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A Study of The Use of Social Media by Four Ghanaian Premier Football Clubs

Dennis Sarkodie Owusu¹

Justice Boffah Pokumensah²

¹ Lecturer, Department of Communication Studies, Christian Service University College, Ghana, E-mail: dsowusu@csuc.edu.gh

² Lecturer, Department of Communication Studies, Christian Service University College, Ghana, E-mail: jbpokumensah@csuc.edu.gh

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Abstract

Social media platforms are regarded as the new channels for disseminating information and communicating among the public in these recent times. Its usage is also patronized by football clubs in Ghana. This study sought to investigate the use of social media by premier football clubs. A purposive sampling technique was used to find out the extent of social media usage by four registered Ghanaian Premier Football clubs, namely, Kumasi Asante Kotoko Sporting Club, Medeama Football Club, Dreams Football Club and Inter Allies Football Club. The study also looked at the reasons for the usage of social media by the four registered Ghanaian premier football clubs and the challenges, if any, faced by these football clubs. Through a qualitative research approach, interviews were conducted to find out the extent of social media usage by the four registered Ghanaian premier league clubs. The findings indicated that all the four football clubs all understand the importance of social media as means of communication in the management of a modern Football clubs, although their understanding of social media was limited to some few roles and functions. The clubs also acknowledged the difficulties in the usage of social media as a means of communication channels such as expensive data, not having camera to take good and sharp pictures and additional cost in employing a social media administrator. The major limitation was the size of the sample used in the study.

Keywords: Social media, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram, Football clubs

BACKGROUND TO STUDY

It has been almost a decade since clubs started using social media for exponential growth in commercial viability, reaching varying publics and as a new means of disseminating information. According to Rosamond Hutt's formative content published on World Economic Forum (March, 2017), four of the most popular social media networks used by football clubs worldwide account for some staggering frequencies per minute worldwide. Facebook has 900,000 logins, YouTube has 4.1 viewed videos, Twitter has 452,000 and Instagram with 46,200. In football, the target audience has always been the youth and as a result, social media is a perfect medium through which messages and campaigns aimed at rallying and canvassing for global support are promulgated. This study aims at determining how four selected registered Ghanaian premier league clubs use social media in communicating to their publics.

According to Statista.com (an online statistics, market research and business intelligence portal), the social media network penetration, as at January 2017, is headed by North America with a 66% penetration rate. It is followed by South America, which has 59%. Africa grew by 14%. The most popular social media network worldwide is Facebook with more than 2.07 billion monthly users in the third quarter of 2017. That accounts for 25% of the earth's population. Social networking consumption has also become increasingly mobile as a result of the advent of smart phones and tablets as mentioned earlier. In Ghana, Facebook users hit 4 million in June 2017 with a 14% penetration rate, according to Internet World Stats. The impact social media has had on people and brands cannot be overemphasized. It has led public relations strategies of both big and small institutions to concentrate on the use of social media platforms to engage their publics, not only to pass information to them, but engage them for feedback and also to use their captive audiences in creative drives and campaigns.

Clubs in Europe have set standards with the use social media networks. They have realized exponential growth in brand footprint and commercial viability as a whole. It is not only about the clubs. The popular players plying their trade in Europe are global brands who are recognized worldwide and their social media accounts are appendages to their popularity and commercial value. In the English Premier League which dominates the use of social media among the elite leagues in the world it is clear that the club with the most fans on Facebook in England is Manchester United. They dominate with 72,115,472, followed by Arsenal with 37,438,561 fans. That means that Manchester United has 1.9 times more fans than Arsenal.

