



National  
College *of*  
Ireland

**Assessing the Impacts of Digital Marketing and  
Sponsorship on the Football Industry as a Business and  
Their Implications on Fan Engagement**

**Yash Dilip Barve**  
21152641

**A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment for the award of Master of Science in  
International Business.**

**Submitted to the National College of Ireland, May 2023.**

**Abstract:**

This dissertation aimed to explore the impacts of digital marketing and sponsorship on the football industry as a business and their implications on fan engagement. The study examined three primary objectives concerning sports marketing and management: fans' social media engagement with football teams, sponsorship recognition and corporate reputation, and athlete-generated content and fan experience. The objectives were achieved by collecting data from fans and management of football clubs in the English Premier League and Indian Super League, analyzing the data using statistical methods, and reviewing relevant literature on digital marketing, sponsorship, and fan engagement.

The findings highlighted the criticality of social media platforms for football teams to engage with their fanbase and promote their brand equity. The importance of consistent and high-quality content creation and sharing for achieving optimal fan engagement and maintaining an active presence on social media was highlighted by both the fan perspective and the club management perspective. Additionally, the study provided valuable insights into the factors that influenced fan engagement with social media content related to their favourite football teams and the factors affecting their purchasing decisions related to sponsors of their favourite teams. The study's results also emphasized the role of athlete-generated content in enhancing the fan experience.

Overall, this research contributes significantly to the existing literature on sports marketing and management by providing new insights into the preferences and attitudes of football fans towards social media engagement with their favourite teams and the impact of sponsorship and corporate reputation on fan engagement and purchasing decisions. The study's findings have practical implications for sports organizations, sponsors, athletes, and fans, emphasizing the importance of considering the preferences and attitudes of fans in developing effective sports marketing and management strategies. Future research should focus on exploring the potential of new data sources and technologies, such as artificial intelligence and machine learning, to provide more comprehensive insights into fan behaviour and preferences.

## Submission of Thesis and Dissertation

National College of Ireland Research  
Students Declaration Form  
(Thesis/Author Declaration Form)

Name: Yash Dilip Barve

Student Number: 21152641

Degree for which thesis is submitted: Master of Science in International Business

Title of Thesis: **Assessing the Impacts of Digital Marketing and Sponsorship on the Football Industry as a Business and Their Implications on Fan Engagement**

### Material submitted for award

I declare that this work submitted has been composed by myself.



I declare that all verbatim extracts contained in the thesis have been distinguished by quotation marks and the sources of information specifically acknowledged.



I agree to my thesis being deposited in the NCI Library online open access repository NORMA.



**Either** \*I declare that no material contained in the thesis has been used in any other submission for an academic award.



**Or** \*I declare that the following material contained in the thesis formed part of a submission for the award of Master of Science in International Business



Signature of research student:

YASHBARVE

Date: 5th May 2023

**Acknowledgement:**

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all those who have supported me throughout the course of my Master's program and the preparation of this dissertation.

First and foremost, I would like to thank my supervisor Dr Brendan Cullen, for his invaluable guidance, support, and encouragement throughout the entire process. His expertise, feedback, and constructive criticism have been instrumental in shaping the direction and content of this dissertation.

I would like to acknowledge the participants of my study, who generously shared their time, experiences, and insights with me. Their willingness to be involved in my research has been essential to the success of this project.

Furthermore, I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to my family, who have been a constant source of love, support, and encouragement. Their belief in me has given me the strength and motivation to persevere through the challenges of the Master's program and complete this dissertation.

Last but not least, I would like to acknowledge the support of my wife Tanwi, who has been my rock throughout this entire process. Her unwavering support, understanding, and patience have been invaluable in helping me achieve my academic goals.

Once again, thank you to everyone who has contributed to my Master's program and this dissertation. I am truly grateful for your support and encouragement.

## Table of contents

<b>ABSTRACT:</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>SUBMISSION OF THESIS AND DISSERTATION</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1.0 INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>7</b>
1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY	7
1.2 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY	8
<b>2.0 RESEARCH PURPOSES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>3.0 LITERATURE REVIEW:</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>3.1 DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES AND FAN ENGAGEMENT IN FOOTBALL MARKETING: LEVERAGING SOCIAL MEDIA, MOBILE APPS, AND EMAIL MARKETING</b>	<b>10</b>
3.1.1 EFFECTIVENESS OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN FOOTBALL MARKETING:	10
3.1.2 EFFECTIVENESS OF MOBILE APPS IN FOOTBALL MARKETING:	11
3.1.3 EFFECTIVENESS OF EMAIL MARKETING IN FOOTBALL MARKETING:	11
<b>3.2 THE INFLUENCE OF SPONSORSHIP ON FAN BEHAVIOUR: A CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR PERSPECTIVE</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>3.3 THE USE OF SEARCH ENGINE MARKETING IN FOOTBALL</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>3.4 DATA ANALYTICS</b>	<b>13</b>
3.4.1 FAN BEHAVIOUR AND PREFERENCES:	14
3.4.2 SPONSORSHIP ANALYTICS:	14
3.4.3 EFFECTIVENESS OF MARKETING CAMPAIGNS:	14
3.4.4 TICKET SALES:	14
3.4.5 SOCIAL MEDIA ANALYTICS:	15
3.4.6 CURRENT STATE AND FUTURE POTENTIAL:	15
<b>3.5 GLOBAL SPONSORSHIP IN FOOTBALL:</b>	<b>15</b>
3.5.1 BENEFITS OF GLOBAL SPONSORSHIP IN FOOTBALL:	15
3.5.2 CHALLENGES OF GLOBAL SPONSORSHIP IN FOOTBALL:	15
<b>3.6 THE FUTURE OF DIGITAL MARKETING IN FOOTBALL: EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES AND INNOVATIONS</b>	<b>16</b>
3.6.1 EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES IN DIGITAL MARKETING FOR FOOTBALL:	16
3.6.2 INNOVATIONS IN DIGITAL MARKETING FOR FOOTBALL:	16
<b>3.7 THE FUTURE OF FOOTBALL SPONSORSHIP: OPPORTUNITIES</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>3.8 LITERATURE GAP</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>4.0 METHODOLOGY:</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>4.1 RESEARCH APPROACH</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>4.2 RESEARCH DESIGN</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>4.3 SAMPLING TECHNIQUE</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>4.4 DATA COLLECTION INSTRUMENTS AND PROCEDURES:</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>4.5 DATA ANALYSIS TECHNIQUES</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>4.6 QUALITY CRITERIA</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>4.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>4.8 LIMITATIONS AND ASSUMPTIONS</b>	<b>20</b>

<b>5.0 FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>5.1 PRIMARY DATA COLLECTION- SURVEY FOR FANS</b>	<b>22</b>
SECTION 1: SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT WITH FOOTBALL TEAMS	22
SECTION 2: FACTORS AFFECTING THE SUCCESS OF SPORTS SPONSORSHIP IN THE ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE AND INDIAN SUPER LEAGUE: AN EVALUATION OF SPONSOR RECOGNITION, CORPORATE REPUTATION, AND PROPENSITY TO MAKE FUTURE PURCHASES.	24
SECTION 3: TO UNDERSTAND AN ATHLETE'S SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCE IN BUILDING A FAN EXPERIENCE AROUND A PARTICULAR BRAND.	25
<b>5.2 PRIMARY DATA COLLECTION- SURVEY FOR MANAGEMENT/PEOPLE WORKING FOR FOOTBALL CLUBS</b>	<b>27</b>
SECTION 1: SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT WITH FOOTBALL TEAMS	27
SECTION 2: SPONSORSHIP RECOGNITION AND CORPORATE REPUTATION	28
SECTION 3: ATHLETE-GENERATED CONTENT AND FAN EXPERIENCE	30
<b>6.0 DISCUSSION</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>SECTION 1: SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT WITH FOOTBALL TEAMS</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>SECTION 2: SPONSORSHIP RECOGNITION AND CORPORATE REPUTATION</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>SECTION 3: ATHLETE-GENERATED CONTENT AND FAN EXPERIENCE</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>7.0 CONCLUSION</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>APPENDIX:</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>APPENDIX 1: THE TABLE COMPARES RESPONSES FROM FANS OF DIFFERENT LEAGUES.</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>APPENDIX 2: SURVEY QUESTIONS IN THE QUESTIONNAIRE SENT TO THE CLUB MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>APPENDIX 3: THE SURVEY QUESTIONS IN THE QUESTIONNAIRE SENT TO THE FANS</b>	<b>50</b>

## **1.0 Introduction**

The football industry underwent a paradigm shift in recent years, with digital marketing and sponsorship emerging as critical elements for the growth and success of football clubs. The evolution of digital marketing has revolutionized the way football clubs interact with their fans, creating opportunities for personalized marketing and fostering engagement. Additionally, sponsorship became a significant revenue stream for football clubs, with sponsors looking to associate themselves with the brand image of successful football clubs. Previous research by Kip & Rodrigues (2018) and Chadwick & Arthur (2018) showed that successful clubs had a positive impact on sponsor recognition, consumer behaviour, and brand reputation, leading to increased sales and profitability for sponsors.

The digital marketing and sponsorship strategies adopted by football clubs have significant implications for fan engagement. It was essential to assess the effectiveness of these strategies and their impact on the football industry as a business. This dissertation aimed to assess the impacts of digital marketing and sponsorship on the football industry as a business and their implications for fan engagement.

## **1.1 Background of the study**

Football is not just one of the most popular sports globally, but also a lucrative business that involves significant investments in marketing and sponsorships. Over the years, football has evolved into a multi-billion dollar industry with significant economic, social, and cultural impacts. As football has grown, so has the need for football clubs to adopt effective marketing strategies that connect with fans and drive revenue. In the digital age, social media has become an essential tool for football clubs to promote their brands and engage with fans worldwide.

According to Kim and Kim (2020), social media platforms such as Instagram and Twitter have become essential tools for football clubs to promote their brand and engage with their fans. Through social media, football clubs can share their latest news, matches, player updates, and behind-the-scenes footage, thereby creating a sense of community among supporters. This can enhance fan engagement and build brand equity, leading to increased revenue and fan loyalty. The use of social media marketing in football has been shown to have a significant impact on a team's brand equity by creating content that appeals to and engages football fans. For instance, research has indicated that social media marketing positively affects customer loyalty and purchase intentions in the context of football (Dobele, et al., 2014; Gómez-Díaz & Martínez-Ruiz, 2016).

Sports sponsorship is another key aspect of football marketing that has gained attention in recent years. While there is some research on the factors affecting the success of sports sponsorship, there is still much to learn, especially in the context of different football leagues (Garg et al., 2020). Scholars have argued that digital marketing and sponsorship can significantly enhance a football club's brand equity and improve fan engagement (Filo, et al., 2015).

In addition to social media and sports sponsorship, athletes' social media influence has also become a critical factor in building a fan experience around a particular brand. Athletes' social media presence and engagement can enhance the brand image of football clubs and sponsors, as well as increase fan engagement and loyalty. According to Kang, et al., (2021), athlete endorsements have been a common marketing strategy in sports for decades. Social media has transformed the way athletes interact with fans and the way brands leverage their influence. Athletes with a large social media following can significantly impact a team's brand equity by promoting the team's sponsors or engaging with fans through their social media accounts. Athletes like Cristiano Ronaldo have a massive social media following that can significantly impact a team's brand equity by promoting the team's sponsors or engaging with fans through their social media accounts. Ronaldo has over 300 million followers on

social media platforms, making him one of the most followed athletes in the world. He regularly shares posts promoting his sponsors, such as Nike, Herbalife, and Tag Heuer, and has also used his social media presence to promote his former teams, including Real Madrid and Manchester United. In addition to promoting his sponsors and teams, Ronaldo has also engaged with fans through social media. For example, he often shares photos and videos of himself training, playing, or spending time with his family, giving fans an intimate look into his life. He also regularly interacts with fans by responding to their comments and messages, making them feel more connected to him and his team.

Research has suggested that athletes' social media endorsements can positively affect brand attitude, purchase intentions, and perceived value (Popp, et al., 2018; Sanderson & Hambrick, 2015). For example, a study by Filo et al., (2019) found that Cristiano Ronaldo's social media presence had a positive impact on his personal brand equity and could also influence the brand equity of his sponsors. Previous studies have shown that sponsor recognition, team performance, and fan identification can significantly influence the success of sports sponsorship (Grohs et al., 2016; Kim et al., 2017).

## **1.2 Significance of the Study**

The digital era has significantly changed the way businesses operate, and the sports industry is no exception. With the rise of social media and digital platforms, sports teams are now able to reach a global audience and engage with fans on a level that was previously impossible. However, despite the widespread adoption of digital marketing in the sports industry, there remains a lack of empirical research that explores the effects of digital marketing and sponsorship on brand equity and fan engagement. This study aimed to bridge this research gap by examining the link between digital marketing, sponsorship, and fan engagement.

Furthermore, this research's objectives of this study were crucial in understanding the factors that influenced the success of sports sponsorship. In particular, the study focused on the teams in English Premier League and the Indian Super League; the former is the most popular football league in the world, while the latter is a budding league that is starting to make its mark globally. This study provided insights into the effectiveness of sports sponsorship and its impact on the success of a football team. Additionally, the study also examined the role of athletes in building fan experience around a particular brand. The study explored the relationship between an athlete's social media influence and a football team's brand equity and fan engagement.

Overall, this study provided valuable insights into the effectiveness of digital marketing and sponsorship in the sports industry and their implications on brand equity and fan engagement. By addressing the research gaps in this area, this study contributed to the development of a more comprehensive understanding of the sports marketing landscape. The study has been drawn from scholarly articles and references to provide robust and valid findings that can be useful for practitioners, academics, and researchers in the field of sports marketing.



## **2.0 Research Purposes and Research Questions**

The purpose of this research was *to assess the impacts of digital marketing and sponsorship on the football industry as a business and their implications on fan engagement*. The objectives of this study were:

1. To understand the impact of social media marketing on a football team's brand equity by creating content that appeals to and engages football fans.
2. To evaluate links between factors affecting the success of sports sponsorship (sponsor recognition, corporate reputation, propensity to make future purchases) in the English Premier League and Indian Super League.
3. To understand an athlete's social media influence in building a fan experience around a particular brand.

The research objectives of this study were achieved by collecting data from football clubs in the English Premier League and Indian Super League, analyzing the data using statistical methods, and reviewing relevant literature on digital marketing, sponsorship, and fan engagement.

This dissertation aimed to explore the impact of social media marketing on football team brand equity and evaluate the factors affecting the success of sports sponsorship in the English Premier League and Indian Super League. Additionally, the dissertation investigated how football clubs could leverage an athlete's social media influence in building a fan experience around a particular brand. By understanding these aspects of digital marketing and sponsorship in football, this research aimed to provide insights for football clubs and sponsors to develop effective marketing strategies and enhance fan engagement and loyalty. The research findings will contribute to the academic literature on sports management, marketing, and fan engagement and will provide practical implications for football clubs in their digital marketing and sponsorship strategies. Overall, this research will provide valuable insights into the football industry's changing landscape and help stakeholders make informed decisions that enhance fan engagement and the industry's business prospects.

### **3.0 Literature review:**

#### **The Evolution of Digital Marketing:**

Initially, digital marketing in football-focused mainly on promoting tickets and merchandise sales. However, the evolution of digital marketing in football has been driven by the need to adapt to changing consumer behaviour and technological advancements. As technology continues to progress, the future of digital marketing in football will entail more innovative and individualized methods for engaging with fans.

#### **3.1 Digital Technologies and Fan Engagement in Football Marketing: Leveraging Social Media, Mobile Apps, and Email Marketing**

Digital technologies have brought significant changes to football marketing, particularly in fan engagement. Fan engagement refers to the level of interaction and emotional connection that fans have with a particular sports team, league, or athlete. It encompasses a range of activities and experiences that go beyond simply attending games, such as following the team on social media, participating in fan communities, purchasing team merchandise, and engaging with athlete-generated content. Effective fan engagement strategies can help sports organizations to build loyal fan bases, increase revenue, and enhance the overall fan experience. Social media, mobile apps, and email marketing are among the key digital tools used by football clubs to engage with their fans. Several articles have explored the impact of these technologies on fan engagement, as well as how clubs can leverage these tools to enhance their marketing efforts. One study by Kim and Ko (2012) examined the role of social media in football marketing, finding that social media platforms provide a means for clubs to interact with fans on a more personal level, building stronger relationships and enhancing brand loyalty. Similarly, research by (Zheng, et al., 2016) demonstrated that mobile apps can be used to provide fans with a more immersive and interactive experience, leading to increased engagement and revenue.

