robust social media campaigns.

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