The Role of Marketing in the Development and Popularization of Football

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Annotation: *This article examines the significant role that marketing has played in the transformation of football from a regional sport to a global phenomenon. It delves into the key marketing strategies employed by clubs, leagues, and governing bodies to build brand identity, expand reach, promote player development, drive revenue, and foster positive social impact. The article concludes by highlighting the enduring influence of marketing on the sport's trajectory and its continued relevance in a rapidly evolving global landscape.*

Keywords: *Football, Marketing, Brand Identity, Fan Engagement, Global Reach, Player Development, Revenue Generation, Social Impact, Sports Industry.*

Introduction

Introduction Football, often called soccer in some parts of the world, has transcended its origins as a regional pastime to become a globally adored sport. This evolution can be attributed in no small part to the strategic application of marketing principles. From building brand identity and fostering fan loyalty to expanding global reach and driving revenue, marketing has played a pivotal role in shaping the modern football landscape. This article delves into the diverse ways in which marketing has propelled football's development and popularization, exploring its impact on the sport's economic, social, and cultural fabric.

In the dynamic world of sports, marketing in football plays an essential role in promoting and managing the brand image of both clubs and international tournaments. Through effective marketing strategies, organizations can increase their visibility, enhance their reputation, and deeply connect with fans around the world.

Methods

Around the world, early football is evident in many locations. The Modern football, which originated in England in the late nineteenth century, can be thought of as an ancestor of the game that civilisations played throughout history. Football was played in ancient cultures as early as 2500 BC, according to some evidence. But their motivations varied; some associated football with religious rituals, while others recognised qualities that could aid in enhancing military tactics [1].

Football was mostly a loss-making sport before to the 1980s since it was not entirely integrated into commercial operations and was isolated from business. To just enjoy playing the game and

competing, friends and coworkers started the first football teams. At that time, football was only for entertainment and players were playing without any commercial interest [2].

The phrase "sports marketing," which describes the connection between marketing and sports, has entered common usage. According to one definition, the word refers to a collection of marketing initiatives that are solely focused on sports and the consumer who anticipates services associated to sports [3]. Three categories of marketing activity can be identified within this category: 1) marketing of sports goods and services that emphasises encouraging consumers to attend various sporting events; 2) marketing that does not specifically promote sports goods but instead makes use of associations with sports; and 3) marketing to advertise a sports organisation in order to draw viewers and encourage businesses to support the organisation financially (Michałek, b.d.). The first step in developing a sports club's image is generating a specific identity of the brand in the mind of the fan (consumer).

Lindstrom made a bold claim when he discovered similarities between religious organisations and sports in terms of projecting an emotional image. The author lists these planes as follows: majesty (club exclusivity, elitism); myths and legends (achievements, traditions); a sense of belonging (common attire, singing); a unifying common enemy (opposing club); recommendation (endorsing a club, athlete, or event); symbols (club logo, colours, symbolic players); and rituals (songs, hymns).

These elements serve as the foundation for creating a sports club's identity in a way that makes it clearly and accurately identifiable [4].

Results and discussion

Numerous clubs were established in this way as a result of the professional game's inevitable appeal to businesspeople who wanted to use it as a means of making money. The phrase "football business" first appeared in the early 1990s as a result of business ventures in the sector.

Without a question, football has changed and is now a major industry rather than just a sport. Since new opportunities are emerging, wise decisions are needed. As with every business, marketing plays a critical part in the growth of the football industry.

Marketing for Football Clubs

Football clubs have millions of fans worldwide and are more than just sports teams. Football clubs utilise marketing to increase fan loyalty, make money from sponsorships and retail sales, and establish their brand globally. In order to engage with supporters and keep the club relevant both during and outside of the season, tactics including producing original content, running social media campaigns, and holding brand activations are essential.

Clubs like Real Sociedad use their mascot on social media, while Leganés is known for creative advertisements. Manchester City has launched a TikTok account specifically for the American market, expanding its reach. FC Barcelona uses immersive experiences and AR technology globally, and Juventus promotes documentaries on streaming platforms, strengthening the emotional bond with fans.

Marketing in World Cups and International Competitions

Global competitions such as the FIFA World Cup provide enormous opportunities for sports advertising. Here, the main goals are to maximise worldwide visibility, draw in well-known sponsors, and provide fans experiences they won't soon forget. In addition to capturing the thrill of the occasion, marketing efforts for these contests need to develop a story that appeals to viewers around the world and in many cultural contexts. To accomplish these goals, technology, narrative, and social media interaction are essential instruments.

Marketing for Players

World-famous football players, in particular, are brands unto themselves. Building their public profile, controlling their social media accounts, and landing sponsorship agreements that complement their personalities with the appropriate businesses are the main goals of player marketing. This covers everything, from producing original content to taking part in international marketing initiatives. For a player's career on the pitch as well as their business prospects off it, image management is essential.

The Internet has developed into a business environment and a highly demanding distribution channel over time. Consequently, internet marketing—which involves using the Internet for promotional purposes—is becoming more and more well-liked [5].

There is no doubt that the development of social media had a great influence on the changes in the nature of marketing used by football clubs. A study by Euromericas Sport Marketing showed that approximately 82% of the most remembered ads in social media are those with athletes [6].

Leo Messi's posts rank seventh and ninth, respectively, while Cristiano Ronaldo's is already in second place. This may come as a surprise because, until recently, athletes were not as closely linked to the media as influencers or music stars. It is important to remember that a football player's popularity can significantly increase the popularity of the team he plays for. A formidable rival emerged when Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter dominated the online advertising space. Football teams are now using the TikTok app as a relatively new marketing tool.