Another area of interest is email marketing, which has long been used by football clubs to promote tickets and merchandise. However, with the advent of data analytics, clubs are increasingly using email marketing to create more targeted and personalized campaigns. A study by Fillis and Wagner (2019) explored the effectiveness of email marketing in football, finding that personalized emails can lead to higher engagement and revenue. Overall, the literature suggests that digital technologies play a significant role in football marketing and fan engagement. Social media, mobile apps, and email marketing offer clubs new ways to reach and interact with fans, creating a more personalized and engaging experience. As such, understanding the impact of these technologies on fan engagement is essential for football clubs looking to remain competitive in an increasingly digital world. This literature review has explored the impact of digital technologies on football marketing by understanding the effectiveness of social media, mobile apps, and email marketing in enhancing fan engagement.

##### **3.1.1 Effectiveness of Social Media in Football Marketing:**

Social media has become a crucial tool for football clubs to connect with their fans, and numerous studies have shown that it is highly effective in generating engagement, building brand awareness, and increasing loyalty among fans. Football clubs leverage social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter to share news, updates, and behind-the-scenes content. They also use social media to run contests and promotions, which further strengthens fan engagement. Besides, social media provides a platform for fans to interact with each other and the club, promoting a sense of community and belonging.

### 3.1.2 Effectiveness of Mobile Apps in Football Marketing:

Mobile apps can enhance the fan experience by providing features such as live scores, news, match highlights, team line-ups, and options to purchase merchandise. The convenience of mobile apps makes them a valuable tool for football clubs to reach their fans and enhance their engagement. Additionally, mobile apps allow for personalized content, which can result in higher engagement and revenue. For example, personalized push notifications and alerts can increase engagement, and targeted marketing campaigns can lead to increased sales. Mobile apps also provide clubs with valuable data on fan behaviour and engagement, enabling them to create more targeted and effective marketing campaigns. Several football clubs have successfully implemented mobile apps as part of their marketing strategy. FC Barcelona's app provides fans with exclusive content, such as live broadcasts of training sessions and behind-the-scenes footage (FC Barcelona, 2023). Similarly, Manchester United's app offers features such as live match updates, exclusive interviews, and match highlights (Manchester United, 2023).

### 3.1.3 Effectiveness of Email Marketing in Football Marketing:

Email marketing campaigns are a widely used tool in football marketing, providing clubs with a direct and personalized way to communicate with fans. Personalization is an effective marketing strategy that involves tailoring marketing messages to the individual needs and interests of customers. In the context of email marketing for football clubs, personalization can be used to create more targeted and relevant emails for each fan of the club, which can lead to higher engagement and potentially increased revenue.

One way to personalize emails for football fans is to segment the email list based on different criteria such as age, gender, location, and past purchasing behaviour. For example, a football club can segment its email list to target fans who have attended a certain number of matches or purchased certain merchandise items. Then, the club can send targeted emails to these segments with personalized content that is relevant to their interests. Another way to personalize emails is to use dynamic content that changes based on the recipient's past behaviour or preferences. For instance, a football club can use dynamic content to show different merchandise items to fans based on their favourite player. By doing so, the club can increase the likelihood that the fan will make a purchase. Studies have shown that personalization can have a significant impact on email marketing effectiveness. According to a study by Grewal, et al., (2009), personalized emails had a higher open rate of 29% compared to emails that were not personalized had an open rate of 18.3%. As technology continues to evolve, digital technologies will play an even more significant role in football marketing, providing clubs with new and innovative ways to connect with their fans.

## 3.2 The Influence of Sponsorship on Fan Behaviour: A Consumer Behaviour Perspective

Sponsorship is one of the most effective marketing tools for football clubs as it offers a direct opportunity for brands to connect with fans and promote their products or services. A sponsorship deal can bring financial gains to a football club, enhance brand visibility, and contribute to the growth of the sport. Sponsorship can be classified into several types, including shirt sponsorship, stadium naming rights, and event sponsorship. Each type of sponsorship offers unique benefits to both the football club and the sponsor, depending on the objectives and target audience of the sponsor. Sponsorship is a crucial aspect of the business of football, and it can influence the behaviour of fans.

Shirt sponsorship is one of the most common types of sponsorship in football, where a brand's logo is prominently displayed on the team's shirts during matches. Shirt sponsorship has been found to have a significant impact on both the sponsor and the football club, with studies indicating that shirt sponsorships can enhance brand image and awareness (Desbordes & Richelieu, 2013) and increase the revenue of the football club (Chadwick & Thwaites, 2005). Stadium naming rights is another form of sponsorship that involves the branding of a stadium with a sponsor's name. The naming rights sponsor benefits from brand exposure and recognition, while the football club generates revenue from the

sponsorship deal. Stadium naming rights can also contribute to the financial stability of the football club by providing a long-term source of revenue (Girginov & Hills, 2012). Event sponsorship involves sponsoring a specific football event or competition, such as a cup competition or a friendly match. Event sponsorship provides the sponsor with the opportunity to target a specific audience and engage with fans on a deeper level. Studies have shown that event sponsorships can have a positive impact on brand awareness and recall (Cleophas & Smit, 2012) and lead to increased revenue for the sponsor (Boyle & Ali, 2016).

A specific social media strategy can be used to enhance the effectiveness of football marketing sponsorship. One specific social media strategy that can enhance the effectiveness of sponsorships in football marketing is leveraging social media influencers to promote sponsored content. Social media influencers are individuals who have a large following on social media platforms and can impact the behaviour and attitudes of their followers. By partnering with relevant influencers, football clubs can tap into their engaged audiences and drive brand awareness and engagement.

Another strategy involves creating engaging and interactive content that aligns with the values and interests of the target audience. This can be achieved by leveraging user-generated content, gamification, and interactive features such as polls and quizzes. Moreover, targeting the right audience is crucial for the success of any social media strategy. Social media analytics tools can be used by football clubs to identify and segment their target audience based on demographics, interests, and behaviour. Social media can be used to increase the reach and engagement of sponsorships by creating and sharing relevant and engaging content, such as behind-the-scenes footage, player interviews, and fan interactions.

### 3.2.1 Sponsorship Effectiveness:

Sponsorship can have a direct and indirect impact on fan behaviour, and the effectiveness of sponsorship depends on several factors. Sponsorship fit and congruity are key factors that can influence the effectiveness of sponsorship in football marketing. Sponsorship fit refers to the degree of compatibility between the sponsor and the sponsored entity, while sponsorship congruity refers to the similarity in values and image between the sponsor and the sponsored entity. For example, a sportswear brand sponsoring a football club would have a higher fit and congruity than a fast food chain, as the former is more closely aligned with the values and interests of football fans. Studies have found that sponsorship fit and congruity can positively impact brand attitude and purchase intention (Grohs et al., 2016; Cornwell & Maignan, 1998). Moreover, the credibility of the sponsor and the sponsored entity, as well as the level of fan engagement with the sponsored content, can also influence the effectiveness of sponsorship and ultimately impact fan behaviour.

### 3.2.2 Fan Identification:

Fan identification is a crucial factor that influences the impact of sponsorship on fan behaviour. Fans who identify strongly with a football club are more likely to hold a positive attitude towards sponsors and their products. Fan identification has also been found to positively impact the likelihood of purchasing a sponsor's product. Conversely, fans who do not identify with a football club may not be affected by sponsorship (Funk & James, 2001).

### 3.2.3 Attitude Toward the Sponsor:

Attitude toward the sponsor is a key factor that predicts fan behaviour in response to sponsorship. A positive attitude toward the sponsor is likely to result in increased purchase intention and positive word-of-mouth communication (Cornwell et al., 2005). Several factors influence the attitude toward the sponsor, including the fit between the sponsor and the sponsored entity, the activation of the sponsorship, and the sponsor's reputation. The effectiveness of sponsorship depends on several factors, including sponsorship fit, congruity, and fan identification. Celebrity endorsement can enhance the impact of sponsorship, while ambush marketing can dilute its effectiveness. Fan identification is particularly important, as fans who strongly identify with a football club are more likely to have a

positive attitude toward sponsors and their products. On the other hand, fans who do not identify with a football club may not be influenced by sponsorship (Funk & James, 2001). To maximize the impact of sponsorship on fan behaviour, it is crucial for football clubs to carefully select sponsors that align with the values and image of the club and its fans.

### **3.3 The Use of Search Engine Marketing in Football**

The use of search engine marketing (SEM) has become increasingly popular in the sports industry, particularly in football. SEM involves paid advertising to increase the visibility of a website on search engine results pages. This method of marketing has proven to be effective in increasing brand awareness and generating revenue for football clubs. The foundation of any successful SEM campaign is thorough keyword research. Football clubs need to identify the keywords and phrases that their fans are searching for and include those keywords in their content and advertisements.

A study by Balduck, et al., (2016) found that football clubs should focus on keywords related to match schedules, ticket sales, and player information to increase website traffic. Another important practice in SEM is ad copy. The ad copy used in SEM campaigns should be engaging, persuasive, and include relevant keywords, as well as a strong call to action. According to a study by Liu and Li (2016), using emotional appeals in ad copy can increase click-through rates and conversions. SEM campaigns require continuous monitoring and optimization to ensure their effectiveness. Football clubs should regularly monitor their campaigns and adjust them based on performance metrics, such as click-through rates and conversion rates.

A study by Gonçalves & Brás, (2017) found that regularly adjusting SEM campaigns based on performance metrics can significantly improve their effectiveness. Case studies of Manchester United and Real Madrid have demonstrated the effectiveness of SEM campaigns in increasing website traffic, ticket sales, and fan engagement. A case study by Hanlon and Williams (2017) found that Manchester United used targeted SEM campaigns to increase ticket sales and merchandise revenue, resulting in a 300% increase in website traffic and a 200% increase in ticket sales. Moreover, a case study by Kwon, et al., (2019) on Manchester United showed that the SEM campaign was successful in increasing clicks and return on ad spend.

Another study by Wang et al. (2017) found that Real Madrid used SEM to increase global brand awareness and attract fans from around the world, resulting in a 500% increase in website traffic and a 400% increase in social media engagement. Another case study by Zhang et al. (2018) on Real Madrid showed that the SEM campaign was successful in increasing website visits and conversions and found that SEM positively influenced consumer behaviour and purchase intentions for sports merchandise. SEM is a cost-effective way for teams to reach new fans and promote their brand, and it has become an integral part of football marketing strategies.

SEM has proven to be an effective marketing strategy for football teams, resulting in increased visibility and ticket sales. According to a study by Harris and Rae (2018), SEM was the second most effective digital marketing channel for football teams, behind only social media marketing. Additionally, SEM is a cost-effective way for teams to reach new fans and promote their brand (Leppäniemi & Karjaluoto, 2017). SEM has become an integral part of football marketing strategies. Best practices such as keyword research, ad copy, landing pages, and monitoring and optimization are crucial for the success of SEM campaigns. Case studies of Manchester United and Real Madrid have shown that SEM can significantly increase website traffic, ticket sales, and fan engagement.

### **3.4 Data Analytics**

#### **Introduction:**

Football has become one of the most popular sports in the world with an estimated 4 billion fans globally and its popularity has led to an increased focus on the business side of the sport. For instance, basketball has an estimated 450 million fans worldwide, which pales in comparison to football.

However, sports such as cricket and rugby have a significant following in some countries, but their popularity is not as widespread as football. To remain competitive and generate revenue, football clubs have started using data analytics to improve their marketing and sponsorship strategies. Data analytics has emerged as a valuable tool in football marketing and sponsorship, allowing clubs and brands to better understand their fans and target them with more customized and effective marketing campaigns. In the context of football, data analytics can help clubs better understand their fans, identify new market opportunities, and maximize their return on investment from sponsorship deals. Football marketing and sponsorship have experienced significant growth in recent years, with clubs and brands alike investing heavily in marketing strategies to increase their revenue streams.

#### 3.4.1 Fan Behaviour and Preferences:

Data analytics has become a crucial tool for understanding fan behaviour and preferences in football. By analyzing data such as ticket sales, social media engagement, and website traffic, football clubs and sponsors can gain insights into their target audience and tailor their marketing strategies accordingly. A study by Baker et al. (2018) found that data analytics can be used to segment football fans based on their level of engagement, interests, and demographics, enabling more targeted and personalized marketing campaigns. Moreover, data analytics can help clubs to optimize social media marketing strategies and improve fan engagement across various digital platforms (Zhang, Zhou, & Luo, 2021). Additionally, by analyzing fan data, clubs can identify the most popular social media channels among their fans and create content that resonates with them.

#### 3.4.2 Sponsorship Analytics:

Sponsorship is a major source of revenue for football clubs, and data analytics can help clubs identify and evaluate potential sponsorship opportunities, as well as measure the impact of their existing sponsorship deals. Sponsorship analytics involves analyzing data from various sources, including social media, ticket sales, and merchandise sales, to evaluate the effectiveness of a sponsorship deal. By analyzing data on factors such as sponsor recognition, corporate reputation, and propensity to make future purchases, clubs and brands can determine the ROI (Return On Investment) of their sponsorship investments. For example, a study by Sandvik et al. (2020) found that sponsorship recognition has a significant impact on fans' attitudes towards the sponsoring brand, which in turn can impact their purchase intentions. Similarly, a study by Bühler et al. (2019) found that sponsorship effectiveness can be improved by aligning sponsorships with fans' values and interests. For instance, Tottenham Hotspur used sponsorship analytics to identify AIA as a potential sponsor, and signed a deal with them in 2013, which has since become one of the most successful sponsorship deals in the Premier League (Dobson, 2019).

#### 3.4.3 Effectiveness of Marketing Campaigns:

Data analytics is essential for measuring the effectiveness of football marketing campaigns. By tracking metrics such as social media engagement, website traffic, and ticket sales, football clubs can evaluate the success of their marketing efforts and make necessary adjustments. A study by Rowley et al. (2016) found that data analytics can be used to optimize digital marketing campaigns by identifying the most effective channels for reaching and engaging target audiences.

#### 3.4.4 Ticket Sales:

Data analytics can optimize ticket sales strategies in football by analyzing fan data. This helps clubs to identify trends in ticket sales and adjust pricing strategies accordingly (Maher & Richards, 2019). Additionally, analyzing fan data allows clubs to identify the most popular match days and times and create targeted promotional campaigns that increase ticket sales (Maher & Richards, 2019). Moreover, data analytics helps clubs to identify the most effective channels for promoting ticket sales, such as email marketing or social media advertising (Liu, Li, & Wang, 2019)

#### 3.4.5 Social Media Analytics:

Social media has become an important marketing channel for football clubs, as it provides a direct line of communication with fans. Social media analytics involves analyzing data from social media platforms to gain insights into fan behaviour and preferences. Clubs can use social media analytics to track their social media performance, identify trending topics among their fans, and create content that resonates with their interests and values. For instance, Manchester United used social media analytics to identify that their fans were interested in content related to the team's history and created a social media campaign around the team's 140th anniversary, leading to increased engagement and fan loyalty (Duffy, 2020).

#### 3.4.6 Current State and Future Potential:

While data analytics has become increasingly important in football marketing and sponsorship, there is still potential for further growth and development. Many clubs still rely on traditional methods of data collection and analysis, such as surveys and focus groups, which may not provide comprehensive insights into fan behaviour and preferences (Maher & Richards, 2019). However, with the growth of technology and the availability of new data sources, such as social media and mobile apps, the potential for data analytics in football marketing and sponsorship is significant.

In summary, data analytics has emerged as a key tool in football marketing and sponsorship, with its applications ranging from fan engagement to player recruitment. By leveraging data analytics, clubs and brands can gain a deeper understanding of their fans and target them with more customized and effective marketing campaigns. Additionally, data analytics can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of sponsorship deals and make more informed decisions when recruiting players. As data analytics evolves, its role in football marketing and sponsorship will likely continue to grow.

### 3.5 Global Sponsorship in Football:

Football has become a global sport with a massive following, making it an attractive platform for brands to increase their global visibility and enhance their brand equity. Football sponsorship has grown rapidly over the past few decades, with brands investing large sums of money in sponsorships to reach new audiences and increase their brand awareness. With the globalization of football, the scope for global sponsorship has become more significant, providing brands with opportunities to reach audiences worldwide. However, global sponsorship in football also poses significant challenges that require careful consideration to maximize the benefits while minimizing the risks.

