A Content Analysis of Korean Professional Football Clubs' Use of Facebook

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이 지 영

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지도교수 김 기 한

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위 원 장 ____임 충 훈____ (인)

부위원장 ____강 준 호____ (인)

위 원 ____김 기 한____ (인)

Abstract

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Ji Young Lee

Department of Physical Education

Graduate School

Seoul National University

Social media provide a platform for sport organizations to build and sustain relationships with Facebook users via two-way communication. The purpose of this study is to examine the role of social media as a marketing platform as well as a brand management tool for professional sports organizations. This study exclusively observes the Korean professional football clubs' (N = 11) use of Facebook by looking at contents posted throughout the 2013 season. The Facebook pages of the clubs are examined to analyze the professional football clubs' current use of social media and to suggest improved future use.

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I. Introduction

Social media has fundamentally affected people's lives since its emergence. Social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook continue to gain popularity while their users continue to increase. Given the high usage rate, social networking sites are increasingly employed as a marketing tool by companies while providing an opportunity for the companies to reach their consumers directly. Social networking sites' interactivity feature benefits the consumers at the same time as it enables consumers to be involved in the production process where they no longer remain as passive recipients of information. Social media further benefits both the companies and consumers by generating positive brand experience via user-generated content. Following this trend, sports organizations have acknowledged the need of using social media, seeking ways to employ the medium in their brand management strategies.

As sports world is closely related to media and the two have been evolving together within the emergence of new media technology, the sports organizations have been attempting to adjust to the new media environment. Social media provides professional sports teams an opportunity to reach their fans directly without interference. The feature can be observed in Facebook, which is one of the most popular social networking sites. Scholars have linked brand management to an enhanced loyalty among consumers and sports fans.

Having a loyal fan base is significant for sports clubs, first because the fans become consistent revenue source for sports organizations. Increased profit then may lead to an improved quality of a sports league, ultimately resulting in an influx of increased number of spectators that may convert to potential fans in the long term. Many scholars further have noted that brand loyalty can be generated through strengthening brand awareness and association. This is particularly true for sports fans whose motivation for liking a team or sports has their roots in collectivism, and it is crucial to provide them a unique and exclusive brand experience to share.

The present study investigates on how professional football clubs in Korea employ social networking sites, particularly Facebook, to increase brand awareness and build brand loyalty. While Korea Professional Football League (K League) is losing its popularity as it has to compete with foreign football leagues and domestic sports leagues, developing an efficient way of employing social media in their management strategy seems eminent in the maintenance of existing fans and attracting new fans. Through examining the K League clubs' managerial practices on social media platform, especially Facebook, the present study aims to analyze how the clubs are utilizing the medium in terms of marketing and proposes possible suggestions for the future use.

Within the stated background and purpose of the study, the following five research questions were proposed: What type of communication tool is most frequently used on Facebook by professional football clubs in Korea, what type of communication tool promotes fan engagement the most, how is Facebook used as a marketing tool by the clubs, which type of brand association and marketing yields fan engagement the most, and how are successful clubs and popular clubs using Facebook by popularity and successfulness. For a deeper analysis, the clubs were divided into groups by popularity and successfulness in answering the fifth research question.

The present study analyzes findings from a content analysis of Facebook posts from 11 K League clubs: Kangwon, Kyeongnam, Daegu, Daejun, Seoul, Seongnam, Suwon, Ulsan, Jeonnam, Busan, and Incheon. The clubs' managerial practices on the Facebook pages were observed in the categories of type of communication, brand association, and marketing strategy. To observe how the fans engage with each of the category, fan engagement was measured and examined through taking account "like," "comment," and "share" features of Facebook.

The current study will first look at previous researches and theories on social media—from its definition and basic history to its application and effectiveness for the marketing use. In the process, various marketing strategies will be explored in relation to their application on social media,

including promotions, viral marketing, relationship marketing, and marketing

through building a brand community. At the end of the literature review,

previous researches on sports organizations' use of social media for marketing

will be studied. A set of content analyses that are conducted based on both

non-sports and sports field will be introduced to maximize understanding of

the content analysis structure employed in this study. Based on previous

researches and observations conducted on them, the research questions of the

present study will be presented, followed by data collection method and

discussion on the findings. The present study will conclude with suggestions

for possible future managerial practice of social media for the K League

football clubs, and hopefully for the other professional sports clubs in Korea.

II. Literature Review

1. Social Media & Facebook

1.1. Definition and Nature of Social Media

The social media era has begun about ten years ago with the advent of LinkedIn and has flourished via introduction of famous social media platforms such as MySpace, Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter. The social media users have grown rapidly since, attracting billions of people throughout the world. Today, Facebook has more than 500 million users whereas Twitter and LinkedIn each possess about 175 million and 90 million users (Curtis, 2011). One type of social media includes Social Networking Sites (SNS), which generally allows users to interact and exchange thoughts with one another. SNSs such as Blogger and Epinions have provided a place for the users to read or leave reviews of products, an activity called blogging. Napster and Third voice rather took an advantage of the new media environment and provided consumers of file sharing and free plug-in (Ritholz, 2010).

The SNSs further fostered the growth of social media in the 2000s. Since the introduction of SNS, people have gained a broad access to interactions with each other and organizations that share common interest in various types of lifestyles. The examples of the SNSs included LunarStorm, cyworld, six degrees, and Wikipedia (Edosoman, et al., 2012). Sites such as sky blog, Myspace, LinkedIn, Hi5 have opened the gate wider and in 2004,

well-known names such as Facebook, Yahoo! 360, and YouTube emerged in 2005 (Junco, Heiergert, & Loken, 2011).

Since its introduction, social media have been a vital part of people's lives and significantly altered the way people communicate. Social media differentiates itself from the traditional platforms or the other forms of new media. As Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) state, social media can be defined as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content" (p. 61). Hansen, Shneiderman, Smith, and Marc (2011) further note that social media facilitate social interaction between users, discovering and linking people of similar interests. Among different social media platforms, SNSs can be stated as "web-based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semipublic profile within a bounded system," while connecting people to other group of people who share a connection with each other (Boyd & Ellison, 2008, p. 211). Thus, SNS provides its users a ground of self-presentation while they connect with their friends (Boyd, 2006; Donath & Boyd, 2004).

Interactivity is one of the most prominent characters of social media that differentiates it from the other forms of media (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). While traditional media such as newspapers, magazine, and television have been considered as one-way communication model only delivering

information to media consumers, social media has placed itself as a two-way communication (Benkler, 2006). Benkler (2006) describes that the change in information environment has happened from dominated by commercial mass media to a place where "user-centric, group-based active cooperation platforms" (p. 357) are enabled. The biggest shift for the social media users is that they are now actively participating in creating and disseminating contents, not remaining passive and only receive information. As a result, the user-created content or user-generated content is created in an amateur level with creativity, which are then posted on the Internet (Wunsch-vincent & Vickery, 2007). The new social media environment has brought the democratization of media production with users having raised user autonomy. Wunsch-vincent and Vickery (2007) suggest the process may lead to lower entry barriers, distribution and user costs.

As social media continue to attract potential users with the distinguished features, organizations have noticed a need to employ the medium in their marketing platform. Kalakota and Robinson (1999) have recognized this phenomenon and suggest companies to fully participate in the process in order to benefit from the social media. Due to developed technology, customers have become active contributors of the marketing process. Peppers and Rogers (1997) note the customers can intervene in everything from designing products to setting prices, building communication platforms and

distributing channels. For organizations, social media can be employed as a beneficial platform where they can personally and directly meet, interact, and promote dialogue within their consumers (Nair, 2011). Another reason the organizations should participate in social media environment lies on the medium's transparency feature. Foux (2006) proposes that information gained from social media is considered to be trustworthier than that of traditional media.

1.2. Facebook and Social Networking

Since its introduction in 2004, Facebook has remained as one of the most popular SNSs. Given its accessibility where anyone at least 13 years old can register, Facebook (www.facebook.com) currently has 864 million active users per day on average and 1.35 billion active users per month as of September 2014 (Facebook, 2014). Typical behaviors of Facebook users involve generating personal profile, finding and adding other users as friends, uploading photos, links or videos, and sending messages to other users. With the medium's "Like" feature, users interact through clicking "like" on average of 4.5 billion per day and through writing an average of 25 comments each month (Facebook, 2013). The most notable feature of Facebook is its social aspect—Facebook users would find and join user groups of common interest, which can be categorized by school, workplace, hometown or any lifestyle interests.

Released in 2008, Facebook's "Page" feature offers a communication platform for those interest groups. Having a page permits organizations to customize their online presence and to intermingle with users on the Internet (Facebook, 2009). Organizations benefit while learning from the user interaction or feedback in forms of likes, comments or shares on their posts: Page statistics are provided to the page administrators where fan interaction is given in addition to the demographic features of the most recurrent users (Facebook, 2009). Content features comprise of status updates, pictures, video, links, and notes. The interaction enables organizations to form an intimate relationship with their target groups while enhancing their brand existence online.