Manchester United player Paul Pogba congratulated friend Romelu Lukaku ahead of Lukaku's move to the club with an Instagram video of the pair that more than 3 million people watched within hours of being posted. In fact, most of these players who play for these clubs are huge global brands themselves, a quality some clubs look out for while considering player purchases. Manchester United bought Paul Pogba not because of his footballing capabilities but also because of his social media status and his commercial viability which is partly due to his association with Adidas - who are his kit sponsors and that Manchester United's. Pogba has over 4 million followers on Twitter, a captive audience every institution will dream of associating with. Nike for instance milks Cristiano Ronaldo's 63.5 million followers on Twitter and his 122 million fans on Facebook by using those platforms to outdoor new products. Ronaldo has a lifetime pact with Nike as a result and was paid a whopping \$1bn for it in 2016. Nike value Ronaldo's social media accounts at \$410 million.

On the whole, English clubs averagely use the following 5 platforms, that is, Twitter, Facebook, Youtube, Instagram and Wikipedia. Their popularity on social media has been so immense that Facebook plans to buy streaming rights of live English Premier League matches. Facebook were initially interested in the 2016-19 media rights but eventually lost out to BSkyB and BT for a whopping £8.4bn. The use of hashtags, suggested 10 years ago, to put tweets into groups and create mantras for football clubs during matches is also a very popular phenomenon on Twitter. In August 2017, Manchester United had amassed a total of 71 million hashtags, and had the highest according to Mirror newspaper.

In Spain for example, the La Liga match played between FC Barcelona and Real Madrid at Nou Camp in December 2016, fetched \$42.5 million in media value for sponsors across all platforms. Social media made 12% of this colossal figure while 41% of the overall value went to Real Madrid, who played as the 'away' club that day. Barcelona once pocketed a mouth-watering \$1 million for 10 months from content on Facebook Live. A jovial video from Real Madrid showing Marcelo and Danilo throwing eggs and flour at each other amassed more than 2.4 million views two weeks after it debuted. Clubs in Germany and Italy have all grown their commercial viabilities through various social media networks.

In Ghana, for instance, the days where football fans relied on only GBC 1, GBC 2 or GBC TV and Daily Graphic for details on a football match are long gone. These days, social media alone boasts of numerous video platforms like YouTube and Vimeo, we have microblogs like Twitter, cross-format portals like Facebook, Myspace, Google Plus, photo platforms like Instagram and

Snapchat, Messengers like Whatsapp and Viber and many New Media platforms. It is common knowledge that these platforms are en vogue and the youth are more interested in them than the traditional radio, newspaper and television platforms.

The situation generally in Africa and Ghana in particular with regards to the use of social media by football clubs leaves much to be desired.

All these factors have led to diverse ways football clubs in advanced worlds communicate with the varying stakeholders. Sadly, Ghanaian premier league clubs experienced very slow growth in this regard. Such stunted growth in communication has a way of affecting all facets of the club since communication is key to the success of every institution.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

In Ghana, football has been commercialized over the years. The introduction of sponsors, television rights and media pluralism means football in the country will not be the same again. It has increased the number of stakeholders which traditionally involved just fans and only the national radio and television stations. The management of football has evolved in Ghana with football clubs having to communicate and manage their relationships with players, staff, sponsors, fans, communities and the media through social media management practices. As a result, tastes and preferences have also diversified like never before. Technology has led to unprecedented fragmentation of the media thereby changing the tastes and preferences of target audiences. As a result, Ghanaian clubs which rely on the old practices of disseminating information do not reach a large population with the demographic trait which supports what a football club expects to see on a Match day.

Clubs like Asante Kotoko and Hearts of Oak which are Ghana's most popular clubs are still struggling to attract sizeable crowds in their respective 40,000-seater capacity stadiums. Both clubs have less than 100,000 fans on Facebook. Hearts have 79, 0000 while Kotoko have racked in 69,000. On Twitter, Hearts lead once again with a verified account which has 40,900 fans. Kotoko's account on Twitter has almost 39,500 and just got verified in November, 2017. Both clubs also have Youtube, and Instagram accounts. Heats of Oak's most popular player on Twitter is Cosmos Dauda with 1,200 fans; he also has 3,620 on Facebook while goalkeeper Felix Annan tops for Kotoko with 3,000 on Twitter and 4,760 on Facebook. (Facebook 2017, Twitter 2017)

While performance levels have not been the same from the days of old, schools of thought are asking if the right messages – including packaging of the message - and channels are being used by the clubs to promulgate messages and campaigns with the aim of creating drives which will affect fans' decision making on their weekend activities. This study therefore seeks to find out how Ghana's premier league clubs are adjusting to the use of social media as a means of communicating with their publics.