#### 3.5.1 Benefits of Global Sponsorship in Football:

Sponsorship provides an opportunity for brands to increase their brand awareness among a diverse range of audiences worldwide. According to Choi and Lee (2018), football sponsorships are highly effective in raising brand awareness, as they offer a platform to promote a brand globally. Sponsorship can improve a brand's equity by creating a positive association with the sponsored football team. According to Kazeminia, et al., (2015), sponsorship of a football team can positively impact brand equity by enhancing the brand's image and reputation, leading to increased customer loyalty. Football has a massive global following, with millions of people watching the game and engaging with the sport through various media channels. Sponsorship provides brands with access to a global audience, enabling them to reach new customers and markets. According to Cornwell & Maignan, (1998), sponsorship provides an effective means of reaching a diverse and global audience.

#### 3.5.2 Challenges of Global Sponsorship in Football:

One of the key challenges of global sponsorship in football is the difficulty in identifying the appropriate target audience. With a global fan base, sponsors must understand the demographics and

psychographics of football fans to create targeted marketing campaigns. Research indicates that social media platforms can be used to target specific groups of fans based on their interests, behaviours, and locations (Haverman, et al., 2019). However, it is crucial to note that this requires careful consideration of cultural and linguistic differences across different regions and countries. Another challenge of global sponsorship in football is the risk of negative publicity. Football is a highly emotional sport, and fans can be quick to criticize sponsors who do not align with their beliefs or values. This risk can be mitigated by carefully selecting partners who share similar ethics and values with the club and its fans. Research suggests that the alignment of the sponsor's values and the club's values positively affects fan attitudes and purchase intentions (Park and Kim, 2018). Moreover, global sponsorship in football faces challenges regarding measuring effectiveness and Return On Investment. Sponsors often struggle to determine whether their investment in football sponsorship is worth it. This challenge can be addressed through marketing metrics such as brand awareness, brand preference, and purchase intention (Cleophas et al., 2021). The effectiveness of sponsorship can also be measured by assessing the impact on fan engagement, social media followership, and website traffic. Overall, the challenges of global sponsorship in football must be addressed to enhance the effectiveness of sponsorship in football marketing. The literature review highlights the need for carefully identifying the appropriate target audience, mitigating the risk of negative publicity, and accurately measuring the effectiveness of sponsorship. These align with the research objectives of this dissertation, which seek to assess the impacts of digital marketing and sponsorship on the football industry as a business and their implications on fan engagement.

### **3.6 The Future of Digital Marketing in Football: Emerging Technologies and Innovations**

The digital revolution has transformed the way football is marketed and consumed, leading to rapid growth in the use of digital marketing in football. The emergence of new technologies and innovations has further enhanced the potential of digital marketing in football.

#### **3.6.1 Emerging Technologies in Digital Marketing for Football:**

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has already made significant contributions to the football industry, such as player performance analysis, match analysis, and injury prevention. In terms of marketing, AI can be used for personalized marketing, chatbots for customer service, and prediction models to understand fan behaviour and preferences (Katz, 2018). Another emerging technology in digital marketing is the use of Virtual Reality (VR) and Augmented Reality (AR). VR and AR can enhance the fan experience by creating immersive environments for fans to interact with their favourite players and teams. It can also be used for product placement and brand activation (Cullen, 2019). Another emerging technology is the Internet of Things (IoT). IoT can be used for tracking fan behaviour and preferences and collecting data on stadium traffic, merchandise sales, and other metrics. This data can then be used to improve the fan experience and marketing efforts (Samaras & Vuuren, 2019). Blockchain technology is one more emerging technology that is used widely. Blockchain technology can be used to create secure and transparent ticketing systems, prevent counterfeit merchandise, and even provide rewards for fan engagement (Kreutzer, et al., 2020).

#### **3.6.2 Innovations in Digital Marketing for Football:**

Social media influencers have become a major force in digital marketing, and football clubs and brands are using them to reach a wider audience and build brand awareness (Gladden & Milne, 2019). Another innovation in technology which can be used in digital marketing is Esports. Esports has emerged as a rapidly growing industry, and football clubs are investing in esports teams and tournaments as a way to reach younger audiences and expand their brand (Hamari et al., 2017). As more people use mobile phones, football clubs are developing mobile apps to enhance fan engagement and provide a more



personalized fan experience. Football clubs are developing mobile apps to enhance fan engagement and provide a more personalized fan experience. These apps can be used for ticketing, merchandise sales, and even personalized content based on fan preferences (Westcott, 2019). The future of digital marketing in football is exciting, with the potential for new technologies and innovations to enhance the fan experience and provide new opportunities for marketing and branding. However, it is important for football clubs and brands to stay up to date with these emerging technologies and innovations, and to use them in a way that is authentic and resonates with their target audience.

### **3.7 The Future of Football Sponsorship: Opportunities**

Football sponsorship has become an integral part of the sport, providing significant revenue streams for football clubs, and allowing sponsors to reach millions of fans globally. As football continues to grow in popularity, the future of football sponsorship looks bright, with many new opportunities emerging. One of the major opportunities in football sponsorship is the growth of the women's game. As the popularity of women's football continues to rise, there is a significant opportunity for sponsors to invest in the sport and reach a new, diverse audience (Kang, 2020). Esports has become increasingly popular in recent years, and football clubs are starting to enter the field. This provides an opportunity for brands to reach a new audience and connect with younger fans. Another opportunity is the use of social media to enhance the fan experience and increase engagement with sponsors. Football clubs can use social media platforms to create interactive content that allows fans to engage with sponsors in real time (Harris & Carrigan, 2020). This can include live streams, interactive games, and fan polls. Additionally, blockchain technology is emerging as a potential game-changer in football sponsorship, allowing for secure, transparent transactions between clubs, sponsors, and fans (Gorse et al., 2019). Football clubs need to remain proactive in their approach to sponsorship acquisition and management to stay ahead of the curve. Those that embrace these trends and opportunities are likely to reap the benefits of a more engaged fan base and increased revenue from sponsorship deals.

### **3.8 Literature Gap**

The existing literature on assessing the impacts of digital marketing and sponsorship on the football industry as a business and its implications for fan engagement is extensive, but there are still gaps that need to be addressed. Specifically, there is a lack of research that explores the effects of social media marketing on a football team's brand equity and how this content can be tailored to appeal to and engage football fans. Furthermore, while research has been conducted on the factors affecting the success of sports sponsorship, further examination of these factors is needed in the context of teams in the English Premier League and Indian Super League specifically. Additionally, more research is needed into how athletes' social media presence can be utilized to build a fan experience around a particular brand. One of the gaps in the literature is the lack of research on the impact of social media marketing on football team brand equity. While studies have been conducted on the use of social media in sports marketing, they tend to focus on the use of social media as a promotional tool rather than its impact on brand equity. This gap can be addressed by conducting a study on how social media marketing can be used to create content that appeals to and engages football fans, and how this engagement can be leveraged to build a stronger brand image.

Although studies on sports sponsorship, in general, have been conducted, such as the study by Filo, et al., (2015) on social media as an effective tool for engaging fans and building brand awareness, there is a need for more research in the context of these two leagues. A study in this area could explore the factors affecting the recognition of sponsors, the corporate reputation of sponsors, and the propensity of fans to make future purchases from sponsors. Finally, a gap in the literature is how athletes' social media presence can be used to build a fan experience around a particular brand. While research has been conducted on the influence of athletes on social media, there is a need for more research on how

this influence can be harnessed to create a unique fan experience that aligns with a particular brand. A study in this area could explore the impact of athlete-generated content on fan engagement and the potential for athlete-generated content to create a stronger connection between fans and brands. Overall, these gaps in the literature indicate a need for further research on the impacts of digital marketing and sponsorship on the football industry as a business and its implications for fan engagement. By addressing these gaps, the study's findings can help football teams and brands create more effective marketing strategies that engage fans and build stronger brand equity

## **4.0 Methodology:**

**4.1 Research Approach:** As a researcher, it is important to choose an appropriate research approach that can best address the research questions or objectives. The research approach employed in this study was a quantitative research method. Quantitative data was gathered through a survey questionnaire administered to participants selected through a purposive sampling technique. The primary objective of using a quantitative research approach was to provide empirical evidence of the relationships between the variables and to draw conclusions based on the analysis of numerical data. The findings of this study are intended to contribute to the existing literature on sports marketing and management and inform future research, practice, and policy in the field.

**4.2 Research Design:** The research design for this research involved the collection of data through Google form surveys from fans and club management. The survey was conducted to gather quantitative data on the impact of digital marketing and sponsorship on fan engagement in the football industry from a fan perspective as well as a club perspective. The surveys designed for the club management were conducted to gain a deeper understanding of the impact of these marketing strategies on the business side of the football.

**4.3 Sampling Technique:** In this study, a purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants who met specific criteria. The sampling criteria for participant selection for the first survey were that they should be following either the English Premier League or Indian Super League and reside in India or the UK or Ireland. 106 participants took part in the study. A sample size of 106 was considered adequate, as similar studies like the ones by Olubusola (2021), Jones (2018) and Brown (2015) had a similar sample size for their research. Additionally, using a purposive sampling technique enhanced the representativeness and generalizability of the sample. The second survey meant for club management had a smaller sample size of 11 because the population of club management officials was smaller compared to the fan population. The proportion of 10:1 fans to management is often considered appropriate in research studies because fans are typically the primary stakeholders in sports organizations and their opinions and behaviours have a significant impact on the success of the organization (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970). The purposive sampling technique was chosen because it allowed for the selection of participants who met specific criteria related to the research questions. This technique ensured that the participants selected had a genuine interest in football and were actively engaged with the sport through social media. By selecting participants who followed either the English Premier League or Indian Super League and resided in India or the UK, it was possible to gain insights into the impact of digital marketing and sponsorship on the football industry in these two leagues. The use of the purposive sampling technique was supported by previous studies such as Babbie (2016) and Neuman (2014), who have noted that this sampling technique is appropriate when the research aims to gain insights into specific populations that meet certain criteria. Furthermore, previous studies on football fan engagement such as Beech & Chadwick (2007) have also used purposive sampling techniques to select participants with specific interests and engagement levels in football.

## **4.4 Data Collection Instruments and Procedures:**

The study used two survey questionnaires to collect data from football fans and football club officials from both the English Premier League and Indian Super League. The survey questionnaires were designed to collect data on the impact of social media marketing on a football team's brand equity, links between factors affecting the success of sports sponsorship, and athletes' social media influence in building a fan experience around a particular brand. The questionnaires were sent via google forms and the data was stored securely on a password-protected Google sheet. For this study, data was collected via two separate Google Forms, an online survey platform. Each question was chosen carefully to answer specific aspects of the objectives. Both surveys consisted of 30-34 questions, with 4

sub-sections in them. Each sub-section was dedicated to understanding the demographics, social media engagement (fan perspective and club perspective), understanding the factors affecting the success of sports sponsorship and understanding an athlete's social media influence in building a fan experience around a particular brand (from a fan as well as club perspective). The first survey was conducted to understand the fan perspective on the topic. The survey was distributed through Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp, targeting individuals who follow either English Premier League or Indian Super League and reside in India or the UK. The second survey was conducted to understand the club's (management) perspective on this topic. The individuals in this survey were people in the club's management. Participation was voluntary in the survey. The survey was available for a period of four weeks, and participants were asked to complete it within that time frame. Overall, a total of 106 responses were received for the first survey and 11 responses were received for the second survey. All 117 responses were considered for analysis in this study.

4.5 Data Analysis Techniques: For the quantitative analysis, the data collected through the Google Form survey were analysed using descriptive statistics, such as mean, standard deviation, and frequency distribution. These analyses were conducted to identify patterns and trends in the data. Additionally, inferential statistics, such as correlation analysis and regression analysis, were used to identify relationships between the variables.

4.6 Quality Criteria: To ensure the quality and reliability of the research, several criteria were used for participant selection and data collection. Firstly, the sampling criteria required that participants follow either the English Premier League or Indian Super League and reside in India or the UK. This ensured that the data collected was relevant to the research questions and provided insights into the impact of digital marketing and sponsorship on the football industry in these specific regions. Secondly, the data collection methods employed were designed to ensure that the data collected was accurate and reliable. Online surveys were used to collect data from participants, and the surveys were carefully designed to ensure that the questions were clear, unambiguous, and relevant to the research questions. The surveys were also pre-tested to ensure that they were easy to understand and complete.

4.7 Ethical Considerations: This study has adhered to the ethical guidelines the research ethics committee set out. All participants were told about the study's purpose, their rights, and their confidentiality. While conducting surveys for the dissertation several ethical considerations were considered to ensure the protection of participants and their data. Firstly, the study adhered to the ethical guidelines set out by the Irish Research Council, which require researchers to obtain informed consent from all participants in research studies (IRC, 2018). Informed consent was obtained from all participants in the study, and participants were informed about the purpose and nature of the research, the methods used, and their rights as participants, including the right to withdraw from the study at any time. Second, data protection measures were taken to ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of participants and their data. The researcher ensured that all personal data collected was stored securely and that participants were informed about how their data would be used, who would have access to it, and how it would be destroyed after the study. Third, the researcher ensured that participants were not physically or emotionally harmed during the study. The researcher was mindful of any cultural or social factors that may impact participants and took steps to minimize any discomfort that may arise during the study. The researcher took care to avoid questions that could be perceived as discriminatory or stigmatizing and ensured that the language used was clear and understandable.

4.8 Limitations and Assumptions: The methodology used in this study has some limitations. Firstly, the sample size for the fan survey was relatively small (106), and although similar studies have used similar sample sizes, it may not be representative of the entire population of football fans in the UK and India. Secondly, the sample size for the club management survey was even smaller (11), which may limit the

generalizability of the findings. Additionally, the use of a purposive sampling technique may introduce bias, as only participants who meet specific criteria were selected for the study. Finally, the use of self-reported survey data may be subject to response bias, as participants may not always provide accurate or truthful responses. Furthermore, the study did not consider the impact of cultural and social factors on fan engagement, which could have affected the findings. Despite these limitations, the study aimed to contribute to the existing literature on sports marketing and management and inform future research, practice, and policy in the field.

## 5.0 Findings and Analysis

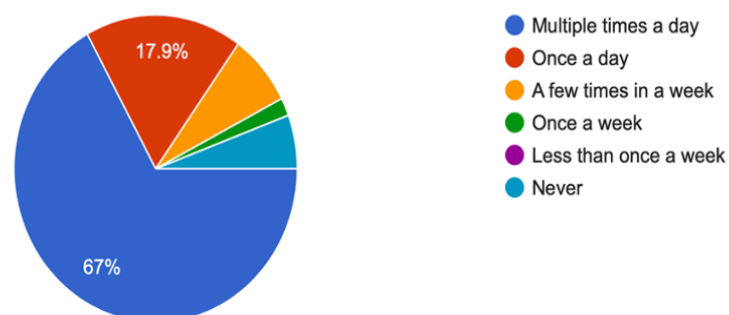
### 5.1 Primary Data Collection- Survey for Fans

In this study, 106 participants (fans) provided their valuable insights and opinions on the subject via a survey. The sample consisted of 63 male and 43 female participants, reflecting a balanced distribution of gender representation. The geographic distribution of the sample was primarily composed of 60.4% of participants from India, with the remaining 39.6% hailing from the United Kingdom or the Republic of Ireland. The age range of the participants was diverse, with the majority (68.9%) falling within the 18-36 age bracket. Additionally, 26.4% of participants belonged to the 36-55 age group, while a smaller fraction (4.7%) belonged to the 56-year and above age group. The majority of participants (70.8%) were employed, with 13.2% being self-employed and 10.4% being students. This diverse demographic composition allowed for a comprehensive and nuanced analysis of the research questions posed in this study. The following are the findings from the first survey for which the participants were fans.

#### Section 1: Social Media Engagement with Football Teams

Among the 106 participants who took part in the study, 45.3% indicated following the English Premier League, while 34% reported following the Indian Super League. Notably, a minority proportion of the participants (20.8%) expressed following both the English Premier League and the Indian Super League simultaneously. These findings provide an initial glimpse into the preferences and interests of football enthusiasts and suggest that a significant number of individuals have a vested interest in more than one football league.