Facebook provides a platform for promoting brand awareness and brand enhancement given its nature of social networking. Newson, Houghton, and Patten (2009) highlighted the Facebook's feature of allowing third-party developers to create compatible applications, which in turn delivers an increased number of social media channels to users. The channels then would motivate users to reappear to the site or yield their urges to generate and circulate contents. Another beneficial feature of Facebook for brands involves its exposure level, as pages are public—can be viewed through search engines without becoming a fan. Furthermore, Facebook pages are designed to reveal personal profiles that enable brands to present themselves in more human form,

approaching fans more closely (Facebook, 2010). The self-presentation results

in enhancing the organizations' brand images (Trusoy, Bucklin, & Pauwels,

2009).

2. Application of Social Media on Various Marketing Purposes

Marketing is a form of methodological science that requires a constant

adoption of new rules following the changes in the environment surrounding it.

To adapt to the new media environment of extensively developed scientific

devices and social media appearance, the field of marketing has put effort in

changing the way it is operated (Saravanakumar & SuganthaLakshmi, 2012).

Such movement is well reflected in corporates' attention on positioning itself

in social media. A research by Burson-Masrteller (2010) reveals that 86% of

100 major corporations on the Fortune 500 list employ at least one of the

SNSs such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, or blogs while 28% of them take

advantage of all four platforms. Vaynerchuk (2011) notes on the point that 64%

of marketers devote five hours or more per week using social media while 39%

put ten hours or more per week. The findings demonstrate the emergence of

social media as an effective marketing tool for corporations.

As Rooney (2011) states, SNSs allow corporations to construct

intimate relationships with consumers, in addition to expand the market to the

consumers that they could not attract before. Generally, social media

marketing offers the companies a door to a network of people online that tend

to rely on their online networks or friends' suggestion during socializing. Since enormous number of people exists online, it is a must for marketers to delve into the effect of social media for influencing consumer preferences and their purchase decisions.

Social media can be employed in marketing to achieve one of the three goals: building awareness, promoting sales, or building loyalty (Castronovo & Huang, 2012). Being present where the target audiences are is crucial since companies' tailored content can be exclusively sent to those target consumers that may generate positive purchase behavior. In addition, the ones connected to companies on social media are people who are most interested in the companies who may exchange good or bad information about the brands (Deepa, et al., 2013). Hollier (2009) stresses the long-term benefits of social media lies on strengthening the brand experience, which would lead to brand building. Reversely, in a similar manner, consumers can experience a brand privilege while getting exclusive information or products (Carraher, & Sullivan, 2006).

As a whole, social media marketing is largely a process of acquiring attention via SNSs. Social media marketing packages generally focuses on generating content that draws attention and urges users to disseminate it through their online networks. Despite the increased importance social media is receiving in marketing field, Ang (2011) points out many companies should

figure out precisely how the medium can be combined into marketing strategies. The companies should leave conventional tactics behind while coming up with new strategies that would match the new technologies (Meadows-Klue, 2008). Social media marketing should be used with right knowledge and methods in order to maximize its effect in the changing business market.

2.1. Social Media and Promotion Mix

Kotler and Keller (2007) define the three main aims for promotion as increasing product awareness, influencing consumers to buy the product, or to reminding the consumers that the product exists. Social media is an ideal promotional platform as it possesses a special feature of two-way communication. Through participating in a creative process, the consumers would be left with an increasing buying intention and loyalty towards a brand (McKenzie et al., 2009). The consumers would also be more likely to tell their friends about products. Social media allows companies to practice the customer-based promotional tactics, which are more cost-effective while having a potential to reach the target audience (Thackeray, et al., 2009).

There are distinct features of social media that make it an interesting marketing tool for marketers. As marketing's primary objective is to reach consumers and affect their purchasing behavior, social media take a special role in the procedure since it is able to access consumers in every stages from

choosing brands to post-purchase. Social media are a "hybrid element of the promotion mix because in a traditional sense it enables companies to talk to their consumers" while conversation between consumers are also in action, controllable by the companies (Mangold & Faulds, 2009, p. 357). In addition, Gillin (2007) underlines the speed and the magnitude of communication of social media. Thus, companies should practice to shape consumer conversations similar to that of the companies' aims in times of promotions.

Offering networking platforms is a notable feature of SNSs that can be used in promotional strategies. The networking sites give consumers an ability to reach people who use same products while exchanging ideas on the products. Engagement is a crucial feature of those networking platforms as consumers may consider themselves more involved with brands when they can provide feedback or propose suggestions. The engagement can be further stimulated by psychological and product properties such as stories, support cause or prizes. Saravanakumar and SuganthaLakshmi (2012) propose that contest is a useful way to yield an active consumer engagement in dealing with products. They further state that voting system combined with contests gives participants a sense of ownership and more engagement. Through promotion, consumer insights can be collected that can be used in the organization decisions in turn.

SNSs are effective in practicing guerilla marketing promotion strategy. According to Levinson (1993), guerilla marketing is beneficial for companies in that it involves low cost while generating buzz. Online feature of SNSs enable guerilla marketing messages to go viral, promoting the relative exposure and efficiency of the campaign (Castronovo & Huang, 2012). Another promotional tactic where its effect can be enlarged via social media platform is events-based marketing, where they come in various forms: "Cause-related marketing, sports, cultural and musical events, lifestyle marketing, and sponsorship" (Castronovo & Huang, 2012, p. 121). The events become a platform where a brand can build its image in the industry as well as earning contacts of their target audience. Reaching a new set of future consumers is another advantage of such marketing, expanding its business market (Castronovo & Huang, 2012). Events are considered as successful if it provokes emotions like excitement among the target audience, which would lead the audience to share their feelings on social networks (Samu & Wymer, 2009).

Among various SNSs, Facebook possesses distinct attributes to be an online promotion platform. Facebook provides brands an opportunity to put and enhance their brand image as well as taking advantage of the medium as a center of market research (Saravanakumar & SuganthaLakshmi, 2012). Facebook users may advertise certain brands to their user friends when they

interact with brands' Facebook posts, making the posts to appear on their

Newsfeeds. Thus, conducting a Facebook promotion would increase brands'

chance to reach new consumers with a lowered cost. Using Facebook to

capture consumers appears promising given the general amount of potential

consumers online: An average Facebook user owns 130 friends and is linked

to 80 pages, events, and groups (Social Media Examiner). While the reasons

for liking brands on Facebook vary, a research by Mashable

(www.mashable.com) found that users "like" a brand on Facebook because

they are consumers or they want to receive promotions. In addition, 77% of

consumers notified they want to engage with brands through getting updates

from the brands. Almost half of the consumers noted that they tend to suggest

a brand to friends after being a fan on Facebook (Mashable). Thus, brands

should try to offer special deals or information to their Facebook fans.

Alternatively, "like-gating" is a type of participatory promotion that

can be used in Facebook where something in return is given in a form of

reward for clicking "like" on a brand's Facebook page. The tactic would be

most effective to attract new consumers. A tactic called crowd sourcing takes

advantage of consumers and leverages the consumers' ideas to be adopted for

corporate decisions. This includes inviting large groups to participate in

shaping a strategy (Saravanakumar & SuganthaLakshmi, 2012). This in turn

can provide the consumers a sense of empowerment that will eventually

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benefit both consumers and brands. Saravanakumar and SuganthaLakshmi (2012) also suggest "check-in" as a promising promotional tactic on Facebook. The tactic is beneficial for companies as they know where their consumers are and which type of consumers attends their brand-associated events. In addition, Facebook Deals allows sellers to offer electronic coupons and loyalty points when customers check-in at arrival. Overall, companies should employ the promotional tactics on Facebook to study what consumers are talking about their brands, as well as to draw and retain the consumers.

2.2. Social Media and Viral Marketing

Kaplan and Henlein (2011) defines viral marketing the "electronic word-of-mouth" (eWOM) where a brand's or product's marketing message is conveyed in a way of exponential growth, often via social media. SNSs are especially suitable for viral marketing since the social community feature allows spreading of the marketing message to a large target population. Through eWOM, passing along a marketing message or sharing information on products can be accelerated. Thackeray et al. (2009) argue that social media improve the influence of viral marketing by facilitating the speed of consumers sharing opinions with larger audiences. However, in order for a content to go viral, the message itself should be memorable and interesting enough to be passed on, prompting an emotional response within the receiver (Dobele et al., 2007).

A message has a better chance to go viral when its content resonates with the target audience and yields the audiences' motivations for sharing information (Castronovo & Huang, 2012). One method is taking self-image of consumers into account. A study by Chung and Darke (2006) reveals that individuals tend to involve in WOM for the products closely associated to one's self-image—products that describe others about who you are. Another study by Sundaram, Mitra, and Webster (1998) suggests impression management goals as a crucial part of WOM, stating self-enhancement as a key motivator for practicing positive WOM. Similarly, Mangold and Faulds (2009) argue that people tend to exchange thoughts with others on products when the products match their desired self-image, as well as the way they want other people to view them. Supporting causes that are significant to consumers is another tactic. Companies thus should leverage emotional connections by embracing consumers' views on certain subjects or social issues and making a move. Mangold and Faulds (2009) further suggest employing products with talking points to generate more discussion on social media. According to Dobele et al. (2007), contents that are considered valuable, fun, stimulating, easy to use, and which provoke emotions are more likely to encourage conversation than the others.

Generally, companies can employ SNSs to sell their products and services through eWOM. As two-way communication is now possible, hearing

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from consumers has become easier on the online platform as well as increasing their commitment to brands. As a result, aligning consumer values and their self-images to companies' images would benefit the companies in encouraging positive eWOM.

