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The Impact of Social Media Marketing on Football – Fan Loyalty

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Abstract

This study aims to determine the practical social media marketing activities to grow the loyalty of football club fans in Indonesia. Furthermore, this study analyzes social media marketing activities and what characteristics in social media marketing activities that can significantly increase fan loyalty. The benefit of this research is to find an appropriate and effective model of social media marketing activity for a football club to maintain and even increase the loyalty of its fans to the club. This study uses a qualitative approach, where the data obtained from the questionnaire is then processed through multiple linear regression analysis, so it can be concluded that the influence of social media on the loyalty of football club fans. This study found that social media marketing activities consist of four characteristics: entertainment, engagement, trendiness, and customization have a positive influence on fan loyalty. In addition, it was also found that social media marketing activities with engagement characteristics were the activities with the most substantial positive influence on significantly increasing fan loyalty.

Introduction

Sports clubs today should compete with one another on a variety of levels. Marketing is one of the most well-liked competitive fields. Sports clubs must employ sophisticated and efficient communication techniques in this regard. They frequently use Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instagram to promote a positive image; this is done partly to educate their followers about the club's online presence. Today, one of the most common forms of communication is through websites. Supporters frequently visit social media sites and club websites.

Social media is becoming a regular sight that cannot be isolated from a football club's daily operations. The usage of digital media in marketing activities has grown significantly since the advent of social media, which symbolizes the growth of digital media. Professional

football clubs' management feels obligated to use every aspect of social media marketing for diverse goals.

Social media usage has evolved to increase fan and supporter involvement and their ability to track the team's progress continuously. Football clubs can make money in various ways thanks to social media's advantage in the frequency of quick and continuous news updates. Filo et al., (2009) explained that the availability of digital media greatly facilitates football clubs in selling match tickets to club merchandise without having to spend enormous costs on the distribution process.

Social media facilitates supporters' need to maintain a tight and passionate bond with their beloved team. Social media's constant minute-by-minute reporting fosters a unique atmosphere between supporters and the team. Supporters may also express their opinions and gratitude through the club's website and social media (Clavio et al., 2012). Through proper fan engagement and intense loyalty, social media presence can also create a separate commitment between fans and club management, all of which will lead to the club's financial benefits.

Instagram is one of the most widely used social media marketing platforms. The brand and image of the club are created and promoted by e-marketing experts using Instagram, and they also interact with the club's supporters. It is a photo/video social media platform that lets users take pictures, edit them using digital filters to give them a distinctive look, and share them on other social networking sites. The square shape of the photographs captured by this program is one of its distinguishing qualities. Applications have become one of the main channels for user contact due to their enormous popularity, which has increased their marketing value. In addition to allowing users to upload photographs, the application also permits users to record and upload short movies.

Both communication and sports are important. Sports have undergone significant change as a result of the economic influence of media, which has also affected how we view them. These changes have an impact on the narratives used in sport, business, and organizations with commercial goals (Wenner, 2013).

Social Media Marketing

Social network marketing is distinct from traditional marketing. Social network users can actively generate shared brand meaning with other users rather than being passive recipients of marketing messages (Geurin & Burch, 2017; Kozinets, et al., 2010). Sports brands spend much time and money online to increase customer relations and engagement. Researchers and professionals alike have focused increasingly on the function of social media in the football industry (McCarthy et al., 2014). The efficient managing of a loyal fan base is a crucial factor in a football te am's financial success. In contrast to other businesses, fan bases incorporate intricate community ties that go beyond the usual transaction-based consumer loyalty (McCarthy et al., 2014). It is critical to comprehend how people interact in these online spaces, given how widely social media is used by the football industry, including clubs, players, and their supporters.

The use of branding, or introducing the club to outsiders, is the most fundamental goal of using social media within the context of managing football clubs (Williams & Chinn,

2011). Williams stated in his scientific work that social media has developed into a highly effective tool for introducing club names in a larger area. This work alludes to the early application of digital media in football. Only through a string of words created on the internet can a football team that often represents a city or province become widely known by the public from other regions to international. The use of social media then spreads to more people as a result of this.