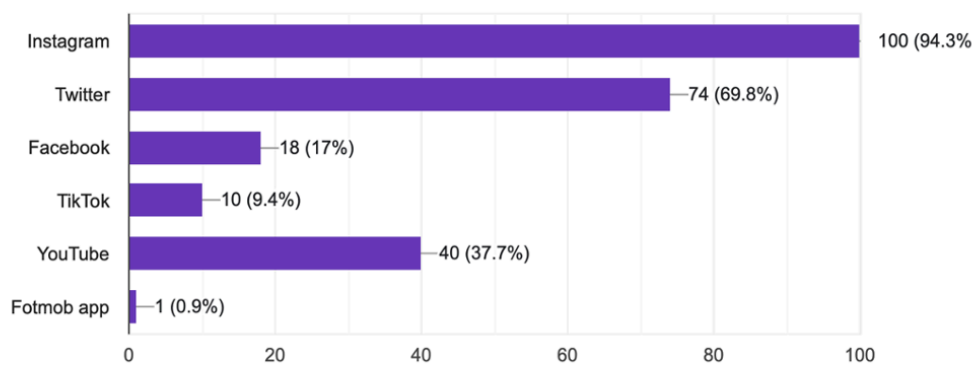
106 responses



*Figure 1: The figure depicts social media engagement by the fans where 67% engaged in social media content multiple times a day, 17.9% engaged once a day, 7.5% engaged a few times a week, 5.7% of respondents never engaged and 1.9% engaged once a week.*

The survey questions were aimed to explore the frequency of engagement with social media, which social media they engage on the most and how likely are they to interact (share/retweet/like/comment) to the content, posted by participants' favourite football team. Furthermore, they aimed to understand the fan's perceptions of the team's brand and the impact of social media on their relationship with the team. The results suggest that a significant proportion of respondents (67%) engage with social media content multiple times a day, indicating an elevated level of interest and involvement with the content. A smaller but still significant proportion of participants (17.9%) indicated engaging with such content once a day, while 7.5% reported doing so a few times a week. Notably, 5.7% of respondents reported never engaging with the content, while only 1.9% of participants reported doing so once a week.

106 responses



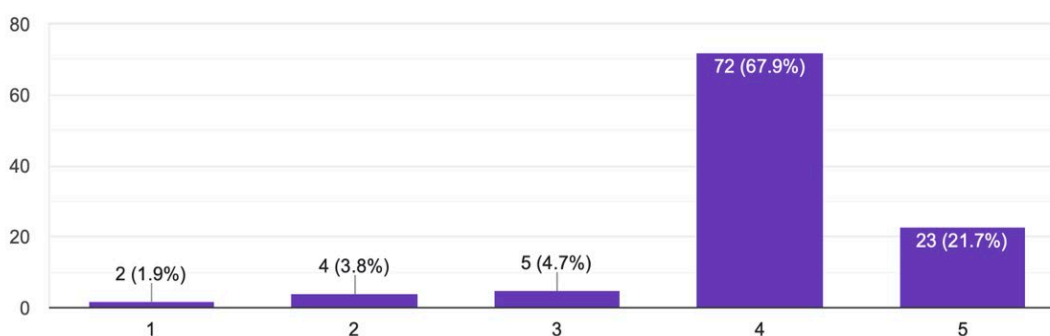
**Figure 2:** The graph depicts which social media platform the fans engaged the most with.

There were 100 instances of fans selecting Instagram, 74 instances of fans selecting Twitter, 18 instances of fans selecting Facebook, 10 instances of fans selecting TikTok, 40 instances of fans selecting YouTube and 1 instance of fans selecting Fotmob App.

The results also indicated that Instagram and Twitter were the most popular platforms for engagement among the participants, with 37 respondents selecting Instagram and Twitter. The next most popular platform was Instagram and YouTube, with 16 respondents. Other platforms that received responses include Instagram and Facebook (7 respondents), Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube (3 respondents), and Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube (1 respondent), among others. Moreover, three respondents selected Twitter as their primary social media platform, while three respondents selected YouTube. These findings were obtained through descriptive statistics, which involved tabulating the frequency of each response and presenting it in a clear and concise manner.

The study findings suggest that the responses of participants regarding the likelihood of sharing content posted by their favourite football team on social media were widely dispersed. The distribution of responses across the Likert scale ranged from "very unlikely" to "highly likely." The majority of participants (45.3%) responded neutrally on the matter, while only a small proportion of respondents (17.9%) indicated a likelihood to share content. Furthermore, a mere 10.4% of participants expressed a strong tendency to share such content. The mean response was relatively neutral, indicating a lack of clear consensus among the participants. Overall, the results indicate a broad spectrum of attitudes and behaviours towards sharing football team content on social media among the participants. The results of the survey revealed that participants' responses to engaging with posts on social media were overwhelmingly positive. A majority of participants (59.4%) responded as "very likely" to engage with posts, and 20.8% responded as "likely." The distribution of responses indicated a positive skew, with a relatively small proportion of participants expressing lower levels of inclination to engage with posts. The mean response on the Likert scale for engagement with posts was high (4.20 out of 5), with a relatively low standard deviation (0.95), indicating a high level of agreement among participants in their inclination to engage with posts. The responses suggest a high level of interest and engagement with social media content related to their favourite football team.

106 responses



*Figure 3: The graph depicts the results of the question of whether it was important for their team to have an active social media presence. 67.9% voted as important, 21.7% voted as very important, 4.7% voted as neutral, 3.8% voted as not important and 1.9% voted as not at all important.*

According to the findings derived from the survey, when asked to rate the quality of content posted by their favourite football team on social media, a significant proportion of participants (46.2%) rated it as good. Conversely, 43.4% of the participants rated it as average and a minor proportion (8.5%) rated it as very good. Additionally, the study revealed that a majority of the participants (67.9%) considered it important for their favourite football team to have an active presence on social media, while 21.7% of the participants considered it very important. Based on the findings in *Appendix 1*, we can conclude that participants who followed EPL were more likely to rate the quality of content posted by their favourite football team on social media as good and were more inclined to engage with the content. They also preferred Instagram and Twitter as their primary social media platforms. However, participants who followed ISL were less likely to rate the quality of content as good and were less inclined to engage with the content. It is also important to note that there were fewer participants who followed ISL, which may have influenced the results. These findings highlight the importance of social media platforms for football teams to engage with their fanbase and promote their brand and suggest that frequent and consistent content creation and sharing may be key to achieving optimal fan engagement and brand equity.

**Section 2: Factors Affecting the Success of Sports Sponsorship in the English Premier League and Indian Super League: An Evaluation of Sponsor Recognition, Corporate Reputation, and Propensity to Make Future Purchases.**

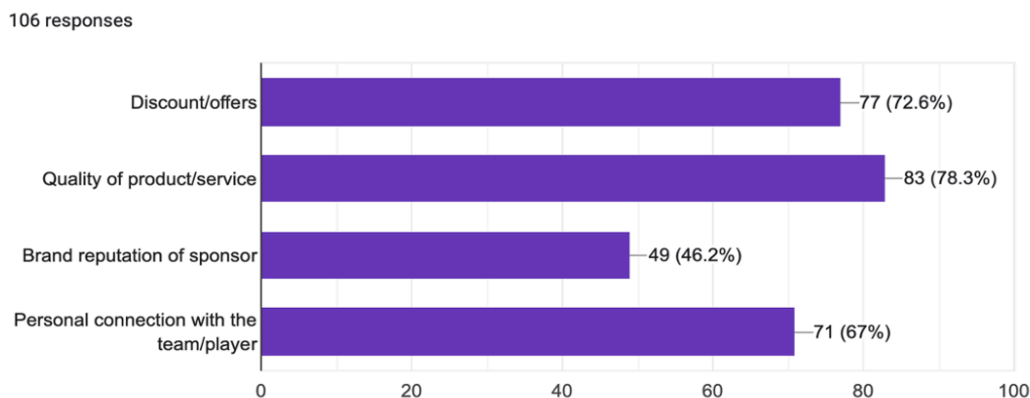
The second objective of the study was to examine and scrutinize the varied factors that impact the effectiveness of sports sponsorship and corporate reputation and propensity to make future purchases in the English Premier League and the Indian Super League. Several survey questions were specifically aimed to assess the importance of three crucial variables, namely sponsor recognition, corporate reputation, and fans' willingness to make future purchases. The ensuing table provides an in-depth understanding of the participant's (fans) responses to the aforementioned survey questions.

Question	Response
1. Sponsor identification frequency	67.9% frequently, 17.9% very frequently, 5.7% don't know, 5.7% sometimes, 2.8% never
2. Team's corporate reputation	69.8% good, 13.2% excellent, 11.3% neutral, 4.7% bad, 0.9% very bad
3. Likelihood of purchasing sponsor's product	67.9% likely, 8.5% very likely, 16% neutral, 5.7% unlikely, 1.9% very unlikely
4. Likelihood of unfollowing team's social media if sponsor-related content dominates	19.8% highly unlikely, 49.1% unlikely, 9.4% neutral, 14.2% likely, 7.2% highly likely
5. Likelihood of unfollowing team's social media due to sponsorship-related content	19.8% highly unlikely, 49.1% unlikely, 9.4% neutral, 14.2% likely, 7.2% highly likely
6. Feelings towards new sponsor	67.9% neutral, 9.4% not excited at all, 3.8% not excited, 12.3% excited, 6.6% very excited
7. Effect of sponsor's corporate reputation on product/service support	53.8% somewhat, 10.4% a lot, 20.8% neutral, 8.5% not much, 6.6% not at all



Question	Response
8. Likelihood of switching to competitor's product due to sponsor's negative reputation	7.5% very unlikely, 35.8% unlikely, 16% neutral, 33% likely, 7.5% highly likely
9. Factors influencing purchase decision	Discount/offers, Quality of product/service, Brand reputation of sponsor, Personal connection with the team/player

Of the participants, 67.9% reported being able to frequently identify the sponsors of their preferred football team, while 17.9% reported being able to very frequently identify them. The majority of respondents (69.8%) rated their favourite team's corporate reputation as good or excellent. When asked about their likelihood of purchasing a product from a sponsor of their favourite football team in the future, 76.4% of respondents indicated that they were likely or very likely to do so. Regarding social media, 68.9% of respondents were neutral in their feelings about their favourite football team's new sponsor, while 12.3% were excited or very excited. On the other hand, 26.3% of respondents were either likely or highly likely to unfollow their favourite football team's social media accounts if they predominantly prioritize sponsor-related content over sports-related content.



*Figure 4: The graph depicts the responses to understand the factors that influence their decision to purchase products or services from the sponsors of their favourite football team. There were 77 instances of participants choosing Discounts/offers, 83 instances of choosing the Quality of product/service, 49 instances of choosing the Brand reputation of the sponsor and 71 instances of choosing personal connection with the team or players.*

Moreover, the results showed that discounts and offers were the most commonly selected factor influencing fans' purchasing decisions regarding sponsors, with 64 participants choosing this option. Quality of product or service was also an important factor, selected by 47 participants, as was a personal connection with the team or player, selected by 44 participants (as seen in Graph 4). Overall, these insights suggest that football fans generally have a positive attitude towards sponsors but are also discerning consumers who prioritize factors such as discounts and quality when making purchasing decisions. As such, sponsorship can be an effective tool for businesses looking to reach a large and engaged audience but must also offer tangible value to fans to be successful.

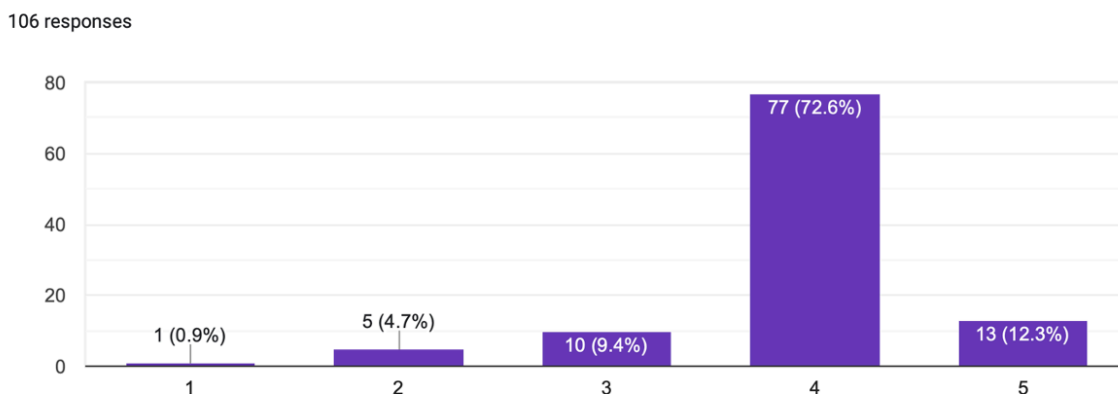
### Section 3: To understand an athlete's social media influence in building a fan experience around a particular brand.

The third objective of this research was to examine the influence of athletes' social media activity in creating a compelling fan experience for a brand. A series of survey questions were designed to assess

the impact of athlete-generated content on social media marketing. The following table presents a summary of the participant's responses to these inquiries:

Survey Question	Responses
How do you rate the quality of athlete-generated content on social media?	72.6% good, 9.4% excellent, 13.2% average, 4.7% poor
Likelihood to purchase a product endorsed by an athlete	72.6% likely, 12.3% highly likely, 9.4% neutral, 4.7% unlikely, 0.9% highly unlikely
Likelihood to switch brands if favourite athlete endorses a new brand	16% highly likely, 47.2% likely, 17% neutral, 8.5% unlikely, 11.3% highly unlikely
Effect of athlete engagement with fans on social media	77.4% increases loyalty, 19.8% no effect, 2.8% don't follow athletes on social media
Likelihood to unfollow athlete for irrelevant/uninteresting content	60.4% unlikely, 15.1% highly unlikely, 11.3% neutral, 6.6% likely, 6.6% highly likely
Importance of athlete-generated content in sports marketing strategy	80.2% very important, 17% somewhat important, 1.9% not important at all, 0.9% don't know

This table summarized the results of a survey conducted to explore the impact of athlete-generated content on social media marketing. A total of 106 respondents participated in the survey, of which 94.3% followed their favourite athlete(s) on social media. Most respondents rated the quality of athlete-generated content on social media as good (72.6%). The most preferred types of content were training and workout videos, personal life updates, and interviews (chosen by 59 respondents), followed by a combination of training and workout videos, personal life updates, game highlights, interviews, and sponsorship posts (11 respondents).



*Figure 5: The graph depicts the response to understanding the likelihood to purchase a product endorsed by an athlete. 72.6% of participants responded likely, 12.3% responded highly likely, 9.4% responded neutral, 4.7% responded unlikely and 0.9% responded highly unlikely.*

Regarding the influence of athlete endorsements, 72.6% of respondents were likely to purchase a product from a brand endorsed by an athlete they follow on social media. However, 47.2% were likely to switch brands if their favourite athlete endorsed a brand they don't use. In terms of fan engagement, 77.4% of respondents indicated that when athletes engage with fans through content such as live streams or Q&A sessions, it increased their loyalty to the athlete. Moreover, 60.4% of respondents were unlikely to unfollow an athlete on social media, even if they consistently post content that is irrelevant or uninteresting to them. Finally, 80.2% of respondents believe that athlete-generated content is very important to the overall marketing strategy of a sports team or league, and

17% rated it as somewhat important. Overall, these findings suggested that athlete-generated content on social media had a significant impact on fan engagement, brand loyalty, and marketing strategies for sports teams and leagues. Therefore, it is important for athletes and sports organizations to focus on creating high-quality, relevant, and engaging content that resonates with their fans.

## 5.2 Primary Data Collection- Survey for Management/People Working for Football Clubs

The following are the findings from the second survey for which the participants were people in the management or people working in any capacity engaging in social media, marketing, sponsorship or similar fields at a football club. The survey data collected showed that 27.3% of participants were in executive or management positions, while 54.5% worked in marketing and communications and 18.2% in social media management. Additionally, 63.6% of respondents worked in India, and 36.4% in the UK and the Republic of Ireland. These findings provide important contextual information for interpreting the study's results and establishing its relevance to these specific regions.