2.3. Social Media and Relationship Marketing

Customer Relationship Marketing (CRM) focuses on customer, in an opposition to the product-centered marketing while believing consumer opinions are fundamentally influenced by the companies' message. Companies may increase their profit by using relationship-centered strategies as they build consumer loyalty through personalized marketing efforts (Rust &Verhoef, 2005). To do so, knowing the consumers—in terms of their interests and lifestyles—is vital in the relationship marketing, as well as collecting consumer data. "Big data" allows companies to decide on certain maters based on evidence rather than relying on intuition (McAfee & Brynjolfsson, 2012). Social media can be a suitable platform to gather such data as it enables the companies to collect new kinds of data on consumers and their friends.

These data come from the social media's feature of user interaction or consumer engagement. While consumers engage with a brand when they create content related to the brand, no specific definition of consumer engagement is settled (Bijimolt et al., 2010). For example, Malthouse et al.

(2009) concentrate on the psychological state of consumer in measuring

consumer engagement. On the other hand, Van Doorn et al. (2010) focus on

the non-purchase activities of consumers such as writing reviews or blog posts.

A study conducted by Malthouse et al. (2013) divides the engagement into two

levels: Lower and higher engagement. In case of the lower engagement,

consumers involve in passive activities like consuming message or leaving

basic forms of feedback including liking a Facebook post. The higher

engagement signifies consumers' participation in various types of co-creation

process such as leaving reviews or making videos on products.

Content is a crucial part of customer relationship in terms of gathering

more consumer data. Consumers are attracted to engaging content, generally

that offers them about updates on the products they already have. Content can

be generated both by the companies themselves or consumers while

companies allow and control such co-creation. Moran and Gossieaux (2010)

note that effective social media marketing should be based on consumer

conversations and their features. They continue to argue that companies

should design their social media strategies after listening to what the online

communities are talking about the companies' products or services. Learning

where the conversations are happening and being able to participate in the

conversation are key steps for a successful relationship marketing, as well as

for providing engaging content.

As stated earlier in the previous section of social media and viral marketing, value fusion strategy can positively affect relationship marketing. Larivière et al. (2013) recommend that "value should be considered more holistically, and value to the consumer and firm should be jointly optimized rather than managed in isolation" (p. 279), satisfying both parties. The data on consumer interests gathered from social media networks can be applied for marketing purposes, providing maximized value to both the company and consumer. The value fusion process is thus closely related to benefiting consumers (Malthouse et al., 2013). For some consumers, exclusive information tailored to them would give them a special feeling that they are deeply engaging with the brand they like. Malthouse et al. (2009) note that generating consumer loyalty is the final goal of CRM interventions—personalized marketing efforts lead to a value creation for consumers, setting potential for building a long-term relationship.

2.4. Social Media and Building Brand Community

Boyd and Ellison (2008) highlight the notable component of SNSs such as enabling the users to publicly display their personalized profiles and connections and managing their images to generate good impressions. Impression management is then defined as the conscious or unconscious effort to affect others' "perceptions about a person, object, or event by managing the information in social interaction" (Dwyer, 2007). SNSs' profile section let the

users to manage their impression where they can post photos, put personal background information, and list interests. Such self-representations empower users to control and shape their interactions on SNS. Similar to an individual user crafting a self-image, companies' brand identity can be created through an online profile: The companies' characteristics can be presented through biographical information and pictures. For example, a Facebook user may "like" an organization's page if the page profile meets his or her taste or objective.

Building brand communities is a key for a company to generate brand awareness and enhance consumer loyalty (Trusov et al., 2009; Holland & Baker, 2001). Brand community can be described as a specialized community that has a foundation on a set of socializations among the fans of a brand (Muniz & O'Guinn, 2001). While social media help connecting users with similar interests, the medium offers users a sense of community (Sproull & Faraj, 1995). Furthermore, SNSs link strangers based on political views, common language, or sexual, racial or religious-based identities (Boyd, 2008). The linked users then communicate freely on a brand community where the interactive communication provides the companies content to scrutinize. As a result, through brand communities, companies can follow the perceptions about the brand in real time.

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Brand communities offer various advantages for brands: Interacting with and monitoring loyal consumers, incorporating consumers to the brand identity, gaining market research from consumers and co-creating value with consumers (McAlxander & Koening 2002). Bagozzi and Dholakia (2006) agree on the positive effect of brand community building in that the brand communities enable the delivery of direct marketing communication to consumers. Tajfel and Turner (1986)'s social identity theory partially demonstrates why consumers join a brand community—people form social identity by linking themselves into specific social groups such as brand communities, allowing brands to provide them symbols to be identified with (Grayson & Martinec, 2004). Thus, when a consumer's social identity increases within a brand community, a greater consumer involvement is expected with the brand (Bagozzi & Dholakia, 2006). As the technological advancement of new media has changed and evolved the brand communities into new forms, the communities established on social media platforms should be studied.

Social media platforms allow companies to build a successful brand community in that it provides two-way communication between the companies and their consumers. As McWilliam (2000) stresses, a successful brand community provides users a sense of involvement and partial ownership. Consumers should be able to co-create value or contents on brand

communities as well, as they do on SNSs. Brand communities on social media

bring various advantages to companies. The social media platform leads the

brand communities to reduce the cost of initiating the communities in the first

place while it provides greater reward than the online communities do due to

the free platforms given to both brands and consumers (LaPointe, 2012).

Furthermore, brand communities on social media can reach greater amount of

users. Another beneficial feature is the proximity of the brand given to

consumers (Algesheimer et al., 2005). Any social media user can join a brand

community without paying associated value or an effort of purchasing

products from the brand. Laroche et al. (2013) continues to prove the

successfulness of social media based brand communities—user information

authenticity. Since the social media users generally provide their authentic

identities, the brands can take advantage of the user demographics.

3. Sports Organizations' Use of Social Media for Marketing

Need for adapting to the social media environment has been

recognized by sport market. About 50% of the population ages 18-35 actively

follow a sport team while 35% of them actively comment on social media

(Keller, 2013). Given the demand, sport organizations have attempted to be on

various social media platforms to reach and build their fan base. According to

Spanberg (2013), this effort is largely demonstrated by the sport organizations'

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use of contests, prizes, games, and video—mostly of the behind-the scenes variety—in aims of engaging their fans.

Through the interactive feature of SNSs, sports organizations obtain unfiltered message from their fans, not just delivering information. The collected consumer data through interaction enables the organizations to build brand identification (Pegoraro, 2010). Given the benefits, sports organizations not embracing the new technology will risk losing the opportunities social media offer as well as an increased fan base. Benefits of using social networks generally involve providing team information, enhancing fandom, building team reputation, improving brand management, encouraging social interactions among fans, promoting ticket sales, promoting customer relationship management, and yielding customer loyalty.

Among SNSs, Facebook is an especially attractive medium for sport marketers since low cost is involved, specific fan group is targeted and information or message is easily distributed and stored (Walker, et al., 2011). The message of the sport teams are more likely to go viral since sports fans tend to own various shared feelings such as sympathy and support (Depken, 2001; Giulianotti, 2002). These feelings are usually talked and shared through social settings such as brand communities.

3.1. Previous Research on the Use of Social Media for Marketing

Many researches have employed content analysis to investigate how organizations of different fields are using social media, especially Facebook, for marketing purposes. The marketing methods focused to be observed in the studies involved brand management, promotion, relationship marketing, and interactive marketing. Analyzing how the organizations design their coding scheme is fundamental in figuring main objectives of each study and what they aim to find out.

A research by Shen and Bissell (2013) investigates on how beauty brands use Facebook to promote brand awareness and enhance brand loyalty. The study presents observations from a content analysis of Facebook page posts from six beauty brands including MAC cosmetics, Estee Lauder, L'Oreal, Clinique, CoverGirl, and Maybelline. The main focus was placed on revealing how the brands are connecting with their fans on Facebook through viral marketing, looking at what is "the most viral post or post type for beauty brand development and engagement on Facebook" (p. 635). The study additionally observes how the "high-end" brands and department stores are using Facebook differently.

Since a majority of brands are still placing their most effort on selling products in terms of using social media for marketing, the second question of the study involved types of promotion techniques used by the beauty brands and how the techniques engaged fans. The third research question of the study

was what kind of methods do the brands practice on their pages to distribute

their product messages. Other questions the study proposed are as followed:

> How do the brands develop and share their calendar, how do the
>
> brands integrate across other channels to increase brand awareness and
>
> brand image, thus to enhance brand loyalty, and how frequently do the
>
> six beauty brands issue posts on their Facebook page each week. (p.
>
> 636)

Primary information employed for analysis involved post time and the

number of likes, comments, and shares. In a belief that eWOM can be

measured through "like," comments, or "share" features of the Facebook, the

numbers on the features were gathered and analyzed. Applying viral marketing

rules and basic characteristics of post contents, coding for post types

incorporated event, product, promotion, entertainment, and other where event

was defined as sharing a calendar. A post fell into the promotion category if its

objective was to encourage consumer demand. Posts under promotion were

further classified into four groups: "coupon/discount code, sample/gift with

purchase, giveaway, or other" (p. 641). Entertainment was coded if the post

encouraged direct interactions between the brand and consumers, including

"beauty pool, Q&A, survey, activity with reward, application services within

the Facebook page, or other" (p. 639). To observe how the beauty brands

integrated across other channels of media to improve brand loyalty, indications

(No = 0; Yes = 1) were set whether or not the following items were present: "Twitter, spokesperson/model, expert/artist, blogger, brands within the same company, other" (p. 639).