McCarthy et al. (2022) further state that fan research has shown the significance of fans using social media for (a) a sense of community and belonging; (b) information and entertainment related to the football team they support; (c) respect through their influence among the fan base; (d) based on trust, the expression and nurturing of their emotional connection and passion for the club they support; and, (e) positive and negative reactions to the club.

Within the social media context, Siguencia, et al., (2016) claims that Instagram allowed clubs to post a variety of things, including pictures and videos; training and athletic competitions; press conferences; significant events in the club's history (such as transfers, sponsors, presentations, etc.); promotional and charitable campaigns; and athletes' private lives. Additionally, the enormous popularity of applications has increased their marketing value, making them one of the main ways for users to communicate with one another. Additionally, there is an option for supporters to leave comments on club-posted images.

Withal, Instagram is a medium that relies heavily on images for communication (Graham, 2013), and it is rapidly gaining popularity among athletes and sports organizations worldwide (Clavio, 2020). Additionally, Instagram, a more prominent social media family member, can influence how supporters feel about their team and the money the team makes (Popp & Woratschek, 2016).

The value of utilizing social media comes from interactions or relationships with other users and material produced by a person, business, or organization. A social media marketing strategy is a set of integrated activities that a business uses to transform social media networks and interactions into practical strategic ways of achieving targeted marketing goals (Li. et al., 2020). Social media interaction with a single or small group of stakeholders as a crucial communication medium falls under the purview of social media marketing.

To underline that using social media as a marketing tool will appeal to different audiences than traditional marketing platforms like printed advertising, billboards, etc., Kim & Ko (2012) proposed the concept of social media marketing (SMMA). The benefits of using social media as a marketing technique include the first that customers will find the free marketing content provided by the company to be more entertaining and that this will result in social network engagement. The second customization option for people is direct bespoke search services offered by the company, hashtags, or the default search tool, social networking site. Third, social media is quick and real-time, enabling customers to learn about the latest developments and trends in the company's products or services. Fourth, a social media marketing strategy enables the creation of personal connections between users, which can result in word-of-mouth effects, or customers' propensity to share information on an enterprise's social media with others. Entertainment, engagement, trendiness, and customisation are the four constructs that SMMA uses.

Loyalty

Oliver (1999) argued the concept of loyalty as “a deeply held commitment to rebuy or patronize a preferred product or service consistently in the future, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behavior” has previously been widely evaluated in the marketing literature. Moreover, based on a meta-review of prior studies, Watson et al. (2015) claim that loyalty is "a set of beliefs paired with a sequence of buying behaviors that systematically favor one entity over rival entities." In addition, according to Tsiotsou (2013), studies of loyalty among sports fans are undertaken in two main streams. The first one focuses on external factors that influence a customer’s relationship with a team. The second one, concerns individual internal psychological factors.

According to Flavián et al. (2006), customer loyalty ensures a business's continued profitability. It projects financial benefits over the long term. A high level of contact and strong links to the company depends on loyal consumers (Hapsari et al., 2017). Attitude and behaviour loyalty can be measured separately for internal loyalty (Fournier, 1998). Behavioural loyalty relates to the link between a customer's different consumption forms and other brand behaviours. In contrast, attitude loyalty refers to the psychological commitment of a consumer to the product (Payne & Frow, 2013). The loyalty attitudes among supporters of sports teams indicate behavioural results in terms of the quantity and frequency of game attendance, watching the club's games on television, donning the club's colours and logo, and participating in debates about the team. Customer satisfaction and team identification are the two most crucial loyalty attitudes underlie loyalty actions (Kościółek, 2019).

Continually belonging to the same sports club for an extended time, expanding the size and breadth of membership, or recommending the club to others are all examples of loyalty in a sporting field. Additionally, behaviorally loyal consumers are less likely to transfer memberships even if a subscription is cheaper elsewhere since they are more inclined to complain about problems rather than changing service providers (Kościółek, 2019).