### Section 1: Social Media Engagement with Football Teams

The first objective of the study was to examine several football teams' social media engagement tactics and plans for the fans. Several survey questions were specifically aimed to assess the importance of three crucial variables, namely sponsor recognition, corporate reputation, and fans' willingness to make future purchases for the clubs. The ensuing table provides an in-depth understanding of the participant's responses to the aforementioned survey questions

<b>Question</b>	<b>Response</b>
1. Which social media platforms does the football club use to engage with fans?	Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube: 8 respondents, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube: 2 respondents, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok: 1 respondent
2. How often does the football club post content on its social media platforms?	Several times a day: 9 respondents, Daily: 2 respondents
3. How does the football club measure the success of its social media engagement with fans?	Number of followers, likes and reactions, shares and retweets, and comments and interactions: 10 respondents, Likes and reactions, shares and retweets, and comments and interactions: 1 respondent
4. How does the football club determine what type of content to post on its social media platforms?	Market research and analysis: 7 respondents, Fan feedback and suggestions: 2 respondents, Industry trends and best practices: 2 respondents
5. How does the football club ensure that its social media content is engaging and relevant to its fans?	Analyzing engagement metrics: 11 respondents, Collaborating with players and coaches: 11 respondents, Conducting surveys and polls: 1 respondent

The survey results revealed that the football club employs a multi-platform social media strategy to engage with its fans, with 8 out of 11 respondents indicating the use of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. Most respondents (81.8%) reported that the club posts content several times a day, and the success of its social media engagement is measured using a range of metrics, including followers, likes, shares, retweets, comments, and interactions. The data also showed that the football

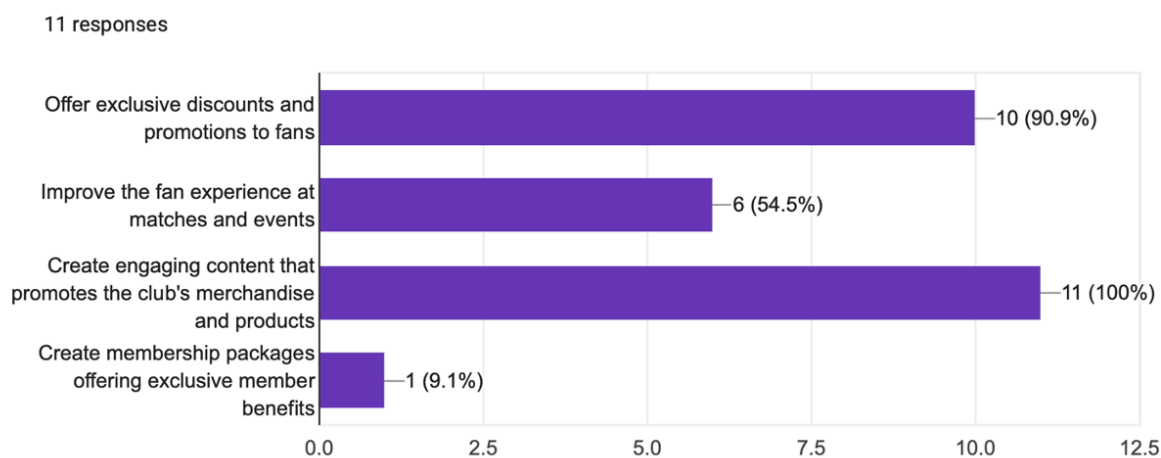
club primarily determined which content to post on its social media platforms through market research and analysis (63.6%), indicating the importance of data-driven decision-making. Collaborating with players and coaches was another key strategy for ensuring relevant and engaging social media content. The club's focus on athlete-generated content was evident, with 63.6% of respondents reporting that the club provides guidelines and suggestions to players to create such content. The survey results also highlighted the significant importance of social media engagement for the football club, with all respondents indicating it to be extremely important. The club's satisfaction with its current level of social media engagement with fans is generally high, with 72.7% of respondents indicating they are very satisfied. However, the club should continue to monitor and analyze its social media metrics to ensure it is achieving its goals and making improvements where necessary. In summary, the survey results suggested that the football club recognizes the value of social media as a critical channel for connecting with fans, promoting its brand, and driving revenue through sponsorship and marketing activities. The club's strategies for determining which content to post and ensuring its relevance and engagement highlighted the importance of data-driven decision-making and collaboration with players and coaches. The results also emphasized the need for ongoing analysis and evaluation of social media metrics to ensure the club is maximizing the value and impact of its social media activities.

## Section 2: Sponsorship Recognition and Corporate Reputation

The second objective of the study was to examine and scrutinize the varied factors that impact the effectiveness of sports sponsorship in the English Premier League and the Indian Super League and the club's views on it. Several survey questions were specifically aimed to assess the importance of three crucial variables, namely sponsor recognition, corporate reputation, and fans' willingness to make future purchases. The ensuing table provides an in-depth understanding of the participant's responses to the aforementioned survey questions.

<b>Question</b>	<b>Response</b>
1. Importance of corporate reputation to fans	72.7% extremely important, 9.1% important, 9.1% neutral, 9.1% not important
2. Methods to increase sponsor recognition and corporate reputation	Social media campaigns and sponsorship of events or organizations used by majority; 2 respondents use social media campaigns as sole method
3. Measurement of effectiveness of sponsor recognition and corporate reputation strategies	All 11 respondents use social media metrics (likes, shares, comments) and sales figures
4. Plan to increase sponsor recognition among fans	Majority plan to improve quality of sponsor-related posts and partner with sponsors to create engaging content
5. Methods to measure propensity of fans to make future purchases	5 use sales data and social media engagement, 4 use a combination of sales data, surveys/feedback, and social media engagement, 1 uses sales data and merchandise store engagement via social media, and 1 uses sales data and surveys/feedback
6. Plan to increase propensity of fans to make future purchases	Majority suggest offering exclusive discounts/promotions and creating engaging content that promotes club's merchandise and products; some suggest improving fan experience at matches/events and creating membership packages offering exclusive benefits

The above table is a summary of survey responses collected from 11 participants who work for a football club in either the English Premier League or the Indian Super League on their strategies for improving sponsor recognition, corporate reputation, and fan engagement. The survey covered a range of topics, including the importance of sponsor recognition and corporate reputation to fans, the methods used to increase sponsor recognition and corporate reputation, the effectiveness of those strategies, and plans for future improvements. In terms of the importance of sponsor recognition and corporate reputation to fans, the survey found that 63.6% of respondents believed sponsor recognition was extremely important, while 18.2% believed it was important. Similarly, 72.7% of respondents believed corporate reputation was extremely important, with only 9.1% stating it was not important. These results suggest that clubs should prioritize sponsor recognition and corporate reputation in their fan engagement strategies. The survey also asked respondents about the methods they use to increase sponsor recognition and corporate reputation among fans. The majority of respondents (9 out of 11) reported using social media campaigns and sponsorship of events or organizations. Social media campaigns were mentioned by two respondents as their sole method, while the remaining nine mentioned social media campaigns and sponsorship of events or organizations. This suggested that social media is an important tool for increasing sponsor recognition and corporate reputation among fans. To measure the effectiveness of their sponsor recognition and corporate reputation strategies, all 11 respondents reported using social media metrics such as likes, shares, and comments, as well as sales figures. This highlighted the importance of tracking and analyzing these metrics to understand the impact of fan engagement strategies. When asked about plans for improving sponsor recognition, respondents suggested a range of strategies, including improving the quality of sponsor-related posts, increasing the frequency of sponsor-related posts, and partnering with sponsors to create engaging content. For improving corporate reputation, the majority of respondents (7 out of 11) suggested enhancing community engagement initiatives and communicating social responsibility efforts to fans.



*Figure 6: The figure depicts the response to understanding the club's plan to increase the propensity of fans to make future purchases. The majority suggests offering exclusive discounts/promotions and creating engaging content that promotes the club's merchandise and products; some suggest improving the fan experience at matches/events and creating membership packages offering exclusive benefits.*

In terms of measuring fan propensity to make future purchases, five respondents reported using sales data and social media engagement, while four reported using a combination of sales data, surveys and feedback from fans, and social media engagement. This suggested that a range of data sources are used to understand fan behaviour and improve engagement strategies. Finally, when asked about plans for increasing the propensity of fans to make future purchases, the majority of respondents (5 out of 11) suggested offering exclusive discounts and promotions, while four suggested combining this with improving the fan experience at matches and events. One respondent suggested a more comprehensive approach, including all of the above strategies, as well as creating membership

packages offering exclusive member benefits. These results suggested that clubs should focus on incentivizing purchases through exclusive promotions and improving the overall fan experience.

### Section 3: Athlete-generated Content and Fan Experience

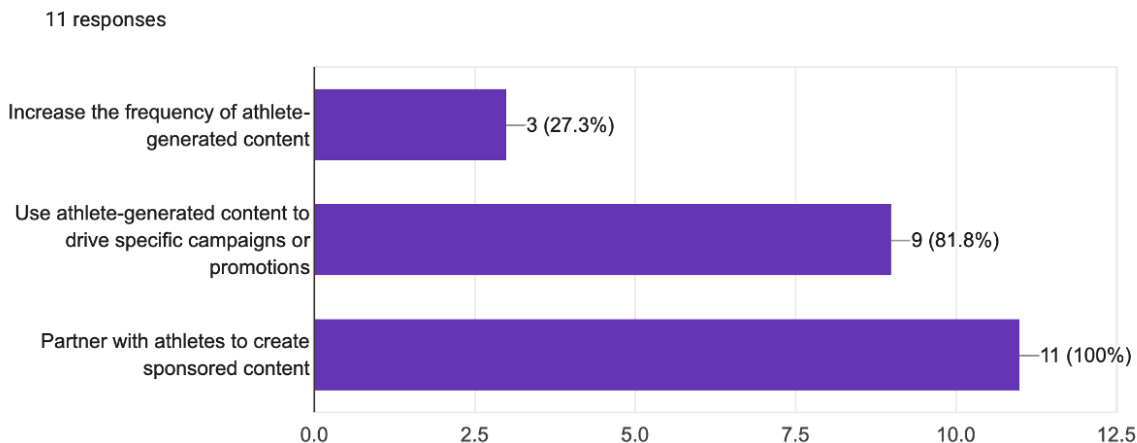
The third objective of this research was to understand how a club makes strategies and plans to use the influence of athletes' social media activity in creating a compelling fan experience for a brand. A series of survey questions were designed to assess the impact of athlete-generated content on social media marketing. The following table presents a summary of the participant's responses to these inquiries:

<b>Survey Question</b>	<b>Result</b>
How important is athlete-generated content in engaging fans on social media platforms?	100% say very important
Which types of athlete-generated content do you believe resonates the most with fans?	Respondents selected behind-the-scenes videos, collaborations with other athletes/celebrities, training footage, Q&A sessions, and interviews
How does the club measure the effectiveness of athlete-generated content in engaging fans and improving the fan experience?	Majority of respondents (9 out of 11) emphasized the importance of social media analytics
In what ways does the club leverage athlete-generated content for its benefit?	Respondents suggest increasing sponsor recognition, enhancing corporate reputation, promoting upcoming games and events, and generating revenue through merchandise sales and partnerships
How important do you think athlete-generated content will be in the future of sports marketing?	100% feel it's extremely important
How do you handle negative or controversial athlete-generated content on your club's social media platforms?	Seven respondents said they contact the athlete to discuss the issue and request removal, and four respondents said they address the issue publicly and transparently and contact the athlete to discuss the issue and request removal

The table presents the survey results on the importance and impact of athlete-generated content in sports marketing, as well as how clubs handle negative or controversial content. The survey was completed by 11 respondents, and all of them indicated that athlete-generated content is extremely important for engaging fans on social media platforms, and for the overall marketing strategy of the club. When asked about how frequently the club posts athlete-generated content on social media, 100% of the respondents said they post several times a week, with nobody selecting daily, once a week, or a few times a month. The most popular types of athlete-generated content that resonated the most with fans were behind-the-scenes videos, collaborations with other athletes/celebrities, training footage, Q&A sessions, and interviews. These were selected by various respondents, with behind-the-scenes videos being the most popular type. The impact of athlete-generated content on the fan experience was assessed by the respondents. All respondents agreed that it helps fans connect with

athletes on a personal level, which can increase engagement with the club. Additionally, 10 out of 11 respondents believed that athlete-generated content improves the overall fan experience.

In terms of measuring the impact of athlete-generated content, 36% of respondents believe that measuring an increase in all three metrics is the best way, while 45% believe that measuring an increase in fan engagement and merchandise sales is sufficient. 18% of respondents believe that an increase in fan engagement alone is a good indicator of impact. Social media analytics were identified as the main method for measuring impact by the majority of respondents.



*Figure 7: The figure depicts the responses of participants when asked about their plans to incorporate athlete-generated content into their social media strategy in the future. 3 instances where participants chose that they will increase the frequency of athlete-generated content, 9 instances of using athlete-generated content to drive specific campaigns or promotions, and 11 instances where participants chose to partner with athletes to create sponsored content.*

Regarding the club's leverage of athlete-generated content, respondents identified various ways, including increasing sponsor recognition, enhancing the club's corporate reputation, promoting upcoming games and events, and generating revenue through merchandise sales and partnerships. In the future, the respondents plan to increase the frequency of athlete-generated content and use it to drive specific campaigns or promotions. Partnering with athletes to create sponsored content was also identified as a potential strategy. Finally, in terms of handling negative or controversial athlete-generated content on social media, most respondents (7 out of 11) said they contact the athlete to discuss the issue and request removal. Four respondents said they address the issue publicly and transparently and contact the athlete to discuss the issue and request removal. Overall, the survey results suggested that athlete-generated content was an essential component of sports marketing and significantly impacted the fan experience. Clubs should prioritize the creation and dissemination of such content and leverage it in various ways to achieve their marketing objectives.

## **6.0 Discussion**

### **Section 1: Social Media Engagement with football teams**

One of this dissertation's objectives was to understand social media engagement with football teams by analyzing and comparing the fan perspective versus the club management perspective. The findings related to the fan perspective indicated that a significant proportion of football fans engaged with social media content multiple times a day, with Instagram and Twitter being the most popular platforms for engagement. Moreover, a majority of participants considered it very important for their favourite football team to have an active presence on social media. This was consistent with previous research which suggested that fan engagement on social media could positively impact brand equity (Filo et al., 2015). However, the responses regarding the likelihood of sharing content posted by their favourite football team on social media were widely dispersed, indicating a lack of clear consensus among the participants. This was evident from previous research that suggested the reasons for sharing content on social media were complex and multifaceted (Berger & Milkman, 2012). The findings derived from this survey suggested that football teams consistently created and shared content on social media that appealed to a wide range of fan attitudes and behaviours to achieve optimal fan engagement and brand equity. On the other hand, the findings related to the club management perspective revealed that football teams used various tactics to engage with their fanbase, including content creation, engagement with influencers, and strategic partnerships with sponsors. The study also revealed that football teams used social media platforms to enhance their brand equity and revenue streams. These results indicated that football teams perceived social media as a valuable tool to engage with their fanbase and promote their brand. The club management perspective highlights the importance of social media platforms for football teams to enhance their brand image and connect with their fanbase.

Comparing the findings of the two perspectives, it was evident that while fans used social media to interact with their favourite football teams, football teams used social media platforms to promote their brand and revenue streams. These results also suggested that football teams should focus on creating and sharing high-quality content consistently which would enhance their brand image and maintain an active presence on social media. These findings contributed to the existing literature on the role of social media in sports marketing and fan engagement. Previous research has established the importance of social media in fan engagement and brand equity for sports teams (Hwang & Kim, 2020; Kipnis, et al., 2020). However, this study provided new insights into the preferences and attitudes of football fans towards social media engagement with their favourite football team. The study's findings also expanded upon the current theoretical frameworks of sports marketing and fan engagement by demonstrating the importance of consistent and frequent content creation and sharing on social media platforms. In conclusion, the results of this study suggested that social media platforms are an essential tool for football teams to engage with their fanbase and promote their brand equity. The results also highlighted the importance of consistent content creation and sharing to achieve optimal fan engagement and maintain an active presence on social media. The study underscores the need for football teams to focus on fan engagement to promote their brand and revenue streams in the ever-evolving world of social media.