The study found out that the beauty brands favored using activities of engaging their consumers, such as Q&A or beauty poll to other types of activities including product or promotion, in designing their posts' content. Open-ended questions like Q&A rather than interactive questions with limited options as poll were used more frequently while survey was figured out to be the most engaging post type. As noted earlier in the present study, the two-way interaction feature of social media may provide brands better engagement control among their consumers. To follow this trend, most of the beauty brands were placing an emphasis on engagement and community rather than promotions or sales. Few of the observed wall posts generated by the brands delivered promotion information such as discount code or gift and suggested that promotion is not the only way to make profits. Overall, gathering insights from consumers via interaction was implied to be more helpful to achieve brand loyalty for a long-term.

A research by Parsons (2013) conducts a content analysis of 70 global brands to analyze how the companies are using social media in fulfilling their marketing purposes. Parsons looked at number of "likes" as a mechanism to assess the popularity of a whole page or of a certain post on a page. For coding

scheme, the research employed Kietzmann et al.'s (2011) framework in further

classifying its types of information, which was divided into 20 different

categories. Additionally, a list was made for types of postings. Posts were

collected from each company's wall during a month period.

      The research observed that following types were helping the

formation of brand identity on the Facebook pages: "Ad campaigns/Product

Information/Sponsorships, Company information/News/History/Fun Facts,

Celebrity/Athlete information/acknowledgements, Events, Information about

changes to Facebook page or website, Photos, Video, Product information,

Entertainment related–TV/Movies, and Social Responsibility/Charity/

Philanthropy/Community" (p. 34). The researcher further stated that posting

live events or video would assist a company to enhance presence on Facebook,

besides frequency of posting. Brands' attempt to personalize their relationship

with consumers was reflected in the type of postings such as holiday greetings,

polls and poll questions, and postings that called for fan involvement. In

general, brands with most number of "likes" were suggested to have built

decent reputations on Facebook while the likes may imply reputation on

Facebook.

      The research also focused on looking at how the companies attempted

to promote conversations among consumers. To measure the conversation

level, categories such as "calls for involvement, customer comments, product

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reviews/tips/uses/recipes, polls/poll questions, and contests/sweepstakes" (p. 34) were observed. The research also concentrated on figuring out how the companies were trying to share with consumers with the following categories: "Apps/games/downloads, career/business opportunities, links, photos, product reviews/tips/uses/recipes, promotions/coupons/samples, and video/YouTube links" (p. 34). Those categories represented the companies' attempt to reach and attract consumers by providing the consumers of exclusive benefits that can be distributed only through Facebook.

The study's content analysis proposed that among variety of reasons companies utilize Facebook, one of the most salient reasons is to develop a long-term relationship with their consumers. It was evident that companies were not using Facebook simply as a place to distribute information. Companies observed were found to post in an average of 24 times a month, demonstrating the Facebook followers of the companies were receiving a message in every few days. A concern for the companies was raised as their posting frequency should be tailored not to bother their Facebook fans. To encourage consumer involvement and lead to potential purchase behavior, the companies often used content with incentives such as coupons, sweepstakes, and contests. These were designed to meet the ultimate goal of marketing. In addition, interaction posts such as requesting consumer feedback, asking

questions and multiple-choice polls were found beneficial for marketing purposes.

A research by Waters and Lo (2012) examines the impact of cultural orientations via social media. The research conducted a content analysis of 225 non-profit organizations' Facebook profiles. During the process, the researchers mainly focused on how the organizations distribute their information, how they manage their Facebook presence and how they promote organizational accomplishments including how they manage to engage the stakeholders.

The Facebook profiles of the organizations were mainly analyzed for the presence of items indicating "social media disclosure, organizational achievement, and stakeholder engagement" (p. 305) to meet the objectives of the study. In this case, the disclosure was comprised of two dimensions: Organizational and individual. Organizational disclosure concentrated on delivering certain information with details of organization and its vision, where the variables involved having "a group description on Facebook, historical information about the nonprofit, the current mission statement, a link to the nonprofit's web site, and a visual of the nonprofit's logo to visually connect with Facebook users" (p. 305). Individual disclosure focused on key elements that made Facebook users to recognize they are communicating with identified people rather than a faceless organization. The variables involved:

"The listing of the account administrators, a specified email address to contact individuals at the organization, an organizational phone number, and physical location address" (p. 305). For organizational achievement, providing "links to news stories that featured the organization, press releases to share organizational announcements, and summaries of campaign results" (p. 305) was coded. In addition, this category measured practice of Facebook features, such as posting of photographs, videos, and audio files that allow organizations to share news and promote their achievements. The last category involved how organizations engage their stakeholders, where variables were designed to include the use of "wall" as a discussion board, posting of "notes," providing a calendar of upcoming events, listing of volunteer opportunities, donating opportunities, and purchasing opportunities.

The study by Park et al. (2011) examines how the health organizations take advantage of social media, especially Facebook's interactive features in managing their brands for advertising purposes. A total of 1,760 Facebook wall comments on the health organizations' pages were collected for content analysis and meet the objective of the study.

The unit of analysis of the study was wall post or comment on the Facebook pages. The study's coding scheme was designed of four categories: "Basic descriptive information about the wall comments on Facebook and the Facebook user, interactive features on Facebook, social media channels used

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in combination with Facebook, and Facebook features on self-presentation/ branding/advertising by organizations" (Park et al., 2011, p. 67). Furthermore, the descriptive variables coded for categorization reasons were as followed: "Date of the comment, type of access, and number of fans on the health organization's page" (p. 67). The type of access was then subcategorized into three levels—open, partially open, and closed in order to find out the visibility of the Facebook profile and wall posts. The genuine number of fans was also recorded for each page to measure popularity.

In the study, the interactivity of the consumers was measured by the consumers' capability to yield simultaneous and sharing among them. The research has come up with 14 interactive features including "other" category: "Comments/posts, e-mail, photo- or image-sharing, video sharing, blogging, instant messaging, mobile/text messaging, e-cards, RSS feed, e-games, e-mail updates, widgets, links to bookmark the page, and e-mail newsletters" (p. 67). The "social media channel" variable was designed to observe an organization's incorporation of other social media platforms with Facebook, where six such platforms were coded: Twitter, YouTube, Flickr, blogs, MySpace and other. Lastly, the organizations' branding or marketing strategies was determined by whether an organization employed self-presentation and promotion. Five different techniques were coded: "Logo, photo, biographical advertisement, wall post advertisement, and advertising goal" (p. 67).

As a result, the non-profit health organizations were found to be more active in posting on Facebook while not able to leverage the interactive feature of the medium like government agencies and schools exhibited. A significant use of social media by the organizations for the purpose of promoting their brands was noted.

The research by Wolley and Limperos (2010) proposes SNSs as a suitable platform for political communication. The main objective of the study was to analyze how Barack Obama and John McCain were depicted across Facebook groups, and content analysis was employed to observe the pattern. In the process of developing a coding scheme, a set of Facebook groups were selected as sample to collect each Facebook group's thumbnail and main group page. The content categories were divided according to the sample. The two names were coded and recognized first in the entire group name for each candidate. The number of group members on Facebook and their activities were also coded. Other group information including "the group title, group picture, group description, and recent news sections" was coded while whether the candidates' names were present or absent on them (Wolley & Limperos, 2010, p. 642). For a qualitative content analysis, whether the collected group information reflected the candidate in a positive or negative manner was taken into account. In addition, the presence of "profanity, racial, religious, age-

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related language, and the valance of the language" was coded as well (Wolley & Limperos, 2010, p. 642).

The results of the study revealed that the Facebook group membership and the members' activity level were found out to be higher for Barack Obama than for John McCain. Looking at the positive and negative portrayal measured, Barack Obama was more positively depicted throughout the Facebook groups than John McCain was.

Similarly, the study by Fernandes et al. (2010) examines Facebook groups of students who have supported the 2008 presidential candidates, McCain and Obama. The schools examined involved the largest land-grant universities in seven neutral states. A content analysis of Facebook groups was also conducted. Each Facebook post was coded as a unit of analysis with basic demographics of the users, group-related information, and date in mind. For coding scheme, the collected posts were then investigated for the existence of a signified list of topics: "Political civic process, policy discussions, horse race coverage, selling products, Web link, social related activities, relationship building, request to join another group, emotional expressions, and "other" (Fernandes et al., 2010, p. 661). In consequence, four subcategories of each topic were coded: "Candidate issues, negative statements about the opponents, organizational or administrative activities for the group and other" (p. 661). These four topics were then divided into two subgroups: Long-term influences

like party affiliation and short-term influences including political issues and candidate image. Lastly, each post's tone was categorized and coded into three levels—positive, negative, and neutral.