LITERATURE REVIEW

SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE BY GHANAIAN PREMIERSHIP CLUBS

Football they say is the passion of the nation and has become an avenue to enhance the peace in Ghana. Since the introduction of social media, football clubs across the world have taken advantage of it to reach out to their teaming and fragmented fans around the globe. According to the BBC, since the year 2013, football clubs are no more content to sit back and take their fans granted in the global and digital age that allows teams in other countries to become both sporting and commercial rivals. Ghana is a footballing nation and people are passionate when it comes to matters relating to football. Social media tools like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube have become part of the youth. Football clubs in Ghana, like Kumasi Asante Kotoko and Accra Hearts Of Oaks boast of having millions of supporters domestically, but the question that runs through is that, what have they been doing to reach out to these supporters in order to mobilise them on a particular platform to interact with them like what other clubs around the world have been doing.

Out of the sixteen clubs who are partaking in 2017/2018 Ghana Premier league, three of them, namely, Asante Kotoko, Hearts Of Oak and Inter Allies have an official verified Twitter account while the remaining thirteen clubs have an unofficial Twitter account. (Twitter, 2018). On Facebook, Asante Kotoko, Hearts Of Oak, Inter Allies, Dreams FC, have official account that is operated by the football club. However, there are a lot of pages and groups created by individuals with the club name attached to them. Interestingly, the number of likes and group members on such platforms can fill our various stadia in Ghana. (Facebook, 2018). According to a research conducted by German-based outfit Result Sports on July, 2017, Accra Hearts of Oak triumphed over Asante Kotoko as the highest ranked Ghanaian Club in the Africa digital Football ranking. Hearts of Oak were ranked 26th in Africa with total command of 116,116. The research looked at the clubs with most active and interactive social media accounts. This made Hearts of Oak, undoubtedly the best club in terms of active social media account, since they are the first Ghanaian club verified by twitter. Fellow Ghana Premier League side and arch-rivals Asante Kotokocame just four places below, 30th on the continental classification. They operate four accounts and command a 88,910 following in total. Each club's digital community is quantified based on its effective utilisation of the following digital media tools - Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Periscope and YouTube. In recent times the media landscapes are filled with arguments on how people are no more patronising our local league and how best we can solve such problems and build the interest of the people. The social media can be used in the following ways:

Mobilisation of supporters

The social media is one way, clubs in Ghana in their own ways can mobilise supporters to the various stadia. For example, social media is an interactive platform and as such give way to a two way communication. This affords supporters who are followers of the clubs the opportunity to get official updates from the clubs and also get the chance to interact directly with the club through comments and feedbacks on the various pages of the clubs. The more supporters have that sense of belonging and value from the club, the more they feel part of the club and as such harnesses the sense of responsibility to support the clubs. Clubs can put their ticket prices on the page, training schedules, interviews and match day interviews from coaches and players, promotions by the clubs, where they can get club replica jerseys, headlines from the club's newspaper and any other information that can generate the interest of club followers.

Commercial Value of Social Media Usage by Football Clubs

Social media platforms can help football clubs in Ghana to give the needed exposure to club sponsors. This gives clubs the leverage to negotiate with club sponsors to get the right financial benefits from these companies. An example is football clubs like Kumasi Asante Kotoko and Accra Hearts of Oak can synchronise their Facebook, Twitter and YouTube accounts with that of their sponsors. This gives the sponsors the opportunity to disseminate information on products and services directly to club supporters. Also clubs can direct traffic to their websites and that of the sponsors. They can also have a joint account to reach out to the club supporters. This can generate a lot of mentions for the sponsor on social media, thereby increasing the brand presence of club sponsors on social media.

SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE BY FOOTBALL CLUBS

The use of social media by football clubs have increased intensely in around a decade. This is as result of the popularity of social media over the recent years; in fact social media has become a norm in the modern society. With the increasing amount of money in football, clubs are often accused of being out of touch with their fans. However with the emergence of social media, fans can connect with them in new ways than before. (Gadhia, 2015). According to Kuper (2014), social media have become an essential element of sports fandom. Twitter is making headlines as footballers and supporters use the social media platform to get their fix of football news or vent their views on the

game, the relationships between football clubs, players, supporters and journalists have been transformed in recent decades. (Price et al, 2013) An increase in the scope and professionalism of public relations in sport has seen football clubs attempt to take ever tighter control over their public image (Andrews, 2005) while access to footballers in particular is monitored and restricted by clubs and agents, the better to increase that lack of value and assemble the right sort of exposure. (Steen, 2007). The Ghana Premier League Twitter account has been active since 2011 and currently in 2017 it has amassed over 12.7 thousand followers. (Twitter, 2017). As a result of this, it is now easy for football clubs and players to get messages across to their fans (for instance the latest updates about their club, the transfer market and live commentary of the games) due to the high usage of social networking sites such as Twitter. Social media are increasingly being viewed as an additional marketing channel through which businesses can communicate or interact with their customers and prospective customers (Gummerus et al., 2011) in which Sports fans have been found to have extremely high product involvement (Mullin et al., 2007), and may be particularly likely to exhibit signs of tribal behaviour, centred on consumption - related interests (Kozinets, 1999). For example, as McCarthy et al (2014) states football is a big business, both nationally and often internationally and identifies UK football clubs as businesses with committed fans. In addition to this, fan bases embed a wealth of complex community relationships, often demonstrating enduring loyalty to the club (Substance Research Team, 2010).

A statement by ShergulArshad (told to delegates at the Soccerex football business convention in Manchester), who is the digital business director at AC Milan declared that “social media is opening up international communication strands that did not exist before” and adding that, the club has brought in e-commerce and social media strategies which provides the supporters insights. In relation to this, GiulianoGiorgetti who is the head of digital, web and media at AC Milan quotes “Our audience has this passion, this is something that sponsors noticed and wanted to be involved with. It has generated a lot of money for us.” Football clubs are no longer content to sit back and take their fans for granted in which this global digital age allows teams in other countries to become both sporting and commercial rivals. (Wilson, 2013)

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Considering that this study is about building and maintaining a mutually beneficial relationship between football clubs and their publics, the study will be underpinned by the systems theory. The systems theory was propounded by Ludwig Von Bertalanffy as a way to think about and study the constant, dynamic adjustment of living phenomena. Bertalanffy (1968) wrote that since the fundamental character of the living thing is its organization, the customary investigation of the single parts and processes cannot provide a complete explanation of the vital phenomenon.

In public relations, (Cutlip, Center & Broom, 2000, p. 178) define systems as “a set of interacting units that endures through time within an established boundary by responding and adjusting to change pressures from the environment to achieve and maintain goal stated.” According to Cutlip et al, unlike physical and biological systems, social systems are not especially dependent on the physical closeness of component parts. Rather, specifications of organization public interactions define systems. Grunig, Grunig and Dozier (2002) stated that the systems perspective emphasizes the interdependence of organisations with their environments, both internal and external to the organisation, adding that with the systems perspective, organizations depend on their environment for resources such as raw materials, source of employees and clients or customers for the products or services they produce, while the environment needs the organization for its product or service.