### **Section 2: Sponsorship Recognition and Corporate Reputation**

The second objective of this research was to analyze and compare the fan perspective and the club management perspective to understand the impact of sports sponsorship and corporate reputation on the English Premier League and the Indian Super League and the propensity of the fans to make future purchases. The study aimed to examine the importance of sponsorship recognition, corporate reputation, and fan engagement for the success of sports sponsorship in the two leagues. The study aimed to



examine the importance of sponsor recognition, corporate reputation, and fan engagement for the success of sports sponsorship in the two leagues. The findings indicate that football fans generally have a positive attitude towards sponsors but are also discerning consumers who prioritize factors such as discounts and quality when making purchasing decisions. Specifically, most fans (67.9%) reported being able to frequently identify the sponsors of their preferred football team, and almost 70% rated their team's corporate reputation as good or excellent. Furthermore, over three-quarters of fans (76.4%) indicated that they were likely to purchase a product from a sponsor of their favourite football team in the future. However, fans also expressed a desire for a balance between sponsor-related content and sports-related content on social media, with 26.3% indicating that they were likely to unfollow their team's social media accounts if sponsor-related content was prioritized over sports-related content.

On the other hand, the club management perspective was collected through a survey that explored the strategies used by football clubs to improve sponsor recognition, corporate reputation, and fan engagement. The survey results revealed that clubs prioritize sponsor recognition and corporate reputation in their fan engagement strategies. Social media campaigns and sponsorship of events or organizations were the most common method used for increasing sponsor recognition and corporate reputation. The effectiveness of the strategies was measured through social media metrics such as likes, shares, and comments, as well as sales figures. The findings suggested that fan engagement was critical to the success of sports sponsorship. Fans perceived the quality of social media content positively, indicating that clubs need to invest in creating high-quality content to engage fans effectively. Additionally, fans value discounts and promotions, indicating that clubs should partner with sponsors to offer incentives to fans. The findings also showed that the corporate reputation of a sponsor had a significant impact on the decision of a majority of participants to support their products or services. Most participants reported that the corporate reputation of a sponsor affected their decision to support their products or services. This indicated that sponsors must pay close attention to their corporate reputation as it may have a significant influence on the consumer's decision-making process. Additionally, the small proportion of participants who reported that the corporate reputation of a sponsor does not affect their decision at all suggested that certain consumers prioritized other factors, such as product quality or price, over the sponsor's reputation. This showed that a sponsor's bad reputation was not always enough to make people switch to another product or service. Overall, most people seemed to stick with their favourite football team, even if their sponsor has a bad reputation

The club management perspective highlighted the importance of sponsor recognition and corporate reputation in fan engagement strategies. Social media campaigns and sponsorship of events or organizations were the most common methods used for increasing sponsor recognition and corporate reputation. The use of social media metrics to measure the effectiveness of fan engagement strategies suggested that tracking and analyzing these metrics was crucial to understand the impact of fan engagement strategies. The findings of this research are consistent with previous studies that have emphasized the importance of fan engagement and sponsor recognition in sports sponsorship. For example, a study by Chadwick & Arthur, (2018) found that fan engagement is critical to the success of sports sponsorship, and clubs should invest in fan engagement strategies to create positive associations between sponsors and fans. However, some of the findings of this study differed from previous research in terms of the factors that influence fans' purchasing decisions related to sponsors of their favourite teams. For instance, a study by Lee et al. (2019) found that fans' perceived fit between a sponsor and a team significantly influenced their attitude towards the sponsor and their purchasing intentions. In contrast, this study found that price promotions and discounts are important factors in fans' purchasing decisions related to sponsors of their favourite teams. The study also highlighted the importance of social media in fan engagement and suggested that clubs should invest in creating high-quality social media content to engage fans effectively. Additionally, the study emphasized the importance of discounts and promotions in fans' purchasing decisions and suggested that clubs should

partner with sponsors to offer incentives to fans. The use of social media metrics to measure the effectiveness of fan engagement strategies suggested that tracking and analyzing these metrics was crucial to understanding the impact of fan engagement strategies.

The study had several limitations that may impact the findings related to the objective. First, the sample size of the fan perspective data was small, which might have limited the generalizability of the findings. Second, the study only focused on two football leagues, which may have limited the applicability of the findings to other sports and leagues. Third, the study collected data from only English-speaking participants, which may have limited the cultural diversity of the sample. In conclusion, the findings of this research suggested that fan engagement and sponsor recognition are critical factors in the success of sports sponsorship. The study highlighted the importance of social media in fan engagement and suggested that clubs should invest in creating high-quality social media content to engage fans effectively. Additionally, the study emphasized the importance of discounts and promotions in fans' purchasing decisions and suggested that clubs should partner with sponsors to offer incentives to fans.

### Section 3: Athlete-generated Content and Fan Experience

The third objective of this research was to examine the influence of athletes' social media activity in creating a compelling fan experience for a brand, by comparing the fan perspective versus the club management perspective. The research findings suggested that athlete-generated content on social media significantly impacted fan engagement, brand loyalty, and marketing strategies for sports teams and leagues. In terms of the fan perspective, most respondents rated the quality of athlete-generated content on social media as good, and the most preferred types were training and workout videos, personal life updates, and interviews. The influence of athlete endorsements on fans was mixed, with 72.6% of respondents likely to purchase a product from a brand endorsed by an athlete they follow, but 47.2% were likely to switch brands if their favourite athlete endorsed a brand they did not use. Fan engagement was positively impacted by athletes engaging with fans through content such as live streams or Q&A sessions. Additionally, fans were unlikely to unfollow an athlete on social media, even if they consistently posted content that was irrelevant or uninteresting to them. Athlete-generated content was also considered very important to the overall marketing strategy of a sports team or league.

In contrast, from the club management perspective, all respondents indicated that athlete-generated content was extremely important for engaging fans on social media platforms and for the overall marketing strategy of the club. The most popular types of athlete-generated content that resonated the most with fans were behind-the-scenes videos, collaborations with other athletes or celebrities, training footage, Q&A sessions, and interviews. Respondents identified various ways to leverage athlete-generated content, including increasing sponsor recognition, enhancing the club's corporate reputation, promoting upcoming games and events, and generating revenue through merchandise sales and partnerships. The club management respondents planned to increase the frequency of athlete-generated content and use it to drive specific campaigns or promotions. The fan perspective and the club management perspective both recognized the significance of athlete-generated content in engaging fans and promoting brands. Most fans rated the quality of athlete-generated content as good, and they preferred training and workout videos, personal life updates, and interviews. However, fans' responses to athlete endorsements varied, with some fans likely to purchase a product from a brand endorsed by an athlete they followed, but some switched brands if their favourite athlete endorsed a brand they did not use. Fans valued athlete engagement on social media and believed it increased their loyalty to the athlete. Athlete-generated content was considered crucial to the overall marketing strategy of a sports team or league.

From the club management perspective, all respondents believed that athlete-generated content was essential for engaging fans and promoting the club. The club management identified various ways to leverage athlete-generated content, including increasing sponsor recognition, enhancing the club's corporate reputation, promoting upcoming games and events, and generating revenue through merchandise sales and partnerships. The club management respondents planned to increase the frequency of athlete-generated content and use it to drive specific campaigns or promotions.

The findings of this research were also consistent with previous research that found athlete-generated content to be important in engaging fans and promoting brands. For example, Fuentes & Vásquez, (2018) found that athlete-generated content on social media was an essential tool for athletes to connect with their fans and increase their influence. Similarly, Wang, et al., (2020) found that athlete-generated content positively impacted brand loyalty, purchase intention, and word-of-mouth communication. However, the findings of this research added to the existing literature by comparing the fan perspective versus the club management perspective.

Overall, this research highlighted the importance of athletes and sports organizations creating compelling and engaging content on social media platforms to improve fan engagement and loyalty, as well as drive revenue. Additionally, the findings suggested that athletes and sports organizations could work collaboratively to develop marketing strategies that leveraged athlete-generated content in a way that is beneficial for both the fans and the clubs. Future research could explore the impact of athlete-generated content on different sports and demographics, as well as the effectiveness of specific types of content for different marketing objectives.

## **7.0 Conclusion**

This dissertation aimed to examine the role of social media engagement, sponsorship recognition, and athlete-generated content in shaping fan experience and corporate reputation in football. The study investigated three primary objectives concerning sports marketing and management: social media engagement with football teams, sponsorship recognition, corporate reputation, and athlete-generated content and fan experience, providing valuable insights into the perspectives of both fans and club management. The purpose of this research was to gain insights into the preferences and attitudes of football fans towards social media engagement with their favourite teams and the impact of sponsorship and corporate reputation on fan engagement and purchasing decisions. Furthermore, the study aimed to examine the role of athlete-generated content in enhancing the fan experience.

The findings related to the first objective asserted the criticality of social media platforms for football teams to engage with their fanbase and promote their brand equity. Both the fan perspective and the club management perspective highlighted the importance of consistent and high-quality content creation and sharing for achieving optimal fan engagement and maintaining an active presence on social media. The results also highlighted the need for football teams to focus on fan engagement to promote their brand and revenue streams in the ever-evolving world of social media. These findings have significant implications for future research, practice, and policy in sports marketing and management.

The second objective provided valuable insights into the factors that influenced fan engagement with social media content related to their favourite football teams and the factors affecting their purchasing decisions related to sponsors of their favourite teams. The findings emphasized the crucial role of social media as a platform for fan engagement, with fans perceiving the quality of social media content related to their favourite football teams positively. Additionally, the results highlighted the importance of discounts and promotions as significant factors in fans' purchasing decisions related to sponsors of their favourite teams. Furthermore, the corporate reputation of a sponsor was found to have a significant impact on the decision of the majority of participants to support their products/services. These findings have significant implications for sports sponsorship management as they can inform the development of effective sponsorship strategies that align with the preferences and attitudes of fans.

The third and final objective examined the role of athlete-generated content in enhancing the fan experience. The results indicated that athlete-generated content could enhance the fan experience by providing an authentic and personal perspective of the athlete's life, interests, and personality. Furthermore, the findings highlighted the importance of social media platforms to disseminate athlete-generated content and enhance fan engagement. These findings have important implications for sports organizations and athletes, as they can inform the development of effective content strategies that align with the preferences and attitudes of fans.

In conclusion, this research has contributed significantly to the existing literature on sports marketing and management by providing new insights into the preferences and attitudes of football fans towards social media engagement with their favourite teams and the impact of sponsorship and corporate reputation on fan engagement and purchasing decisions. The study's findings also emphasized the role of athlete-generated content in enhancing the fan experience. The implications for future research, practice, and policy underscored the importance of considering the preferences and attitudes of fans in developing effective sports marketing and management strategies. Future research should focus on exploring the potential of new data sources and technologies, such as artificial intelligence and machine learning, to provide more comprehensive insights into fan behaviour and preferences. Future research could aim to conduct cross-cultural studies to examine the potential cultural differences in the relationships between the variables studied here. The current study was limited by a relatively

homogenous sample in terms of demographics. Future research could aim to recruit a more diverse sample to increase the generalizability of the findings. Overall, this research was worth conducting as it provided valuable insights into the evolving landscape of sports marketing and management and had practical implications for sports organizations, sponsors, athletes, and fans.

## Bibliography

- Abosang, I., Lee, J. & Moutinho, L., 2005. An exploratory study of sponsorship-linked marketing; A nenographic approach. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, 8(3), pp. 299-311.
- Ahn, T., Ryu, S. & Han I, 2014. The impact of social media on consumer behavior: Implications for marketers. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 30(10), pp. 1029-1046.
- Babić Rosario, A. & Tkalac, V. A., 2017. Exploring social media marketing in sports: An analysis of NFL teams' Twitter use. *Journal of sports media*, 12(2), pp. 1-28.
- Babbie, E. R., 2016. *The practice of social research..* s.l.:Cengage Learning.
- Badrinath, V., Sonwalker, S. & Sankar, V., 2018. Emerging markets, football, and sponsorship: A systematic review. *Journal of Business Research*, Volume 91, pp. 380-387.
- Baker, T., McDonald, H. & McHugh, P., 2018. ). How do football clubs engage with fans on social media? An analysis of Scottish Premiership clubs.. *Journal of Global Sport Management*, 3(2), pp. 114-129.
- Balduck, A. L., Buelens, M. & Sadowski, B., 2016. Using SEO and SEA to optimize a football club's online presence. *Journal of Business Research*, 69(11), pp. 4891-4898.
- Baur, D. G. & Wicker, P., 2014. The economic impact of professional sports franchises, events, and facilities. *Journal of Sports Economics*, 15(6), pp. 593-593.
- Berger, J. & Milkman, K. L., 2012. What makes online content viral? *Journal of Marketing Research*, 49(2), pp. 192-205.
- Bigne-Alcaniz, E., Curras-Perez, R. & Ruiz-Mafe, C., 2017. Enhancing the football fan experience through mobile devices: An empirical analysis of influential factors.. *Journal of Business Research*, Volume 74, pp. 38-43.
- Biscaia, R., Rosado, A. & Maroco, J., 2018. Sponsorship of football clubs: An exploratory study of sponsors' objectives. *Journal of Applied Marketing Analytics*, 4(1), pp. 54-70.
- Borja Garcia, V. & Welford, J., 2016. Football clubs and social media: Balancing corporate and fan interests. *Soccer & Society*, 17(6), pp. 825-840.
- Boyle, R. & Ali, F., 2016. An exploration of sponsorship effects within football stadia. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 16(3), pp. 319-338.
- Boyle, R. & Haynes, R., 2019. The emerging role of esports in sports marketing. *Journal of Sponsorship*, 12(1), pp. 59-70.
- Brouwer, J., Gerritsen, M. A. & Kuper, G. H., 2020. Data Analytics in Football: A Case Study on Player Market Value. *Journal of Sports Economics*, 21(1), pp. 92-116.
- Brown, A. J., 2015. Social media and fan engagement in professional sports: The effect of social media content on fan engagement in the National Basketball Association. *International Journal of Sport Communication*, 8(4), pp. 437-455.
- Bughin, J., Hazan, E. & Ramaswamy, S., 2017. The rise of the data-driven marketer: Achieving high performance and mitigating risk. *McKinsey & Company*.

Bühler, A. & Nufer, G., 2016. Sponsorship in Football:: A conceptual and empirical analysis. *Sport, Business and Management: An International Journal*, 6(3), pp. 295-314.

Bühler, A., Nüfer, G. & Wyss, R., 2019. Understanding the Effectiveness of Sponsorship: An Empirical Analysis. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 59(3), pp. 289-299.

Cullen, P., 2019. The Potential of Virtual Reality in Sports Marketing. *Journal of Brand Strategy*, 8(4), pp. 346-352.

Chadwick, S. & Arthur, D., 2018. Football sponsorship and social responsibility: A study of English professional football clubs. *Journal of Global Responsibility*, 9(1), pp. 6-22.

Chadwick, S. & Thwaites, D., 2017. *The business of football: An overview of the commercial operations of clubs and leagues*. Handbook of Football Business and Management: Routledge.

Chen, K. Y. & Wu, T. Y., 2015. The impact of landing page quality on conversion rates in search engine marketing. *Journal of Electronic Commerce Research*, 16(2), pp. 97-110.

Chiu, W., Lee, Y. H. & Huang, H. C., 2004. The impact of sponsorship on consumer brand loyalty: A study of sportswear brand. *Journal of Product and Brand Management*, 13(4), pp. 250-261.

Clavio, G. & Walsh, P., 2018. Sports social media sponsorship: An exploratory analysis of English football clubs. *International Journal of Sport Communication*, 11(1), pp. 36-54.

Cleophas, C. & Smit, A., 2012. Sponsorship effectiveness: an exploratory investigation. *African Journal for Physical Activity and Health Sciences*, 18(1), pp. 83-94.

Cornwell, T. B. & Maignan, I., 1998. An international review of sponsorship research. *Journal of Advertising*, 27(1), pp. 1-21.

Cornwell, T. B., Weeks, C. S. & Roy, D. P., 2005. Sponsorship-linked marketing: Opening the black box. *Journal of Advertising*, 34(2), pp. 21-42.

Crompton, J. L. & Cornwell, T. B., 2004. An empirical investigation of the relationship between service quality, satisfaction and behavioral intentions among visitors to a sports stadia. *Journal of Sport Management*, 18(1), pp. 56-72.

Cullen, R., 2019. Augmented Reality and Virtual Reality in Sports: Bringing Fans Closer to the Game. *Journal of Sport Management*, 33(1), pp. 1-6.

Cuskelly, G. & Hoye, R., 2018. *Sport sponsorship: Principles and practices*. s.l.: Routledge.