The results of the study found that Facebook can be used to promote conversation and civic political involvement. Such topics involved policy disputes, campaign update, candidate matters, and attainment of campaign products. In general, pro-Obama groups had more site activities than that of pro-McCain groups. Furthermore, pro-Obama groups focused mainly on short-term topics such as candidate image and campaign issues during the primary season, while pro-McCain groups concentrated on long-term topics such as partisanship and group affiliation. Overall, the study proposed that youth online communities tend to actively follow and participate in political conversations.

3.2. Previous Research on Sports Teams' Use of Facebook

An increasing number of researches are focusing on sport organizations' use of Facebook as the importance of adapting to social media environment continues to rise. Based on the relationship-marketing context, the study by Pronschinske et al. (2012) examines the relationship among the page attributes on sport teams' Facebook pages and fan involvement. The study proposed that SNS provides a chance to create new and expanded existing relational bonds with fans. A content analysis of 114 professional

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sports teams' Facebook page was conducted to find out the effect of page attributes have on the number of Facebook fans.

The main aims of the study were to figure out how the sport teams can attract more number of fans on Facebook and how they should present themselves to implement a successful relationship-marketing. The results indicated that authenticity and user engagement were the most important page attributes that contribute to maintain and increase the number of Facebook fans. In addition, given the social identity theory where individuals have desire to associate with organizations they perceive as successful, teams with a high regular season winning percentage resulted in having a significantly larger number of Facebook fans (Bhattacharya et al., 1995). Lastly, posting real-time information regularly was found to be beneficial for sport teams' Facebook pages.

A research by Wallace et al. (2011) examines the college sport teams' use of social media in managing their brands. For the study, the ten National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) teams' and the Big 12 Athletic Conference teams' Facebook page posts were observed for the 2010-11 season. The sampling period involved one week randomly chosen from each of the spring, summer, fall, and winter seasons. Through content analysis of the sport team pages, how the major college sport teams are employing social media for marketing and branding purposes were reviewed.

Coding scheme for the study was developed with major themes such as "communication tools, brand attributes, brand associations, marketing strategy, information coverage, and type of fan interactions" (Wallace et al., 2011, p. 431). The type of communication was selected to observe whether the category influences the type of user interactions with content. The brand attribute category was divided into two categories based on the Bauer et al. (2008) study: Product-related and non-product-related attributes. Bauer et al. (2008) proposed that non-product related attributes provoked stronger brand-attribute and loyalty outcomes than did the product related attributes. The brand association category was employed to detect agenda-building strategies. Lastly, since consumer interaction can be linked to satisfaction with online brand experience, the consumer interaction was selected as a category (Pedersen et al., 2007). The researcher also considered "the frequency of uploading content items, type of communication media used, and the fan interaction with these items throughout the season" (Wallace et al., 2011, p. 428).

The results of the study found that the Big 12 teams tended more to upload photos and status updates than the NCAA teams did. Among the communication types, the sport teams used links and status updates the most. While the study suggested the teams to use videos, notes, and other communication tools in order to increase fan interaction, the teams were not

frequently employing them. Both groups used product related attributes more than they used the non-product related attributes. The top seven most used brand associations were found out to be: "Team success, rivalry, socialization, brand mark, stadium, commitment, organizational attributes, and none" (Wallace et al., 2011, p. 434). In terms of the types of marketing promotions, for both NCAA and Big 12 pages, "general information" was the most frequently used category followed by "ticket sales" and "sponsorship." In terms of measuring user interaction, the number of "likes" and "comments" were measured for each post.

A study by Miranda et al. (2014) employs the Facebook Assessment Index (FAI) to compare and evaluate the Facebook pages of top European and North American professional sport teams. In the process, opinions of experts were collected through distributing a questionnaire. The questionnaire was comprised of three major categories to review the information on a Facebook page of organizations: popularity, interactivity, and content. The popularity was measured by number of fans of the Facebook pages while interactivity signified Facebook engagement of the fans such as likes, comments, and shares. The study employed previous Delphi analysis by researchers, where five indicators of degree of Facebook page interactivity were provided:

Number of wall posts made by the organization in the last 7 days;

average number of likes per post, calculated from the last 10 posts;

average number of comments per post, calculated from the last 10

posts; average number of shared posts, calculated from the last 10

posts; and average number of user posts answered by the company in

less than 24 hours, calculated from the last 10 posts that need an

answer. (p. 79).

The content category was evaluated by reviewing the existence of relevant

information such as product information, marketing messages, events, polls,

location, phone, and email.

The results of the study showed that the Facebook pages examined in

the study were employing social media to build long-term relationships with

the users while focusing on distributing content providing real-time online

brand experience. The study also highlighted that most of the professional

sport teams employ SNSs not only to sell their brands but also to boost the

game-day experience such as "the highlights, the atmosphere, the music

playlist, the pre-match rituals, views from the seats, and humorous anecdotes

from each game" (p. 87).

A research by Thompson et al. (2014) analyzes the National Sport

Organization (NSO) of New Zealand in how they develop and manage their

social media strategy. As the NSO New Zealand acknowledges the importance

of employing social media like Facebook in meeting expectations of all

stakeholders, the needed strategies in the process are examined. The

researchers identified such strategies as "use of promotions, 'behind the-scenes' material, and constant engagement and conversation with fans and followers" (p. 42). For methodology, the study employed expert interviews, Google Analytics and Facebook's Insights data to measure Return on Objective (ROO). The study came up with three major categories in order to meet the objective of the study: "Content (quality, relevance, engagement), metrics, and ROO and barriers to engagement" (p. 51).

The results of the study revealed that communication types of questions and polls were the most successful in stimulating interaction of the users. In comparing the data collected during the competition period to that of outside the competition period, more traffic to the Facebook page was noted during the competition period. While the main cause of the traffic was promotion, the study proposed that promotion could be an effective strategy in motivating users to "like" the page. Increased awareness and exposure of the brand was then expected. The use of behind-the-scenes content was also found to be successful in engaging the fans. For the Tourism New Zealand (TNZ)'s page, this involved the "use of video clips with tournament staff, audio from player press conferences, videos of player cameos, and photos from official Davis Cup functions" (p. 53). The inclusion of the "value-added" content like New Zealand's traditional dance performance, pōhiri, provided exclusiveness to users becoming an incentive of being a fan. Lastly, the research

recommended a number of strategies regarding content of a sport organization's Facebook page:

> Acquiring more content from regional bodies with a particular focus on club and regional events; including offers from club pro-shops exclusively for fans; featuring blog posts from team players; integrating quizzes with the option of providing monthly prizes from sponsors for the best performance; and providing incentives for fans to get involved during national tournaments ties by encouraging fans to send in photos of themselves supporting a player(s)/team. (p. 53)

All of the strategies noted on the study were intended to promote conversations and motivate engagement among the users. The level of engagement and interaction was used as metrics of how successful strategies were carried out.

 While a significant amount of research is conducted on sports teams' need of marketing and branding through traditional form of media, there is a limited amount of research concentrating on the new media adaptation and its effect on professional sport organizations, especially relating to the social media strategies (Thompson et al., 2014). As this limitation is more evident in Korean sports market, a research examining social media strategies of Korean professional sports teams seem eminent for a development of the market. The present study attempts to provide an examination on how the professional

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sports teams in Korea are using Facebook, focusing on the clubs of the K

League, and hopes to suggest ways for improvement as a result.

4. Research Questions

Based on the previous research and the objective of current study, the

following five research questions were developed:

RQ1: What type of communication tools is most frequently used on

Facebook by professional football clubs in Korea?

RQ2: What type of communication tools promotes fan engagement the

most?

RQ3: How is Facebook used as a marketing tool by the clubs?

RQ4: Which type of brand association and marketing yields fan engagement

the most?

RQ5: How clubs are using Facebook by the popularity and successfulness?

III. Method

The objective of the present study is to examine Korean professional football clubs' use of social media, explicitly Facebook, as a means of marketing and branding tool. The study also expects to observe how the Facebook users interact on the Facebook pages depending on different types of communication, branding, and marketing strategies. In order to review certain types of communication patterns each club used, a content analysis of the K League clubs' use of Facebook pages (N = 11) was conducted.

1. Selection of Clubs

All 14 of the K league Classic clubs who have participated in the 2013 season were subject to be observed in the study. The clubs' Facebook pages were included in the study after their site authenticity was verified, as all the pages stated that they are official Facebook pages of the clubs or contained address to their official club websites. As three of the clubs—Pohang, Jeju, and Jeonbuk—have not managed official Facebook pages by the year of 2013, only 11 club pages were studied in the present study: Kangwon, Kyeongnam, Busan, Suwon, Seoul, Daejun, Daegu, Incheon, Jeonnam, Seongnam, and Ulsan. For a deeper analysis, the 11 clubs were categorized into four groups under two categories. First, the clubs were divided by popularity: Popular clubs (Seoul, Suwon, Jeonnam, Incheon, and Kyeongnam) and unpopular clubs (Busan, Daejun, Ulsan, Daegu, Kangwon, and Seongnam). For

popularity, the number of "likes" on the clubs' Facebook pages acted as standard for classification—five clubs who had most number of likes were coded as "popular" while the rest were considered "unpopular." For successfulness, the five clubs who ranked higher in the 2013 season were placed in the "successful" group whereas the rest of the six clubs were seated in the "unsuccessful" group. To be more specific, based on the K League's split system, the clubs finished the 2013 season in the upper split were classified as "successful" while the clubs ended the season in the lower split were labeled "unsuccessful."