A football club’s PR department or PR manager must adopt the open systems approach to be able to scan through the environment successfully and exchange inputs and outputs with stakeholders. This will help the PR manager or the department to advise the club’s management for a mutually beneficial relationship between the club and its publics. According to (Cutlip, Center & Broom, 2000, p.181) “Social systems cannot be completely closed or totally open, so they are either relatively open or relatively closed.” They noted that closed systems have impermeable boundaries so they do not exchange matter, energy or information with their environments and since they do not adapt to environmental change, it leads to their collapse. On the other hand, Cutlip et al stressed

that an open system has permeable boundary that allows it to exchange inputs and out puts with its environment and that open systems are responsive to environmental changes. According to Berger and Chaffee (1987), a family is an excellent example of a system. The members of the family are the objects of the system. Their individual characteristics are the attributes. Because families exist in a social and cultural environment, there is mutual influence between families and their environment. Hall and Fagan (1968), noted that a closed system has no interchange with its environment and may move towards internal chaos and disintegration, while the open system receives inputs from its environment and is geared towards life and growth. Football clubs in Ghana need to operate with the principles of the open system in order to avoid the disasters associated with operating with a close system. Grunig (1985) developed a system theory of public relations with three-fold goals. The first allows managers to monitor their immediate environment, i.e. to know how things are going on.

The second is to help managers to decide on how their department should operate, subject to their environment. Thirdly, it is to guide managers in changing their communication subsystem, and institutionalize reforms that enhance effectiveness. This theory will enable PR practitioners to appreciate and understand what have become the bases for PR initiatives and predict how such initiatives or campaigns can change in response to different environmental conditions.

This study agrees with the tenets of the systems theory given that a football club does not live in isolation. A football club, like any social organization, lives in an environmental setting and needs inputs from members of the environment to survive. The systems theory has been used to test the nature of relationships between organisations and their publics and the objectives of this study also fall in line with the systems theory. The theory addresses the roles and functions of the public relations practitioner as well as talks about the kinds of relationships that exist between organizations and their publics. This study also agrees with the distinction between close and open systems and looks at how football clubs can either be described as functioning as closed or opened within their environments. It also agrees with principles of subsystems and suprasystems. The theory will also guide this study to determine the behavior or communication pattern of the football clubs' internal and external publics.

METHODOLOGY

This study used a qualitative research approach. The nature of this study required the use of the qualitative methodology, using in-depth interviews as a tool for data collection. The qualitative methodology was used largely because it begins with the intention of exploring and interpreting a particular subject by identifying themes in data (Greenhalgh & Taylor, 1997; Thompson, 1999; Weiner et al., 2001). The data collected in a qualitative study includes more than words; attitudes, feelings, vocal and facial expressions, and other behaviors are also involved. The data which may consist of interview transcripts, field notes from observations, a wide variety of records and historical documents, and memoranda, are treated to rigorous ongoing analysis. Three processes are blended throughout the study: collection, coding, and analysis of data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967):

Respondents in this study comprised public relations practitioners and communication personnel of Kumasi Asante Kotoko FC, Medeama FC, Dreams FC and Inter Allies FC. They were known as senior public relations managers within their respective football clubs at the time of the interviews. A person from the communications or PR department was selected to represent their respective football club. These persons were purposively sampled to represent these football clubs in the study. According to Keyton (2006) purposive sampling depends on the judgment of the researcher, who hand picks the participants to be included in the sample. The entire four respondent selected to participate in the study are all employees of these football clubs. They were, therefore, familiar with the operations (Social Media) activities of the football clubs they represented and as a result, they were in the best position to talk about the social media operations of these clubs.

First, a phone call noting the purpose of the interview was placed to the communications departments of the four registered football clubs. Followed up was a visit to their offices. Interview questions were sent to the Public Relations Officers.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

THE EXTENT OF SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE BY THE FOUR REGISTERED GHANAIAN PREMIER FOOTBALL CLUBS

It was gathered from the interviews with the four PROs of the registered Ghanaian Premier Football Clubs that they all understand what social media is and acknowledged the importance of social Media as means of communication in the management of a modern Football clubs. This is in an agreement with “The evaluation of social media use” (Filo et al., 2015).