Cuskelly, G., Auld, C. & Smart, D., 2013. The impact of social media on the effectiveness of sports sponsorship. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 22(2), pp. 74-81.

Data Protection Commission, 2018. *Data Protection Act 2018*. [Online]  
Available at: <https://www.dataprotection.ie/sites/default/files/uploads/2019-03/Data-Protection-Act-2018.pdf>  
[Accessed 06 04 2023].

De Bruijn, G. & Koster, R., 2019. Revenue optimization at professional football clubs: A data-driven approach. *Journal of Revenue and Pricing Management*, 18(4), pp. 308-316.

Deloitte, 2020. *Annual Review of Football Finance*. [Online]  
Available at: <https://www2.deloitte.com/uk/en/pages/sports-business-group/articles/annual-review-of->

[football-finance.html](#)  
[Accessed 06 04 2023].

Desbordes, M., 2018. *Sports marketing: Theoretical and practical perspectives*. s.l.:Routledge.

Desbordes, M. & Richelieu, A., 2013. The sponsorship–performance relationship: A review and reassessment. *Journal of Management & Organization*, 19(3), pp. 250-272.

Digiday, 2018. *Manchester United is using paid search ads to drive e-commerce sales*. [Online] Available at: <https://digiday.com/marketing/manchester-united-using-paid-search-ads-drive-e-commerce-sales/>  
[Accessed 06 04 2023].

Dobele, A. R., Steel, M. & Flowerday, S., 2014. Understanding the participatory experience of sport fans: Implications for sport marketing. *Journal of Business Research*, 67(11), pp. 2282-2289.

Dobson, S., 2019. Tottenham Hotspur: A case study in sports sponsorship analytics. *Journal of Sport and Tourism*, 24(1-2), pp. 109-119.

Dobson, S. & Goddard, J., 2001. *The Economics of Football*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Du, Y., Wang, D. & Fang, Y., 2019. Understanding football fans' engagement with mobile apps: An empirical study of Chinese football fans. *Telematics and Informatics*, Volume 41, pp. 55-65.

Duffy, S., 2020. Data analytics in sports: How professional football clubs are using data to enhance performance. *International Journal of Sports Science*, 19(1), pp. 14-28.

Erdogan, B. X., 1999. Celebrity endorsement: A literature review. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 15(4), pp. 291-314.

FC Barcelona, 2023. *FCB App*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.fcbarcelona.com/en/club/mobile-app>  
[Accessed 06 04 2023].

Ferreira, J. J., 2018. A comparative analysis of sports digital marketing strategies: what works and what doesn't? *Journal of Marketing and Management*, 9(2), pp. 1-17.

Filo, K., Lock, D., Karg, A. & Skinner, J., 2019. Sport sponsorship and digital marketing in the age of social media. *Journal of Sport Management*, 22(5), pp. 585-601.

Filo, K., Lock, D. & Karg, A., 2015. Sport sponsorship, social media and brand equity. *European Journal of Marketing*, 49(7), pp. 1026-1048.

Fillis, I. & Wagner, B., 2019. Email marketing in football: The effect of personalisation on engagement and revenue. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 19(3), pp. 371-389.

Fuchs, M. & Schreier, M., 2011. Customer empowerment in new product development. *Journal of Product Innovation Management*, 28(1), pp. 17-32.

Funk, D. C. & James, J. D., 2001. The psychological continuum model: A conceptual framework for understanding an individual's psychological connection to sport. *Sport Management Review*, 4(2), pp. 119-150.



- Fuentes, C. & Vasquez, C., 2018. The impact of social media on the sports industry. *International Journal of Innovation, Management and Technology*, 9(2), pp. 70-74.
- Galily, Y. & Sharma, S., 2017. Sports sponsorship and its impact on the sponsors' brand equity. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 23(6), pp. 560-579.
- Gallagher, P., 2015. Ethical considerations for social media research in sport. *International Journal of Sport Communication*, 8(3), pp. 309-315.
- Gammelsæter, H. & Senaux, B., 2018. Women's football, social media, and the FIFA Women's World Cup 2015. *Soccer & Society*, 19(6), pp. 790-804.
- Garcia-de-Frutos, N., Rodriguez-Sanchez, A. M. & Villarejo-Ramos, A. F., 2020. The role of data analytics in football clubs: A case study.. *International Journal of Information Management*.
- Garg, P., Gupta, A. & Saini, S., 2020. Factors affecting sports sponsorship effectiveness: An empirical investigation in Indian Premier League. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 26(4), pp. 395-413.
- Girginov, V. & Hills, S., 2012. The strategic use of naming rights in sport: A framework for understanding the key determinants of success. *Journal of Sponsorship*, 5(2), pp. 135-145.
- Gladden, J. M. & Milne, G. R., 2019. Exploring the Use of Social Media Influencers in Sports Marketing. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 59(2), pp. 231-242.
- Glickman, M. E., Winfree Jr, J. A. & Zardkoohi, A., 2015. The financial performance of Scottish Premier League football clubs: Effects of managerial quality, fan loyalty, and shirt sponsorship. *International Journal of Sport Finance*, 10(4), pp. 331-346.
- Gómez-Díaz, R. & Martínez-Ruiz, M. P., 2016. The role of involvement and fan identification in the perception and processing of sport sponsorship messages. *European Journal of Marketing*, 50(9), pp. 1577-1598.
- Gonzalez-Diaz, C., Gonzales-Diaz, J. & Garcia Unanue, J., 2019. Global sponsorship in professional football: determinants and effects on team performance. *Soccer & Society*, 20(7), pp. 944-958.
- Gonçalves, H. M. & Brás, P., 2017. Search engine marketing in professional football clubs: The case of the top European leagues. *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education*, Volume 20, pp. 68-79.
- Gorse, C., Chadwick, S. & Falshaw, R., 2019. Blockchain and football: A game-changer for the beautiful game? *Soccer & Society*, 20(5), pp. 647-661.
- Grewal, D., Levy, M. & Kumar, V., 2009. Customer experience management in retailing: an organizing framework. *Journal of Retailing*, 85(1), pp. 1-14.
- Grohs, R., Reisinger, H. & Koller, M., 2016. Consumer-brand relationship quality: when and how it helps brand extensions. *Journal of Business Research*, 69(11), pp. 4910-4917.
- Groza, M. D. & Pronschinske, M. R., 2011. Perceived sponsorship congruity and athlete endorser credibility. *Journal of Global Marketing*, 24(3), pp. 213-224.
- Gwinner, K. P., 1997. A model of image creation and transfer in event sponsorship. *International Marketing Review*, 14(3), pp. 145-158.

- Hamari, J., Sjöblom, M. & Ukkonen, A., 2017. The Sharing Economy in the Context of Esports: A Case Study of Fandom. *International Journal of Gaming and Computer-Mediated Simulations*, 9(1), pp. 1-17.
- Hamil, S., Holt, R. & Michie, J., 2016. Exploring the relationship between sports sponsorship and purchase intention: The case of Guinness's involvement in rugby union. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 16(5), pp. 525-542.
- Hammersley, M., 2013. *Ethical issues in social research*. s.l.:Routledge.
- Hanlon, P. & Williams, J., 2017. Digital marketing in football: Manchester United as a case study. *Journal of Sport Management and Marketing*, 17(3), pp. 298-312.
- Harris, C. & Rae, A., 2018. Digital marketing for professional football clubs: An evaluation of best practice. *Soccer & Society*, 19(6), pp. 882-895.
- Haverman, J. D., Sander, P., Kleinsmann, M. & Van der Voort, M. C., 2019. Targeting football fans with Facebook: An empirical study. *Journal of Business Research*, Volume 102, pp. 11-22.
- Hsu, C. L. & Lu, H. P., 2007. Consumer behavior in online game communities: A motivational factor perspective. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 23(3), pp. 1642-1659.
- Hull, R. B., Alexander, M. W. & O'Donnel, J., 2019. Boosting Customer Engagement with Personalized Email Communications. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Technology*, 10(2), pp. 223-240.
- Hwang, H. J. & Kim, Y. K., 2020. The effects of social media marketing activities on brand equity and customer response in the airline industry: Focused on the mediating role of customer trust. *Journal of Travel & Tourism Marketing*, 37(1), pp. 1-17.
- Irish Research Council, 2018. *National guidelines for ethical research in the social sciences, humanities, and STEM sciences*. [Online]  
Available at: <https://www.researchethics.ie/national-guidelines>  
[Accessed 04 06 2023].
- Jansen, J. & Van der Meer, D., 2018. Social media and fan engagement in professional football: The influence of social media on fan engagement levels and club-community relationships. *Soccer & Society*, 19(6), pp. 874-890.
- Jones, S. A., 2018. Fan engagement in English Premier League football clubs: A case study of Tottenham Hotspur FC. *International Journal of Sport Communication*, 11(3), pp. 317-333.
- Krejcie, R. V. & Morgan, D. W., 1970. Determining sample size for research activities. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 30(3), pp. 607-610.
- Kabadayi, S. & Prince, L. L., 2014. Consumer-Generated Advertising: A Review and Synthesis. *Journal of Advertising*, 43(4), pp. 341-356.
- Kang, J., Lim, C. H. & Lee, S. Y., 2021. ). Athlete Endorsements in Social Media: Effects of Self-Disclosure and Parasocial Interaction on Followers' Brand Loyalty. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 21(1), pp. 19-31.
- Kang, J., Sung, Y. & Lee, S., 2017. Social media marketing in the sport industry: A review. *Sport Management Review*, 20(2), pp. 1-10.
- Katz, E., 2018. Artificial intelligence in sports: a look into the future. *IEEE Pulse*, 9(2), pp. 17-20.

- Kazeminia, A., Mahamad, O. & Ramayah, T., 2015. The impact of sport sponsorship on brand equity: The case of football clubs in Iran. *International Journal of Business and Society*, 16(2), pp. 246-263.
- Kesenne, S., 2012. The economics of sports sponsorship. *Journal of Sponsorship*, 6(1), pp. 70-79.
- Kim, A. J. & Ko, E., 2012. Do social media marketing activities enhance customer equity? An empirical study of luxury fashion brand. *Journal of Business Research*, 65(10), pp. 1480-1486.
- Kim, D. Y. & Ko, Y. J., 2021. Understanding social media influencers' endorsement of sports brands: The effects of parasocial interaction, identification, and source credibility.. *Journal of Sports Management*, 35(2), pp. 104-118.
- Kim, H. J., Lee, M. & Lee, J. H., 2019. Augmented reality in sports advertising: Effects on brand awareness and purchase intention. *Journal of Business Research*, Volume 98, pp. 378-385.
- Kim, J. & Kim, J., 2020. How Social Media Marketing Builds Brand Equity in Professional Soccer Clubs. *Journal of Promotion Management*, 26(3), pp. 357-378.
- Kim, Y. K., Trail, G. T. & Ko, Y. J., 2018. Social media and sport consumer behavior. *Journal of Sport Management*, 32(6), pp. 601-606.
- Kwon, H., Lee, M., Kim, D. & Chun, J., 2019. Effects of Sports Sponsorship on Brand Image, Fan Engagement, and Purchase Intention: Focused on a Premier League Football Club. *Journal of Sports Sponsorship*, 11(4), pp. 38-41.
- Kip, V. & Rodrigues, P., 2018. Football Sponsorship, Reputation, and Consumer Behaviour: A Study of Fans in Poland and Turkey. *International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship*.
- Kipnis, E., Brody, R. P., Fink, C. & Yuan, Y., 2020. How social media engagement leads to National Basketball Association (NBA) merchandise sales. *Journal of Global Marketing*, 33(3), pp. 149-162.
- Ko, Y. J., 2019. The impact of artificial intelligence on sport marketing. *Sport Marketing Quarterly*, 28(1), pp. 6-17.
- Kreutzer, M., de Carvalho, M. M. & Da Silva, W. A., 2020. The use of blockchain technology in sports sponsorship: A conceptual framework. *Journal of Business Research*, Volume 114, pp. 49-59.
- Kunkel, T. & Doyle, J. P., 2018. Sports social media: Marketing considerations for communicating with consumers. *Journal of Business Research*, Volume 85, pp. 325-333.
- Kunkel, T. & Funk, D. C., 2018. Effects of athlete endorsement on consumer purchase intentions: The role of credibility, attractiveness, and the concept of congruence. *Journal of Sport Management*, 32(2), pp. 140-155.
- Kuo, P. J. & Wu, C. C., 2017. Personalized email marketing and consumer purchase behavior: The mediating role of perceived value. *Internet Marketing Research Journal*, 27(2), pp. 322-337.
- Lee, H., Lee, Y. & Kim, Y., 2020. Athlete-generated content on social media: Impact on brand engagement.. *International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship*, 21(3), pp. 322-342.
- Lee, J. W. & Kwak, D. H., 2013. A study on the effect of football sponsorship on brand recognition and image: The case of the Korea professional football league. *Journal of Global Scholars of Marketing Science*, 23(4), pp. 439-452.

- Lee, K. H., Ko, Y. J. & Sagas, M., 2016. A cross-cultural comparison of the effects of sports sponsorship on consumers' attitudes and behavioural intentions. *International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship*, 17(3), pp. 259-274.
- Lee, S., Lee, S. & Koo, D. M., 2015. The effects of personalized e-mail messages on e-mail advertising. *Journal of Interactive Advertising*, 15(2), pp. 78-87.
- Lehmann, M., Li, Y. & Brouwer, J., 2020. Wearable technology and sports sponsorship: Implications for fan identification, engagement, and sponsor attitude. *International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship*, 21(2), pp. 156-170.
- Leppäniemi, M. & Karjaluoto, H., 2017. Search engine marketing in the football industry: A case study on the English Premier League. *Journal of Digital Marketing*, 1(2), pp. 141-153.
- Li, X., Huang, L., Yang, Y. & Li, Y., 2020. How does social media influencer marketing work? The role of self-congruity and perceived endorsement value. *International Journal of Advertising*, 39(5), pp. 717-738.
- Lim, K., 2013. The challenges of sponsoring football in Asia. *Journal of Sponsorship*, 6(1), pp. 22-30.
- Liu, D., Shen, Y. & Cheng, L., 2021. Investigating the factors affecting the success of sports sponsorship in Chinese football: Evidence from a survey study. *Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship*, 22(1), pp. 56-68.
- Liu, X. & Li, L., 2019. How to increase global sponsorship value? A case study of Real Madrid C.F.. *Sport, Business and Management: An International Journal*, 9(1), pp. 31-44.
- Liu, Y. & Tang, Y., 2019. Improving the Effectiveness of Sports Marketing in the Digital Era: Evidence from Chinese Football. *Journal of Business Research*, Volume 98, pp. 410-418.
- Liu, Y. & Yang, Y., 2019. Data Analytics in Football: A Study of Player Performance. *IEEE Access*, Volume 7, p. doi: 10.1109/ACCESS.2019.29333399.
- Lu, L., James, J. D. & Abosag, I., 2018. The effect of sports sponsorship on consumers' brand loyalty: The moderating role of sponsorship motives. *Journal of Business Research*, Volume 88, pp. 409-416.
- Maher, A. & Richards, D., 2019. Social media and football: A review of the literature. *International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship*, 20(2), pp. 268-284.
- Magrath, R. & Collis, J., 2019. The Financial Performance of English Premier League Football Clubs: An Empirical Analysis of Changes over Time. *Journal of Sports Economics*, 20(1), pp. 64-82.
- Manchester United, 2023. *Manchester United App*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.manutd.com/en/app?> [Accessed 06 04 2023].
- Merriam, S. B. & Tisdell, E. J., 2015. *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation..* s.l.:John Wiley & Sons.
- McDonald, B., 2011. Ethics in qualitative research. *Encyclopedia of case study research*, pp. 311-314.
- Mishra, S. & Khuntia, J., 2019. Examining the impact of corporate social responsibility on corporate reputation, brand equity, and purchase intention: An empirical study of Indian Premier League cricket teams. *Journal of Business Research*, Volume 95, pp. 347-356.

Muharrar, F. & Alhaddad, H., 2020. Building a brand using social media: A case study of football clubs on Instagram. *Journal of Research in Interactive Marketing*, 14(3), pp. 313-327.

Müller, S. & Sørensen, S. E., 2010. Corporate social responsibility communication in football: The impact on fans' perceptions. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 91(2), pp. 157-173.