2. Unit of Analysis & Sampling Period

Data for the study was obtained through looking at the 11 K League clubs' Facebook pages. Unit of analysis for the study was each Facebook post of the chosen clubs during a fixed amount of time. To collect enough samples for data analysis, the respective club pages were examined for nine constructed weeks. Among the nine weeks, each week was randomly selected from the months of March to December of 2013, which are the actual months a season is operated. The data collection period was designed to yield a balanced and unbiased data throughout the season. A total of 969 posts were collected as a result.

3. Coding Structure

The codebook and its definitions for coding were developed based on the observations on early posts of the clubs and previous researches. As shown in Table 1, major themes of the codebook involved type of communication, brand association, and marketing strategy. Each of the 969 posts was coded three times under different categories.

Table 1. Coding Structure

Category	Subcategory
Type of communication	Status update, question, video, link, photo, other
Brand association	Rivalry, stadium, ex-player, home city, goodwill, team characteristics, team history, fans, star player, coach, team performance, social interaction, none, other.
Marketing strategy	Merchandise, ticket sales, guerilla marketing, sponsorship, event marketing, promotions, none, other.

The type of communication category was included to observe how the clubs are employing different types of Facebook tools that enable the clubs to communicate with their fans: Status update, question, video, link, photo, and other. Specific coding scheme and coding method for type of communication are demonstrated in Table 2. For example, a post with video attached was coded as "video" whereas a post with link to an external site was coded as "link." A post formed in a question form—ranging from a simple text asking a question to a structured quiz in a form of "vote" was coded as "question." When a post satisfied multiple subcategories like a post with photos and a link,

decision was made focusing on the perception on what the clubs' main aim

was in distributing the content.

Table 2. Specific Coding Scheme for Type of Communication

Sub-category	Concept	Example
Status update	Texts without any visual or external aid that provide information.	"[K League Classic 29R] End of first half Seongnam 2:0 Kangwon *Goal: 8' Yeom (Assist: Jeparov), 27' Kim"
Question	Posts in a question form or a vote, asking for fan engagement or interaction.	"Fill out the word balloons in the photo. We expect the fans' active participation."
Video	Video attached that can be streamed instantly without visiting external link.	"What does the player Jiho Han think of the player Jongwoo Park? Check out the interview!"
Link	A link provided to another site or encouraged to be visited.	"Coach Ho Kim's interview is up. http://sports.news.naver.com..."
Photo	Photos or an album uploaded to aid information in text.	"Player Myeongjin Ko practicing at the National Team (4 photos)"
Other	Posts do not meet the above subcategories.	"Daejun Citizen (DCFC) created an event. [Hana Bank and Daejun Citizen present scholarship!]"

The brand association category was formed aiming to examine how the

clubs are branding themselves through Facebook. The posts were observed

focusing on the clubs' activity that have purpose on building a long-term

relationship with their fans, while having an intangible marketing purpose to

enhance brand loyalty. Founded within the relationship marketing perspective,

the sub-categories of the brand association involved: Rivalry, stadium, ex-

player, home city, goodwill, team characteristics, team history, fans, player,

coach, team performance, social interaction, none, and other (see Table 3). As Bauer et al. (2008) argued, the brand association values were designed concerning the product related and non-product related attributes. Among the subcategories for brand association, product related items involved rivalry, stadium, ex-player, team characteristics, team history, player, coach, and team performance while the non-product related items included home city, goodwill, fans, and social interaction. The product related values generally signified what the clubs were selling to boost the game-experience among fans whereas non-product related values tended to be more related to the fans. In terms of coding, if a post was mentioning about a club's home city that the club is residing in, it was coded as "home city." Similarly, a post about events that has a central theme on connecting to the home city was also coded as the subcategory—posts usually demonstrated the clubs volunteering at local facilities like schools. While the "goodwill" subcategory had a similar operational agenda-building purpose as the "home city," it was not limited to aid the locals but the whole society. Again, coding was conducted in a mutually exclusive way while focusing on the central theme or main message the clubs wanted to deliver or to brand themselves through.

The marketing strategy category was included to study how the clubs were marketing themselves via Facebook. Marketing strategy subcategories were built by looking at posts that were stimulating consumer demand, having

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Table 3. Specific Coding Scheme for Brand Association

Subcategory	Concept	Example
Rivalry	Notes on a rivalry between any two clubs.	"The first harbor derby match of the season Busan-Incheon"
Stadium	Demonstrates or mentions stadium or any facility of a club.	"Would there be any stadium that has a greater sunset view than our Dragons home stadium's?"
Ex-player	Posts on an ex-player of a club, his whereabouts and performance.	"Player Jooyoung Park's goal video when he was playing for our team."
Home city	Posts have something to do with the home city the club is residing in.	"Into the citizens_Changwon middle school_football clinic"
Goodwill	Posts on helping the society	"Daegu FC will deliver 10 wheelchairs to neighbors when 100th 'share' is reached."
Team characteristics	Demonstrates club effort, dedication or spirit. Also mentions club color or uniform.	"While it is raining, both the coach and the players are concentrating on practicing~~"
Team history	Posts about club history—on matches or establishments.	"Greeting the 10th year of 'Incheon Soccer Magazine,' let's look back at the 2013 season."
Fans	Posts about fans—thanking, introducing, motivating fans, etc.	"Meeting the best female supporters of K League Classic, Busan I-park's 'Aegis.'"
Player	Focusing or featuring on a specific player of a club.	"D-9. Kihoon Yeom in 'Silver arrow [uniform].'"
Coach	Focusing or featuring on a coach or a staff of a club.	"Why did Kangwon FC choose coach Arthur? It's answered through this article."
Team performance	Posts about club performance—results and highlights.	"Our players fought hard but lost with score of 4:2."
Social Interaction	Attempt to socialize with fans via topics unrelated to sports.	"Fans of Daegu FC, have a happy Chuseok with your families ☺"
None	Post does not signify any brand association.	"The departure time for tomorrow's shuttle to Kangreung is changed from 11:30 to 12:30pm."
Other	Post does not meet the subcategories above but have some kind of brand association.	"The best beauty of the football league, the announcer Jiwon Jung visited the Ulsan-Moonsu stadium yesterday for 'Viva K League' shoot."

specific purpose of increasing purchase behavior whether it is buying a match ticket or merchandised products. A direct and certain act of marketing behavior was categorized as marketing strategy as well. For example, the subcategory "guerilla marketing" signified any unconventional marketing attempt of the clubs that involved visiting a specific event site mostly without notice or a sudden offering of rewards. However, a simple coverage of team-related topics was also considered as marketing in this study, considering that distribution of free information can yield long-term marketing effect. For example, simply stating a team's current location or what they are up to would be coded as "team coverage." The sub-categories thus involved: "Merchandise," "ticket sales," "guerilla marketing," "event marketing," "promotions," "sponsorship," "event coverage," "individual coverage," "team coverage," "none" or "other" (see Table 4). Both brand association and marketing strategy categories were selected as major themes of the research to observe clubs' different purposes of posting on Facebook in relation to reaching their marketing goals.

For each of the three categories and for all 969 posts, fan engagement was measured through the number of "likes," "comments," and "shares" in order to study which type of posts would engage fan interaction the most. The numbers for each Facebook features were obtained by simply looking at each post and recording the numbers. In the present study, the fan engagement was

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Table 4. Specific Coding Scheme for Marketing Strategy

Subcategory	Concept	Example
Merchandise	Posts advertising any kind of product of a club.	"The awaited all-weather jacket preorder has begun."
Ticket sales	Information on how and where to buy game tickets.	"6/23 (Sun) 6pm FC Seoul vs. Busan advance purchase: www.fcseoul.com"
Guerilla Marketing	A sudden and unusual approach to fans.	"Visiting PR! Provincial office"
Event Marketing	Special event created by a club to interact with fans or introduce the sports.	"Busan provided a football training session for elementary school teachers"
Promotions	Schemes, discounts, contests, free services, awards, etc.	"The last home match with fans— treat for 500 fans!! (Uniforms, autographed balls, flags...)"
Sponsorship	Mentions sponsor or featuring awards sponsored by sponsors.	"NEWS: Daejun Greengrocery Inc., agreed to sponsor Daejun Citizen"
Event Coverage	Free information about match information and results.	"[K League Classic 23R] first half 33' Substitute for Seongnam Player 49 Hanyoon Kim in Yeongnam Kim out"
Individual Coverage	Free information on an individual that is related to a club, such as player, staff, etc.	"Our player Jungheok Kwon renewed the contract for two years, remaining as Incheon's GK till the 2015 season."
Team Coverage	Free information and coverage on a club.	"Most of the players take rest in the morning during the weekdays without matches."
None	Post does not contain any marketing purposes.	"Which song you guys think of when it rains like today?"
Other	Post does not meet the sub-categories above but have some kind of marketing attempt.	"We apologize for the 5/25 Ulsan Hyundai shuttle."

further analyzed with the amount and level of engagement needed to perform each behavior. Simply "liking" a post would be considered as a low level of engagement while it can be perceives as a passive behavior—merely reading content and pressing "like." On the other hand, commenting on a post and sharing it would be considered as a high level of engagement since they involve somewhat more complicated cognitive process than "liking," expressing one's own thoughts in words, and willing to share them with other Facebook "friends" or fans of the pages.