The proliferation of social media tools has significantly affected the way people communicate and get informed. In Asante Kotoko, the Public relations officer said due to the number of fans the club has, it was necessary for the club to have social media platforms which would be a link between the management of the club and the supporters. As a result, Asante Kotoko has three social media platforms namely; Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. “We communicate the management programs and that of the technical and playing body to the media and supporters through our social media channels”. The Public relations Officer at Medeama FC also acknowledged that the role of social media in the administration in a football club is very important for Medeama FC; it was stated they have three social media platforms which plays crucial role in the management of the club’s communication with its publics. Therefore, Social media which is highly accessible can be used to reach a large audience (Brogan, 2010; Zarrella, 2010). “It’s a platform where you meet a whole lot of people with different types of ideas and mentality about football.”

On the other hand, the third and fourth club respectively viewed social media as “ Basically, the platform which offers me, a collection of apps which gives me the chance to essentially interrupt or share with others anything relative to business, personal life and any other interest I so desire to put across to the public”. “It is a platform which uses internet for interaction and transacting business. Social Media is important. It helps us protect the image of the club and projects our activities and project the club to make our activities known to the supporters” The literature suggest that while communicating with traditional media was about delivering a message, communicating with social media is a two-way process of building a relationship and having a conversation with the audience (Drury, 2008) and Social media has allowed people to communicate, post and share pictures/videos in online societies and networks. Social media content can either be under the form of text, picture, video and networks (Berthon, et al, 2012).

From the understanding of the four PROs, they confirmed the attractiveness of visuals, while going a step further and constantly analysing the effect of posts on fans in terms of number of comments, clicks on links, or views of videos through the use of social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. A critical observation was that all the four clubs saw the extent of social media differently even though they have a common understanding of social media.

THE REASONS FOR USAGE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Another issue the study sought to find was the reasons for which these registered football clubs use social media. The question posed to the four PROs was that “What are the reasons for using social media platforms?” The question sought to find out what entails the reasons for their usage. All the respondents indicated that social media has come to stay. It was found out that Kumasi Asante Kotoko FC was one of the biggest football clubs in Ghana with a large support base across the country. The club had various channels of communication which is used to communicate with its publics which included; staff, players, supporters, sponsors, media and the Ghana Football Association. The other three public relations officers mentioned that social media is the fastest communication channel in reaching their publics. They acknowledged having social media accounts. They use Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to send information about their clubs to the media and the fans as well as interact with them. Kotoko’s PRO stated “The club audiences are gradually turning

to social media as a means of getting quicker and faster information instead of the traditional means like newspapers and radio.” A point which is supported by Gadhia (2015), which found that with the emergence of social media, fans can connect their football clubs in new ways than before.

The same reason was given by practitioners for their view that their audiences are gradually turning to social media as a means of getting quicker and faster information. For example, the head of public relations at Dreams FC noted: “The reasons are simple. These platforms are the most popular amongst our audience even with the weakest strength of internet presence, our audiences are able to reach us anywhere they are so as to access the content we put on the various platforms.” Thus, in line with Blanchard and Sollis (2011), states one of the main reason behind why social media has been quickly embraced by the general public is that it provides connection with people in ways that are valuable, meaningful and convenient.

The findings of the question made aware how these four clubs use social media to share their news or photos/videos of their clubs. Through social media, they are able to engage their numerous supporters. This position is in consonance with Kuper (2014), “social media have become an essential element of sports fandom. Twitter is making headlines as footballers and supporters use the social media platform to get their fix of football news or vent their views on the game, the relationships between football clubs, players, supporters and journalists have been transformed in recent decades.” This is in line with the statements by all the four PROs that social media is the fastest and reliable platform in reaching their publics and image projection.