Marketing departments soon discovered how widely used this medium has become, so they do not limit themselves to publishing live matches, behind-the-scenes videos or interviews.
The Parisian club is clearly the most popular among TikTok users. A true marketing success is having more than 23.2 million followers (Fig. 1). According to these figures, the top 10 clubs in this ranking and the top 10 clubs that sell club shirts nearly exactly match. This demonstrates their great emphasis on marketing success and their multifaceted approach to achieving it.

Players like Neymar and Messi have started their own apparel companies in addition to working with premium and fashion labels. Through their platforms, they also support charitable endeavours, improving their reputation and aiding important causes.
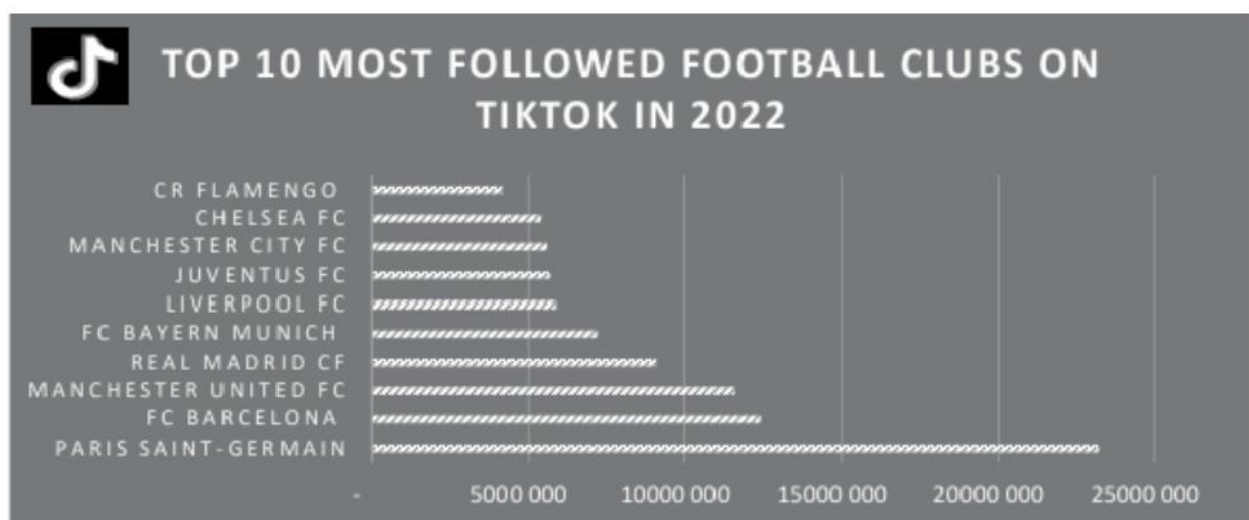

Figure 1. Top 10 most followed football clubs on Tik Tok in 2022 (Foot Goal, n.d.). [7]

1. Building Brand Identity and Fan Loyalty. Football clubs and leagues have meticulously cultivated distinctive brand identities through a variety of marketing strategies. Iconic logos, vibrant mascots, and captivating narratives contribute to creating a sense of belonging and pride among supporters. The enduring power of these elements is evident in the passionate followings of clubs like Manchester United, Real Madrid, and Barcelona. Social media platforms have further enhanced fan engagement, allowing clubs to connect with supporters, share content, and foster a sense of community.

2. Expanding Global Reach and Fan Base. Marketing has been instrumental in expanding football's reach beyond its traditional boundaries. Internationalization strategies, driven by partnerships and global broadcasting deals, have captivated new audiences worldwide. The English Premier League, for instance, has successfully established a global fanbase through its strategic marketing efforts. Furthermore, the use of social media platforms has allowed clubs and leagues to connect with fans across continents, breaking down geographical barriers.

3. Promoting Player Development and Talent Acquisition: Marketing has played a vital role in nurturing young talent and creating future stars. Clubs invest heavily in youth academies, developing players from a young age. Strategic marketing campaigns, coupled with player endorsements and social media presence, build up the image and popularity of players, turning them into global icons and attracting attention to the sport.

4. Driving Revenue Generation and Financial Growth. Football clubs and leagues have leveraged marketing to drive financial success. Marketing campaigns and promotional efforts attract fans to stadiums, boosting ticket sales and generating revenue. Merchandise sales, fueled by brand loyalty and player popularity, have become a significant source of income. Moreover, marketing strategies attract lucrative broadcasting deals, ensuring a steady stream of revenue for clubs.

5. Addressing Social Issues and Promoting Positive Values. Football has increasingly been used as a platform to address social issues and promote positive values. Campaigns focused on diversity and inclusion, as well as charitable initiatives, have raised awareness and encouraged social change. The sport's ability to unite people from diverse backgrounds and foster a sense of community further enhances its societal impact.

Conclusion

In conclusion, marketing has been a cornerstone in the development and popularization of football. By building brand identities, expanding global reach, promoting player development, driving revenue, and addressing social issues, marketing has transformed the sport into a global phenomenon. In a rapidly evolving world, marketing will continue to play a critical role in shaping the future of football, ensuring its continued success and relevance across generations.

Additional conclusions:

➢ Modern technologies, social networks, digital marketing create new opportunities in popularizing football.

➢ Marketing in football development requires teamwork. Clubs, leagues, sponsors and media can work together to make football more popular and profitable.

➢ In marketing, it is important to consider the needs and interests of fans.

➢ The right marketing strategy for football teams is essential to ensure the growth of football.

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