4. Coding Procedure

Data was collected through gathering posts from the club pages, which involved taking a screenshot of each post and assigning an item number to each. The collected 969 units were then reviewed and categorized following the definitions of the codebook. During the process, emerging categories and themes helped the complete formation of the codebook. Categories that did not offer abundant cases to build a mutually exclusive category were identified as "other." Revisions were made along the coding process to clarify that coded categories were as exhaustive and mutual exclusive as possible. As explained in previous sections, when an item satisfied multiple categories at once and was not mutually exclusive, it was classified to one specific category based on its central theme. Since most of the Facebook users have access to the pages' posts, the obtained numbers of fan engagement are always subject to change.

The data analysis was conducted through descriptive statistical analysis, while frequencies and percentages for all categories and their sub-categories were reported. In addition, one-way ANOVA was conducted with SPSS version 18 to analyze fan interaction for different categories.

5. Intercoder Reliability

To avoid observation bias, a coder who is not involved in the study was recruited to test the intercoder reliability of the coding scheme. While the whole data was coded via one coder, the employed second coder aided in raising the validity of the coding scheme. Before the test, the second coder was trained through several training sessions to be familiar with the coding scheme and its definitions. To test the reliability, a sample of approximately 10% of data (n = 97) was randomly chosen from the whole for the second coder to code independently (Neuendorf, 2002). The intercoder reliability coefficient formula by Perreault and Leigh (1989) was employed to calculate the agreement. The type of communication category yielded the intercoder reliability of 0.97 while the other two categories—brand association and marketing strategy produced that of 0.93 and 0.94. Thus, the overall intercoder reliability among the categories averaged approximately 0.95, which exceeds the acceptable level proposed by Perreault and Leigh (1989).

IV. Results

A total of 969 posts were collected and analyzed for nine constructed weeks: 65 posts from Kangwon, 98 posts from Kyeongnam, 88 posts from Daegu, 91 posts from Daejun, 109 posts from Busan, 130 posts from Seoul, 121 posts from Seongnam, 116 posts from Suwon, 65 posts from Ulsan, 44 posts from Incheon, and 42 posts from Jeonnam.

1. Type of Communication Tool Used by Clubs (RQ1)

The first research question was proposed to examine the most popular communication type on the Facebook page of the 11 football clubs. A descriptive analysis of the type of communication category (status update, question, video, link, photo, other) showed that 42.72% of the 11 clubs' posts (n = 969) was categorized as "photo," proving it as the most popular communication type employed by the clubs (see Table 5). The second most popular type of communication was "link," (24.25%) as most of the clubs attached links to external sources to lead the fans to post-related web pages. The third most popular type of communication was "status update," which accounted 22.19% of the entire posts. The top three most common type of communication (photo, link, and status update) altogether consisted of more than 85% of the club posts. The rest of the order is as followed: "Video" (8.67%), "question" (2.06), and "other" (0.10%). The clubs employed "video" less than expected.

Table 5. Types of Facebook Communication Tools Used

Communication Tool	Frequency
Photo	42.72%
Link	24.25%
Status update	22.19%
Video	8.67%
Question	2.06%
Other	0.10%

Note. n = 969

2. Type of Communication Tool and Fan Engagement

The second research question projected to study the most engaging post type on the Facebook page of the 11 clubs, analyzing how the posts engaged their Facebook fans. Overall, the frequency demonstrated the number of "likes" earned more interactions from the users (M = 87.96) than did the number of comments (M = 20.97) and "shares" (M = 1.36; see Table 6). The results suggested that the most engaging communication type urged an individual to "like" a post was "video" (n = 84, M = 139.43), followed by "photo" (n = 414, M = 119.47), "question" (n = 20, M = 95.70), "status update" (n = 215, M = 75.60), "link" (n = 235, M = 68.60), and "other" (n = 1, M = 29.00). Although the clubs preferred to post "photo" and "link," "video" found out to be the most effective communication tool in motivating fan engagement. The results also suggested that "question" (M = 96.65) was more likely to be commented on than the other five groups: "video" (M = 10.19), "photo" (M = 8.29), "status update" (M = 7.54), "link" (M = 3.17), and "other" (M = 0.00).

As shown in Table 6, "video" (M = 4.33) was most frequently shared followed by "photo" (M = 1.63), "question" (M = 1.10), "link" (M = 0.61), "status update" (M = 0.49), and "other" (M = 0.00).

Table 6. Communication Tools and Fan Engagement

Type	Rank	Likes	Rank	Comments	Rank	Shares
Status	4	75.60 (99.28)	4	7.54 (17.04)	5	0.49 (2.00)
Question	3	95.70 (108.65)	1	96.65 (213.38)	3	1.10 (3.11)
Video	1	139.42 (146.10)	2	10.19 (14.26)	1	4.33 (13.42)
Link	5	68.60 (69.88)	5	3.17 (6.33)	4	0.61 (1.39)
Photo	2	119.47 (147.45)	3	8.29 (12.95)	2	1.63 (6.37)
Other	6	29.00 (0.00)	6	0.00 (0.00)	6	0.00 (0.00)
Average		87.96		20.97		1.36

One-way ANOVA tests were completed to understand how the number of "likes," comments, and "shares" differed across the five types of communication tools. Facebook user interaction was significantly varied in "likes," $F = 8.825$, $p = 0.000$, for types of communications. Similarly, one-way ANOVA showed that Facebook user interaction was significantly varied in comments, $F = 25.019$, $p = 0.000$, and in "shares": $F = 3.080$, $p = 0.016$. Tukey's post-hoc comparisons of the communication types signified that the "question" (M = 96.65) earned significantly more comments than other types: "Status update" (M = 11.11, $p < .001$), "video" (M = 12.26, $p < .001$), and

"link" (M = 5.537, p < 0.001). In addition, "video" (M = 7.91) was found out

to be more shared than the link (M = 1.95, p < 0.05).

3. Facebook as a Marketing Tool (RQ3)

The third research question was developed to understand how the

football clubs are using Facebook as a marketing tool, in the aspects of

branding and marketing. The 11 football clubs represented a broad variety use

of brand associations. As seen in Table 7, the largest number of clubs' posts

addressed "player" (31.89%) to associate their brand while "team performance"

(21.98%), and "fans" (7.22%) were the next major representation on Facebook.

"Team characteristics" (6.60%), "home city" (6.50%), "coach" (4.85%),

"rivalry" (4.23%), "goodwill" (3.51%), "stadium" (2.17%), and "social

interaction" (1,96%) represented the remaining brand associations. However,

Table 7. Brand Association Used by the Clubs

Brand Association	Frequency
Player	31.89%
Team performance	21.98%
Fans	7.22%
Team characteristics	6.60%
Home city	6.50%
Coach	4.85%
Rivalry	4.23%
Goodwill	3.51%
Stadium	2.17%
Social interaction	1.96%
Ex-player	0.72%
Team history	0.72%
None	4.75%
Other	2.89%

Note. n = 969

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"ex-player" (0.72%) and "team history" (0.72%) were barely used by the clubs
to associate their brands. On the contrary, "none" (4.75%) and "other" (2.89%)
represented a fairly solid amount of the portion.

In terms of marketing strategies used by the clubs, generating and
distributing free information on the clubs accounted more than 75% of the
entire posts (see Table 8). The most popular marketing strategy used by the
clubs was "event coverage" (40.04%), followed by "individual coverage"
(21.88%) and "team coverage" (15.79%). The rest of the marketing strategy
employed involved "other" (5.68%), "event marketing" (5.37%), "promotions"
(5.37%), "sponsorship" (1.96%), "guerilla marketing" (1.44%), "none"
(1.03%), "ticket sales" (0.93%), and "merchandise" (0.52%). While the clubs
were concentrating on distributing free coverage of clubs, "ticket

Table 8. Marketing Strategy Used by the Clubs

Marketing Strategy	Frequency
Event coverage	40.04%
Individual coverage	21.88%
Team coverage	15.79%
Event Marketing	5.37%
Promotions	5.37%
Sponsorship	1.96%
Guerilla Marketing	1.44%
Ticket Sales	0.93%
Merchandise	0.52%
None	1.03%
Other	5.68%

Note. n = 969

sales" and "merchandise" accounted for a very small amount of the portion among the marketing strategies used by the clubs.

4. Facebook as a Marketing Tool and Fan Engagement (RQ4)

The fourth research question delved into the question of which type of brand association and marketing yields fan engagement the most. As shown in Table 9, the number of "likes" gained more interactions ($M = 84.28$) than the number of comments ($M = 9.73$) and "shares" ($M = 1.30$). Among the brand association sub-categories, "ex-player" ($n = 7$, $M = 105.86$) was most likely to generate "likes" from the fans, followed by "player" ($n = 309$, $M = 133.13$) and "stadium" ($n = 21$, $M = 105.86$). The rest of the brand association generated "likes" as followed: "Team characteristics" ($n = 64$, $M = 97.30$), "rivalry" ($n = 41$, $M = 96.07$), "team performance" ($n = 213$, $M = 93.92$), "other" ($n = 28$), $M = 85.86$), "goodwill" ($n = 34$, $M = 72.38$), "none" ($n = 46$, $M = 68.04$), "fans" ($n = 70$, $M = 68.33$), "coach" ($n = 47$, $M = 65.19$), "home city" ($n = 63$, $M = 62.52$), "social interaction" ($n = 19$, $M = 47.58$), and "team history" ($n = 7$, $M = 40.29$).