THE CHALLENGES FACED BY THESE FOUR GHANAIAN PREMIER FOOTBALL CLUBS

The next objective of the study sought to find out the challenges faced by these four Ghana premier football clubs with social media usage. The findings indicated that all the four Public relations officers of the clubs acknowledge the difficulties in the usage of social media as a means of communication channels. This study discovered that Respondents from the four clubs were specifically asked what poses as challenges. Comments such as those listed below were given in response to the question: “What are the challenges faced by their clubs in the use of social media and the most occurring challenge faced the older audiences are used to the traditional means of getting information. It does not help the club to get all audiences informed in one instance.” stated by the officer of Asante Kotoko. “Expensive data, not having camera to take good and sharp pictures and additional cost in employing a social media administrator.” The practitioner from Medeama acknowledged.

In addition, it was established that Dreams FC also faces difficulties in the use of their social media platforms. The Public relations officer of Dreams FC made aware financial constraints as one of the challenges. “First, it is financial resource which opens the avenue to employ not just qualified personnel to manage social media accounts but also purchase the right tools to facilitate the work. Secondly, absence of good internet connectivity at match venues outside Accra poses challenges.” He explained. A study by Darrell M. West on the topic “Digital divide: Improving Internet access in the developing world through affordable services and diverse content,” states that Lacking disposable financial resources makes it difficult to purchase devices or gain access to digital services. This study agrees to the statement by the PRO for Dream FC. According to a Deloitte study (The Deloitte Millennial Survey 2018), “income levels are a key barrier to internet access, and internet penetration is often the lowest in countries with the lowest GDP per capital.” Unless these individuals can utilize free or cheap products, they won’t be able to gain the benefits of the technology revolution.

To sum up on the issues of challenges faced by these four registered Ghanaian premier football clubs, the PRO for Inter Allies stated that; “The widespread of rumours and misinformation has never been easier with the use of social media in today’s football management. Unstable internet connection for highlights and streaming.” It was seen from these statements from the four football clubs regarding challenges faced concerning social usage, that aside the normal operational challenges, social media usage contributing immensely to club management and brand, poses a major challenge in its administration.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings led to the conclusion that the usage of social media by the four registered premier league clubs contributes to the activities of the four clubs. The use of Social Media enables the clubs to interact effectively with their publics thereby fulfilling the organisational goals and expectations of the clubs. There is also a significant awareness of social media of the clubs.

The first objective of the study was to ascertain the extent of social media usage by the four clubs. It can be deduced from the responses provided by the four clubs that extent of the use of social media by the clubs is quite similar. The general impression gathered from the study is that respondents seemed to have a fair idea about the functions social media plays in their football management. This manifested in the kind of responses given during the study, for example, press releases, public announcements etc which formed part of traditional means communication helped a lot but social media has added more contributions.

The second objective of the study sought to establish the reason for which these four clubs use social media. From the data gathered, it is suggested that the social media platforms are the most popular amongst their audience even with the weakest strength of internet service. The data confirms the clubs' publics are turning to social media as a means of getting quicker and faster information.

The third objective sought to find the challenges, if any, faced by these four clubs with their social media usage. The study found that the older audiences are used to the traditional means of getting information. It does not help the club to get all audiences informed in one instance. Expensive data, not having camera to take good and sharp pictures and additional cost in employing a social media administrator were some challenges the study identified.

In conclusion, the literature indicates that the four registered Ghanaian premier league football clubs are most effective when social media is a part of strategic management between their publics and the clubs (Broom, 1982). Social Media cannot however be practiced strategically if the social media is not given the ear of top management. Being part of the management of a club requires the club to enact the social media role.

RECOMMENDATION

In view of the findings made regarding the usage of social media by the four registered Ghanaian premier football clubs, it is recommended that social media activities is gaining grounds in modern football management it is there recommended that every football club should have social media units. The study recommends that Ghanaian clubs should adapt to technological advancement in communication by taking social media more seriously. Social media has become a powerful, effective and inexpensive channel of communication for organizations. Organizations like football clubs with dedicated and passionate supporters must take full advantage and expand their reach and support base through communication with social media channels.

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