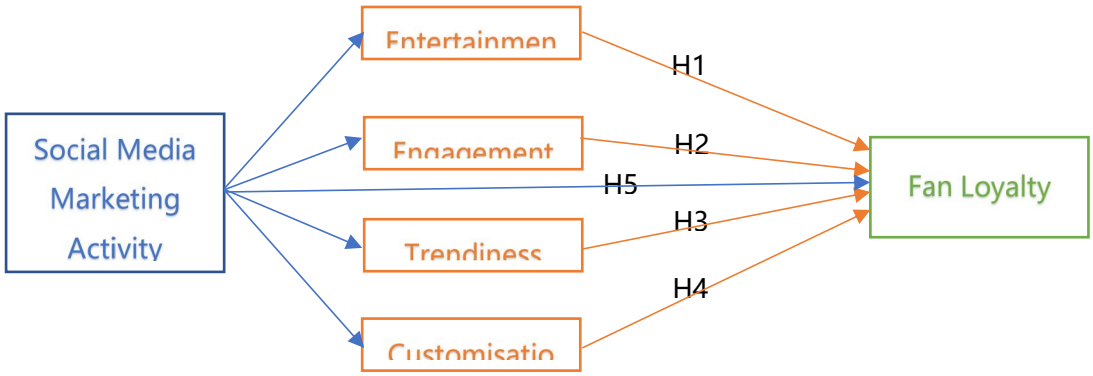
Schijns et al., (2016) argued that an emotional bond with the sports team (also known as "my club"), a sense of duty to remain a member, and the perception that there are not many other clubs to switch to are all components of attitude loyalty. Whereas members extend their membership, increase the number of services they buy from the club, and promote the club to friends and family are the behavioral results of loyalty among a sports club fan.

Research Method

In the last week of July 2022, a self-assessment online questionnaire survey was employed to collect sample data, the questionnaire was distributed through Google form. The participant in this study are Indonesian football fans who follows clubs in the domestic professional leagues via the club's official Instagram account. 76 completed surveys were gathered using non-probability sampling, and answers from only 50 eligible participants were included in this research. Respondents who indicated they supported amateur or non-domestic football clubs and those who does not follow their club’s official Instagram were not included in the research. The respondents were asked to indicate their age, sex, and favorite sports team and were to answer thirteen questions on a five-point Likert scale.

According to Kim & Ko (2012), this research examined whether the critical factors required to construct a social media marketing activity (entertainment, engagement, trendiness, and customization) have an impact on fan loyalty of football clubs both the attitude and behavior loyalty (Kościółek, 2019; Schijns et at., 2016).

Figure 1: Proposed conceptual model



Source: Author proposed model

The questions were prepared in Bahasa Indonesia. In order to minimize systematic technique biases, we asked straightforward and basic questions, with responses expressed on a Likert scale. SPSS 24 was used to do the data analysis. The author calculated the averages and standard deviations for responses to questions that used a Likert-type scale, when strongly agree question will be given score 5, gradually descend to the strongly disagree with sore 1.

The variables to be studied and analyzed are grouped into two types:

1) Independent Variable (X), namely the variable that affects or is the cause of the change or the emergence of the dependent variable (Sugiyono, 2012). The independent variables in this study are:
    - Variable X1: Entertainment
    - Variable X2: Engagement
    - Variable X3: Trendiness
    - Variable X4: Customisation
2) Dependent Variable (Y), namely the variable that is influenced or that becomes the result because of the independent variable. Included in the dependent variable in this study are:
    - Variable Y: Fan loyalty

The scale used in measuring the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable in this study is the Likert Scale. The Likert scale measures attitudes, opinions, and perceptions of a person or group of people about social phenomena. The Likert scale is a scale on an interval scale, and respondents are asked to make choices about their level of agreement according to their perceptions. For quantitative analysis, the answers can be scored, for example (Sugiyono, 2012):

1. Strongly agree - given a score of 5
2. Agree - given a score of 4
3. Fair - given a score of 3

4. Disagree - given a score of 2
5. Strongly disagree - given a score of 1

Based on the research objectives and literature review, this study proposed the following research hypotheses:

- Ho: Social media marketing activity does not affect fan loyalty
- H1: Entertainment as one of the forms of social media marketing activity positively impacted fan loyalty
- H2: Engagement as one of the forms of social media marketing activity positively impacted fan loyalty
- H3: Trendiness as one of the forms of social media marketing activity positively impacted fan loyalty
- H4: Customisation as one of the forms of social media marketing activity positively impacted fan loyalty
- H5: All social media marketing activities simultaneously positively impacted fan loyalty