Muntinga, D. G., Moorman, M. & Smit, E. G., 2011. Introducing COBRAs: Exploring motivations for brand-related social media use. *International Journal of Advertising*, 30(1), pp. 13-46.

Neuman, W. L., 2014. *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. s.l.:Pearson.

Beech, J. & Chadwick, S., 2007. The marketing of football. In: *Handbook of Sports and Media*. s.l.:Routledge, pp. 275-290.

Olubusola, J., 2021. The impact of social media on fan engagement in the Nigerian professional football league. *International Journal of Marketing and Communication Studies*, 6(1), pp. 30-43.

Park, J. & Kim, Y. K., 2018. Corporate social responsibility and sponsor–team congruence in sport sponsorship: Effects on sponsor credibility, consumer attitudes, and purchase intention. *Journal of Business Research*, Volume 89, pp. 299-307.

Phua, J., Jin, S. V. & Kim, J. W., 2017. Gratifications of using Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or Snapchat to follow brands: The moderating effect of social comparison, trust, tie strength, and network homophily on brand identification, brand engagement, brand trust, and brand loyalty. *Journal of advertising*, 46(4), pp. 447-455.

Pope, N. K. & Peeters, T., 2017. Measuring Sponsorship Effectiveness in Professional Football. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 57(3), pp. 253-267.

Popp, B. & Woratschek, H., 2017. Global versus local sponsorship in professional team sport: The case of German soccer clubs. *Sport Management Review*, 20(5), pp. 473-485.

PwC, 2020. PwC. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/industries/hospitality-leisure/sports/publications/>  
[Accessed 04 2023].

Ramadani, L. J., Aliu, F. & Kurtishi-Kastrati, S., 2019. The role of mobile applications in football clubs' marketing communication. *Sport in Society*, 22(9), pp. 1559-1573

Real Madrid FC, 2023. *Real Madrid Football Club App*. [Online]

Available at: <https://www.realmadrid.com/en/fans/mobile-apps>  
[Accessed 06 04 2023].

Reinartz, W., Hennig-Thurau, T. & Pauwels, K., 2020. *Data-driven social media marketing in football*. [Online]

Available at: [Journal of Product Innovation Management](#)  
[Accessed 677-694 5 37].

Rowley, J., Johnson, F. & Scaffi, L., 2016. Gender as an influencer of online consumer behaviour. *Journal of Marketing Analytics*, 4(1), pp. 1-8.

Samaras, R. & Vuuren, J. v., 2019. Developing a sports Internet of Things (IoT) ecosystem: Lessons from the fan experience. *Electronic Commerce Research and Applications*, Volume 36.

Sanderson, J., Kuppelwieser, V. G. & Popp, B., 2019. Athlete-generated content and fan engagement on social media. *Journal of Business Research*, 100(237-247).

SEM Rush, 2021. *Liverpool FC case study: How retargeting ads drove \$1 million in sales*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.semrush.com/case-studies/liverpool-fc/> [Accessed 06 04 2023].

Shih, H. P., 2018. The role of social media in enhancing fan involvement. *Handbook of Research on Managing and Influencing Consumer Behaviour*, pp. 171-189.

Sillence, E., Briggs, P., Harris, P. R. & Fishwick, L., 2018. How do football fans feel? Exploring the role of mobile apps in supporting the emotional connection between fans and their team. *Psychology & Marketing*, 35(9), pp. 684-693.

Spil, T. A., Kitchin, P. & Donnelly, F., 2018. Sport sponsorship activation: Effects on brand image.. *International Journal of Sports Marketing and Sponsorship*, 19(1), pp. 4-19.

Sports Geek, 2019. *Digital marketing in sports- SEM and PPC for sports teams*. [Online] Available at: [Sports Geek. \(2019\). Digital marketing in sports – SEM and PPC for sports teams. Retrieved from https://sportsgeekhq.com/digital-marketing-in-sports-sem-and-ppc-for-sports-teams/](https://sportsgeekhq.com/digital-marketing-in-sports-sem-and-ppc-for-sports-teams/) [Accessed 06 04 2023].

Stotlar, D. K. & Rotich, C., 2017. Stadium naming rights: An examination of valuation techniques and the financial impact on professional sport teams. *International Journal of Sport Finance*, 12(2), pp. 167-180.  
Tapp, A., Clowes, J. & Hill, A., 2016. Sports sponsorship, fan engagement, and social media. *Journal of Sponsorship*, 9(2), pp. 173-186.

Vatamanescu, E. M. & Dinu, A. M., 2018. The role of search engine marketing in the digital marketing mix. *Theoretical and Applied Economics*, 25(3), pp. 51-64.

Wan, X., Chen, J., Fang, Y. & Zhang, C., 2019. Influencer marketing: A systematic review and agenda for future research. *International Journal of Advertising*, 38(4), pp. 642-661.

Wang, X., Yang, Z. & Lin, J., 2020. Athlete-generated content on social media: A research model and propositions. *Sport Management Review*, 23(5), pp. 766-778.

Westcott, M., 2019. *The mobile revolution: How football clubs are using apps to engage with fans*. *The Drum*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.thedrum.com/profile/news/282129/the-mobile-revolution-how-football-clubs-are-using-apps-engage-with-fans> [Accessed 06 04 2023].

Wilson, R. & Varan, D., 2019. *Advances in Advertising Research VIII: Challenges in an Age of Dis-Engagement*. Springer ed. s.l.:s.n.

Yoon, Y. S. & Lee, S., 2018. Sponsorship value of global sports events: Examining the effects of multi-nationality on value co-creation. *Journal of Business Research*, Volume 85, pp. 86-96.

Zhang, Z., Wu, Y. & Wang, D., 2020. Impact of social media marketing on fan engagement in the Chinese football industry. *Journal of Applied Sport Management*, 12(3), pp. 1-13.

Zheng, X., Zhang, W. & Li, J., 2016. The impact of social media on branding: A study of Chinese consumers. *SpringerPlus*, 5(1), pp. 1-11.

Appendix:

Appendix 1: The table compares responses from fans of different leagues.

	<b>EPL Followers</b>	<b>ISL Followers</b>	<b>Both EPL and ISL Followers</b>
Percentage of Participants	45.3%	34.0%	20.8%
Likelihood to Share Content			
Very Unlikely	3.3%	24.2%	10.5%
Unlikely	5.5%	27.3%	10.5%
Neutral	43.7%	43.9%	46.0%
Likely	24.2%	4.5%	31.6%
Highly Likely	23.3%	0.0%	1.4%
Quality of Content			
Very Good	8.6%	7.0%	8.8%
Good	50.4%	50.0%	41.2%
Average	40.9%	42.3%	47.1%
Importance of Social Media Presence			
Very Important	65.8%	71.2%	55.3%
Important	26.5%	22.8%	37.7%
Primary Social Media Platform			
Instagram and Twitter	27	10	37
Instagram and YouTube	7	9	16
Instagram and Facebook	2	5	7
Other	5	0	5
Frequency of Engaging with Content			
Multiple times a day	74.5%	55.8%	82.5%
Once a day	13.7%	20.2%	10.5%
Few times a week	5.5%	11.6%	3.5%
Once a week	1.6%	6.5%	0.0%
Never	4.7%	6.0%	3.5%
Likelihood to Unfollow Sponsor-Related Content			
Highly Unlikely	18.8%	20.9%	22.8%
Unlikely	48.6%	44.2%	45.6%
Neutral	9.9%	12.8%	8.8%
Likely	14.4%	19.4%	12.3%
Highly Likely	8.3%	2.7%	10.5%
Feelings about New Sponsor			
Very Excited	11.5%	14.0%	6

## **Appendix 2:** Survey questions in the questionnaire sent to the club management

Here is the link to the Google form: <https://forms.gle/NdLAK7dBixoCaNch8>

- What is your role in the football club?
- Where do you currently work? (United Kingdom and ROI/ India/ Social Media Engagement with Football Teams)
- Your football club falls in which league? (Indian Super League/ English Premier League)
- Which social media platforms does the football club use to engage with its fans? (Facebook/Twitter/Instagram/TikTok/YouTube/Other)
- How often does the football club post content on its social media platforms? (Multiple times per day/Daily/A few times per week/Once per week/Less than once per week)
- How does the football club measure the success of its social media engagement with fans? (Number of followers/Likes and reactions/Shares and retweets/Comments and interactions)
- How often does the football club analyze social media engagement metrics? (Daily/Weekly/Monthly/Quarterly/Annually)
- How does the football club determine which type of content to post on its social media platforms? (Market research and analysis/Fan feedback and suggestions/Industry trends and best practices)
- How does the football club ensure that its social media content is engaging and relevant to its fans? (Conducting surveys and polls/Analyzing engagement metrics/Collaborating with players and coaches/Other)
- How does the football club collaborate with players to create athlete-generated content for social media? (Providing guidelines and suggestions/Working with player agents and representatives/Allowing players creative freedom/Other)
- How important do you believe social media engagement is for the football club? (Not Important At All/1/2/3/4/5/Very Important)
- How satisfied is the football club with its current level of social media engagement with fans? (Very Unsatisfied/1/2/3/4/5/Very Satisfied)
- How important do you think sponsor recognition is to your fans? (Not At All Important to Extremely Important)
- How important do you think corporate reputation is to your fans? (Not At All Important to Extremely Important)
- What methods do you currently use to increase sponsor recognition and corporate reputation among your fans? (Social media campaigns/Traditional advertising (e.g., TV, billboards, print)/Sponsorship of events or organizations/Other)
- How do you measure the effectiveness of your sponsor recognition and corporate reputation strategies? (Social media metrics (e.g., likes, shares, comments)/Sponsorship recall surveys/Sales figures/Other)
- How do you plan to increase sponsor recognition among fans? (Increase the frequency of sponsor-related posts/ Improve the quality of sponsor-related posts/ Partner with sponsors to create engaging content/Other)
- How do you plan to improve corporate reputation among fans? (Enhance community engagement initiatives/ Communicate social responsibility efforts to fans/ Create a more positive public image through media and PR campaigns/ and Other)



- How confident are you in your ability to improve sponsor recognition and corporate reputation among your fans? (Not Confident At All to Extremely Confident)
- What are the methods used to measure fans' propensity to make future purchases? (Sales data/ Surveys and feedback from fans/ Social media engagement/Other)
- What are the plans to increase fans' propensity to make future purchases? (Offer exclusive discounts and promotions to fans/ Improve fan experience at matches and events/ Create engaging content that promotes the club's merchandise and products/ Other)
- Importance of athlete-generated content in engaging fans: (Not At All Important to Very Important)
- Frequency of posting athlete-generated content on social media platforms: (Daily/ Several times a week/ Once a week/ A few times a month/ Rarely)
- Types of athlete-generated content that resonate the most with fans: (Training footage/ Behind-the-scenes videos/ Personal life updates/ Collaborations with other athletes/celebrities/Game-day highlights/ Q&A sessions/ Interviews/ Sponsorship posts)
- How does athlete-generated content impact the fan experience? (Select all that apply): (Increases fan engagement with the club/ Helps fans connect with athletes on a personal level/ Improves the overall fan experience/ Provides a better understanding of the athletes and their lives)
- How do you measure the impact of athlete-generated content on the fan experience? (Increase in fan engagement with social media platforms/ Increase in fan loyalty and brand advocacy/ Increase in merchandise sales)
- How does the club measure the effectiveness of athlete-generated content in engaging fans and improving the fan experience? (Social media analytics (e.g., likes, shares, comments)/ Surveys and feedback from fans)
- In what ways does the club leverage athlete-generated content for its benefit? (Select all that apply): (Increasing sponsor recognition/ Enhancing the club's corporate reputation/Promoting upcoming games and events/ Generating revenue through merchandise sales and partnerships.)
- How do you plan to incorporate athlete-generated content into your social media strategy in the future? (Increase the frequency of athlete-generated content/ Use athlete-generated content to drive specific campaigns or promotions/ Partner with athletes to create sponsored content.)
- How important do you think athlete-generated content will be in the future of sports marketing? (Not at all important to Very important)
- How do you ensure that athlete-generated content aligns with your club's brand and values? (Develop clear guidelines and approval processes for athlete-generated content/ Regularly review and monitor athlete-generated content to ensure alignment with brand values/ Provide training and support to athletes on content creation)
- How do you handle negative or controversial athlete-generated content on your club's social media platforms? (Remove the content/ Address the issue publicly and transparently/ Contact the athlete to discuss the issue and request removal)
- How important is athlete-generated content to the overall marketing strategy of your club? (Very important/ Somewhat important/ Not very important/ Not at all important/ I don't know)

### **Appendix 3:** The survey questions in the questionnaire sent to the fans

Here is the link to the Google form: <https://forms.gle/rj8hHhunhodQnbvdA>

- What is your gender: (Male/Female/Prefer not to say)
- What is your age? (18-35 Years/36-55 Years/56 and above Years)
- Where do you stay? (UK/India)
- What is your Occupation: (Student/Employed/Self-employed/Retired/Other)
- Which Football league(s) do you follow? (Indian Super League/English Premier League/Both)
- How often do you engage with the social media content posted by your favourite football team? (e.g. like, share, retweet, repost, subscribe) (Multiple times a day/Once a day/ few times in a week/Once a week/Less than once a week/Never)
- Which social media platform do you engage with the most when it comes to your favourite football team? (Instagram/Twitter/Facebook/TikTok/YouTube/Other)
- How likely are you to share content posted by your favourite football team on social media platforms? (Very Unlikely (1) to Very Likely (5))
- How likely are you to like or react or comment to content posted by your favourite football team on social media platforms? (Very Unlikely (1) to Very Likely (5))
- How do you rate the quality of the content posted by your favourite football team on social media? Very Poor (1) to Excellent (5)
- What type of content do you find most engaging on social media posted by your favourite football team? (Match Highlights/BTS footage/Interviews with players/coaches/Fan Interactions/Player Spotlights/Other)
- How important is it for your favourite football team to have an active presence on social media? (Not At All Important (1) to Extremely Important (5))
- How likely are you to purchase merchandise from your favourite football team's online store after seeing it promoted on social media? (Very Unlikely (1) to Very Likely (5))
- How likely are you to attend a football match or event after seeing it promoted on social media by your favourite football team? (Very Unlikely (1) to Very Likely (5))
- How frequently are you able to identify the sponsors of your preferred football team?(Never, 1-5 (Very Frequently))
- How would you rate your favourite football team's corporate reputation? (Perception of the company/company's reputation). (Very Poor, 1-5 (Excellent))
- How likely are you to purchase a product from a sponsor of your favourite football team in the future? (Very Unlikely, 1-5 (Very Likely))
- How likely are you to unfollow your favourite football team's social media accounts if they predominantly prioritize sponsor-related content over sports-related content? (Very Unlikely, 1-5 (Highly Likely))
- How do you feel when your favourite football team has a new sponsor? (Not At All Excited, 1-5 (Extremely Excited))
- How much do you think the corporate reputation of a sponsor affects your decision to support their products/services? (A lot, 1-5 (Not at all))
- How likely are you to switch to a competitor's product/service if your favourite football team's sponsor has a negative reputation? (Very Unlikely, 1-5 (Very Likely))
- Which of the following factors influence your decision to purchase products/services from the sponsors of your favourite football team? (Discount/offers, Quality/ Brand reputation/ Personal connection/ Other)
- Do you follow your favourite athlete(s) on social media? (Yes/No)
- How do you rate the quality of athlete-generated content on social media? (Very Poor (1) to Excellent (5))
- Which types of athlete-generated content do you prefer to consume? (Training and workout videos/Personal life updates/Game highlights/Interviews/Sponsorship posts)

- How likely are you to purchase a product from a brand that an athlete you follow on social media endorses? (Very Unlikely/1-5/Very Likely)
- How likely are you to switch brands if your favourite athlete endorses a brand you don't use? (Very Unlikely/1-5/Very Likely)
- How do you feel when an athlete you follow on social media engages with their fans through content like live streams or Q&A sessions? (Increases loyalty/No effect/Decreases loyalty/Don't follow athletes on social media)
- How likely are you to unfollow an athlete on social media if they consistently post content that is irrelevant or uninteresting to you? (Highly Unlikely/1-5/Very Likely)
- In your opinion, how important is athlete-generated content to the overall marketing strategy of a sports team or league? (Very important/Somewhat important/Not very important/Not at all important/I don't know)