Table 1: Measuring questions

Measurement Items	
Social Media Marketing Activity	
X1	I follow the club's Instagram account because the contents are entertaining.
X1	The content posted on the club's Instagram account is more attractive than content posted on the website.
X2	I often comment on the club's Instagram account.
X2	I often share the contents of the club's Instagram account on my social media.
X3	Pieces of information from the club's Instagram account are up to date.
X3	I usually found the latest information about the club on the club's Instagram account than on other sports portals.
X3	I often bought the club's merchandise through the club's Instagram account.
X4	I purchase club products (match tickets, club merchandise, etc.) through their Instagram account because I can customize products (choose a seat number at the stadium, choose a shirt size, make changes to the product to be purchased according to my wishes).
X4	I can find the information I'm looking for on the club's Instagram account.
	Fan Loyalty

Y	I attended (live) or watched (via tv or internet) club matches because of the information I got from the club's Instagram account.
Y	The contents shared on the club's Instagram account influenced me to buy the club's merchandise.
Y	I am willing to pass the information on the clubs' information, brand, and product/ services from social media to my friends or family.
Y	I believe that following the club's Instagram account convinced me to keep support only "my club" and not give my support to other clubs.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of sample

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	50	98%
Female	1	2%
Age		
16 - 25	6	12%
26 - 35	39	76%
36 - 45	5	10%
Above 45	1	2%
Favourite's Football Club		
Arema FC	4	8%
Bali United	7	13%
Borneo FC	2	4%
Persebaya	13	25%
Persib	9	18%
Persija	5	10%
Persik	1	2%
Persipura	3	6%
PS Barito Putera	2	4%
PSM Makassar	2	4%
PSMS Medan	1	2%
PSPS Riau	1	2%
Rans Nusantara	1	2%

This study uses a non-probability sampling technique. Each element selected as the sample is not based on the probability attached to each element but based on the special characteristics of each element (Sinulingga, 2015). This technique uses a purposive sampling approach where samples are taken based on criteria and considerations determined by the author himself.

The sample in this study must meet several criteria, namely:

1. Supporter of domestic / local football club
2. Following official Instagram account of their favourite club

Results

To measure the impact of social media marketing towards football – fan loyalty, t – student test was conducted to see how significance the impact of each social media marketing activity partially on football – fan loyalty. In addition, F test was also conducted to measure the impact of social media activity simultaneously on football – fan loyalty.

Table 3: Results of T test

Coefficients[a]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients B	Unstandardized Coefficients Std. Error	Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	2,995	2,362		1,268	0,211
	ENTERTAINMENT	0,365	0,319	0,143	1,147	0,257
	ENGGAGEMENT	0,362	0,170	0,265	2,129	0,039
	TRENDINESS	0,327	0,244	0,229	1,340	0,187
	CUSTOMISATION	0,455	0,254	0,274	1,787	0,081

a. Dependent Variable: FAN LOYALTY

Based on the table 3, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. Entertainment as one of the forms of social media marketing activity positively impacted fan loyalty (H1). Variable Entertainment (X1) has not a positive and significant effect on football – fan loyalty. This can be seen from the significance of the Entertainment (X1) 0.257 > 0.05.
   And the value of t table = t (a/2; n-k-1), t = (0.05/2; 51-4-1), t = (0.025; 56) = 2.00324. It means that if the value of the t count is lower than the t table (1.147 < 2.00247), then H1 is rejected. So that the hypothesis which reads entertainment as one of the forms of social media marketing activity positively impacted fan loyalty cannot be accepted.

2. Engagement as one of the forms of social media marketing activity positively impacted fan loyalty (H2). Variable Engagement (X2) has a positive and significant

effect on football – fan loyalty. This can be seen from the significance of the Engagement (X2) 0.039 < 0.05.
And the value of t table = t (a/2; n-k-1), t = (0.05/2; 51-4-1), t = (0.025; 56) = 2.00324. It means that if the value of the t count is lower than the t table (2.129 > 2.00247), then H2 is accepted. So that the hypothesis which reads engagement as one of the forms of social media marketing activity positively impacted fan loyalty can be accepted.

3. Trendiness as one of the forms of social media marketing activity positively impacted fan loyalty (H3). Variable Trendiness (X3) has not a positive and significant effect on football – fan loyalty. This can be seen from the significance of the Trendiness (X3) 0.187 > 0.05.
And the value of t table = t (a/2; n-k-1), t = (0.05/2; 51-4-1), t = (0.025; 56) = 2.00324. It means that if the value of the t count is lower than the t table (1.340 < 2.00247), then H3 is rejected. So that the hypothesis which reads trendiness as one of the forms of social media marketing activity positively impacted fan loyalty cannot be accepted.

4. Customisation as one of the forms of social media marketing activity positively impacted fan loyalty (H4). Variable Customisation (X4) has not a positive and significant effect on football – fan loyalty. This can be seen from the significance of the Customisation (X4) 0.081 > 0.05.
And the value of t table = t (a/2; n-k-1), t = (0.05/2; 51-4-1), t = (0.025; 56) = 2.00324. It means that if the value of the t count is lower than the t table (1.787 < 2.00247), then H4 is rejected. So that the hypothesis which reads customisation as one of the forms of social media marketing activity positively impacted fan loyalty cannot be accepted.

Table 4: Results of F test

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	347,446	4	86,861	14,760	.000[b]
	Residual	270,711	46	5,885		
	Total	618,157	50			

a. Dependent Variable: FAN LOYALTY
b. Predictors: (Constant), CUSTOMISATION, ENTERTAINMENT, ENGGAGEMENT, TRENDINESS

Based on the test results listed in the table above, it can be seen that the F-count is 14,760 while the F-table value is 2.57, so the value of F-count > F-table, moreover, with the significant level is 0.000 < 0.05, then Ho is rejected, and H5 is accepted. Therefore, it can be concluded that the Entertainment (X1), Engagement (X2), Trendiness (X3), and Customisation (X4) variables simultaneously significantly increasing Fan Loyalty (Y).

Conclusions

Through this research, a conclusion can be drawn that can be taken into consideration by a football club in developing digital marketing through social media, especially Instagram in

Indonesia. The characteristics of marketing activities through social media can be divided into four types: Entertainment, Engagement, Trendiness, and Customization. Among these four characteristics, all of them positively influence increasing fan loyalty of a football club. However, one characteristic that has the most substantial influence and can significantly build a sense of fan loyalty is engagement. Therefore, social media content that emphasizes more on engagement is needed to strengthen the loyalty of fans of a football club.

Content that prioritizes engagement on social media is generally in the form of content that emphasizes two-way interaction between the club and its fans. The interaction between the club and fans will foster a sense of belonging to the club, which will increase fan loyalty in the long term. In addition to engagement, clubs can also write content with entertainment, trendiness, and customization to increase fan loyalty, but with less frequency than material with engagement characteristics.

The combination of these four characteristics of social media marketing activity will significantly strengthen the bond between the club and its fans. Therefore, it can be concluded that the more vigorous social media marketing activities that emphasize the four characteristics above, the stronger the loyalty of the club's fans. These activities will reduce a person's tendency to move to support other clubs and impact increasing sales of club merchandise or match tickets.

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Appendix

Questions in English

1. I follow the club's Instagram account because the contents are entertaining.
2. The content posted on the club's Instagram account is more attractive than content posted on the website.
3. I often comment on the club's Instagram account.
4. I often share the contents of the club's Instagram account on my social media.
5. Pieces of information from the club's Instagram account are up to date.
6. I usually found the latest information about the club on the club's Instagram account than on other sports portals.
7. I often bought the club's merchandise through the club's Instagram account.
8. I purchase club products (match tickets, club merchandise, etc.) through their Instagram account because I can customize products (choose a seat number at the stadium, choose a shirt size, make changes to the product to be purchased according to my wishes)
9. I can find the information I'm looking for on the club's Instagram account.
10. I attended (live) or watched (via tv or internet) club matches because of the information I got from the club's Instagram account.
11. The contents shared on the club's Instagram account influenced me to buy the club's merchandise.
12. I am willing to pass the information on the clubs' information, brand, and product/ services from social media to my friends or family.
13. I believe that following the club's Instagram account convinced me to keep support only "my club" and not give my support to other clubs.