The fans were most likely to comment on the following brand associations: "Home city" ($M = 28.03$), "ex-player" ($M = 14.85$), "team history" ($M = 13.43$), "stadium" ($M = 13.05$), "none" ($M = 8.48$), "fans" ($M = 8.39$), "social interaction" ($M = 8.11$), "player" ($M = 7.91$), "team performance" ($M = 7.66$), "rivalry" ($M = 6.34$), "team characteristics" ($M =

Table 9. Brand Association and Fan Engagement

Brand Association	Rank	Likes	Rank	Comments	Rank	Shares
Rivalry	5	96.07 (104.66)	10	6.34 (8.15)	2	2.39 (7.13)
Stadium	3	105.86 (89.94)	4	13.05 (17.93)	6	1.29 (2.80)
Ex-player	1	144.43 (162.90)	2	14.86 (17.67)	9	0.86 (1.46)
Home city	12	62.52 (55.78)	1	28.03 (128.30)	5	1.30 (3.68)
Goodwill	8	72.38 (70.34)	12	5.24 (8.02)	1	4.29 (17.40)
Team Characteristics	4	97.30 (114.94)	11	6.33 (9.52)	8	1.08 (2.52)
Team history	14	40.29 (57.65)	3	13.43 (22.04)	14	0.14 (0.35)
Fans	10	68.33 (79.80)	6	8.39 (14.27)	10	0.76 (1.75)
Player	2	133.13 (145.85)	8	7.91 (13.00)	4	1.35 (6.86)
Coach	11	65.19 (68.78)	14	3.28 (4.39)	12	0.57 (1.03)
Team Performance	6	93.92 (140.26)	9	7.66 (17.24)	6	1.29 (4.41)
Social Interaction	13	47.58 (42.59)	7	8.11 (7.45)	13	0.42 (0.67)
None	9	68.94 (115.89)	5	8.48 (15.38)	3	1.72 (5.26)
Other	7	85.86 (57.60)	13	5.11 (6.87)	11	0.75 (0.83)
Average		84.28		9.73		1.30

6.33), "goodwill" (M = 5.24), "other" (M = (5.11), and "coach" (M = 3.28).

For share, the most number of shares came from "goodwill" (M = 4.29),

"rivalry" (M = 2.39), "none" (M = 1.72), "player" (M = 1.35), "home city" (M

= 1.30), "stadium" (M = 1.29), "team performance" (M = 1.29), "team

characteristics" (M = 1.08), "ex-player" (M = 0.86), "fans" (M = 0.76), "other"

(M = 0.75), "coach" (M = 0.57), "social interaction" (M = 0.42), and "team history" (M = 0.14). In general, the fans rarely generated "shares" compared to "likes" and comments.

One-way ANOVA was tested to notice how the number of "likes," comments, and "shares" differed across the 14 types of brand associations. Facebook user interaction was significantly varied in "likes," $F = 3.651$, $p = 0.000$ and in comments, $F = 2.545$, $p = 0.002$. One-way ANOVA demonstrated that Facebook user interaction was not significantly different in "shares" ($p = 0.708$) for different brand associations.

In terms of marketing strategy, the number of "likes" generated more fan engagement (M = 91.83) than the number of comments (M = 17.64) and "shares" (M = 1.58; see Table 10). Among the marketing strategies, "ticket sales" (n = 9, M = 210.56) was most likely to be "liked" by the fans, followed by "individual coverage" (n = 212, M = 129.07) and "team coverage" (n = 153, M = 108.17). The rest involved "event coverage" (n = 388, M = 89.94), "other" (n = 55, M = 88.71), "guerilla marketing" (n = 14, M = 69.43), "merchandise" (n = 5, M = 68.99), "promotions" (n = 52, M = 67.20), "event" "marketing" (n = 52, M = 65.55), "sponsorship" (n = 19, M = 61.50), and "none" (n = 10, M = 53.10). As of number of comments, the largest number was produced by the order: "Guerilla marketing" (M = 112.29), "ticket sales" (M = 14.67), "sponsorship" (M = 13.90), "promotions" (M = 10.08), "none" (M = 10.60),

"individual coverage" (M =7.63), "event coverage" (M =6.94), "other" (M

=6.55), "event marketing" (M =6.36), "team coverage" (M =6.30), and

"merchandise" (M =4.20). For "shares," following marketing strategies

yielded "share" by the order: "Ticket sales" (M =4.89), "promotions" (M

=3.00), "guerilla marketing" (M =1.86), "event marketing" (M =1.49),

"individual coverage" (M =1.43), "team coverage" (M =1.39), "event

coverage" (M =1.09), "other" (M =0.95), "sponsorship" (M =0.65),

"merchandise" (M =0.60), and "none" (M =0.20).

Table 10. Marketing Strategy and Fan Engagement

Marketing Strategy	Rank	Likes	Rank	Comments	Rank	Shares
Merchandise	7	66.20 (47.30)	11	3.40 (2.33)	10	0.60 (0.49)
Ticket Sales	1	210.56 (197.15)	2	14.56 (20.77)	1	4.78 (9.67)
Guerilla Marketing	6	69.43 (58.61)	1	112.29 (254.99)	3	1.86 (3.48)
Event Marketing	9	65.73 (59.48)	9	6.48 (9.57)	4	1.52 (3.95)
Promotions	8	65.92 (60.53)	4	10.77 (13.90)	2	2.94 (14.07)
Sponsorship	10	63.21 (42.84)	3	12.00 (18.80)	9	0.68 (1.03)
Event Coverage	4	90.00 (121.60)	7	6.95 (14.20)	7	1.09 (3.76)
Individual Coverage	2	129.07 (149.54)	6	7.63 (14.17)	5	1.43 (7.98)
Team Coverage	3	108.17 (132.94)	10	6.26 (9.51)	6	1.39 (4.37)
None	11	53.10 (44.23)	5	10.60 (10.52)	11	0.20 (0.40)
Other	5	88.71 (84.83)	8	6.55 (10.45)	8	0.95 (1.74)
Average		91.83		17.64		1.58

One-way ANOVA tests were conducted to reveal how the number of "likes," comments, and "shares" varied across the 11 types of marketing strategies. Facebook user interaction was significantly different in "likes," $F = 3.108$, $p = 0.001$ and in comments, $F = 15.173$, $p = 0.000$. One-way ANOVA further exposed that Facebook user interaction has not significantly varied in "shares" ($p = 0.954$) for different marketing strategies.

5. Use of Facebook by Popularity and Successfulness (RQ5)

The fifth research question touched on the issue of whether the 11 football clubs are using Facebook differently by popularity and successfulness. As seen in Table 11, the average number of fans for the popular clubs ($M = 28,654$) was generally higher than that of the unpopular

Table 11. Number of Facebook Page Fans by Popularity

Facebook page	Facebook Fans
Popular Clubs	M = 28,654
Seoul	71,082
Suwon	43,724
Jeonnam	12,073
Incheon	11,821
Kyeongnam	4,571
Unpopular Clubs	M = 3,638
Busan	4,252
Daejun	4,214
Ulsan	4,184
Daegu	3,445
Kangwon	3,056
Seongnam	2,676

Note: Figures as of November 6, 2014

clubs (M = 3,638). The average number of fans for the successful clubs (M = 27,013) was higher than that of unsuccessful teams' (M = 5,006). While popular clubs were consisted of five teams, their overall number of posts (n = 430) was lower than that of the unpopular clubs (n = 539) where six clubs were included. Similarly, the successful clubs (n =5) had less number of posts (n = 464) than the unsuccessful clubs (n = 6) where 505 posts were collected.

As seen in the results, both the popular and the unpopular clubs uploaded the most of their contents with photos (see Table 12). The popular clubs used the following brand associations most frequently: "photo" (40.00%), "status update" (26.28%), "link" (17.44%), "video" (12.56%), "question" (3.72%), and "other" (0.00%). The unpopular clubs used the following brand associations most frequently: "Photo" (44.90%), "link" (29.68%), "status update" (18.92%), "video" (5.57%), "question" (0.74%), and "other" (0.19%). The unpopular clubs tended to upload more contents with links, whereas the popular clubs employed status update and video more

Table 12. Communication Tool: Popularity

Communication Tool	Popular (N = 430)	Unpopular (N = 539)	Difference
Photo	40.00%	44.90%	4.90%
Status update	26.28%	18.92%	7.36%
Link	17.44%	29.68%	12.24%
Video	12.56%	5.57%	6.99%
Question	3.72%	0.74%	2.98%
Other	0.00%	0.19%	0.19%

Note. n = 969

frequently.

When the clubs were separated by successfulness, both the successful

clubs and unsuccessful clubs used "photo" most frequently as communication

tool (see Table 13). The frequency of the successful teams' use of

communication tool as followed: "Link" (28.66%), "status update" (20.91%),

"video" (10.34%), "question" (2.37%), and "other" (0.00%). The unsuccessful

teams used communication tool most frequently in the following categories:

"Status update" (23.37%), "link" (20.20%), "video" (7.13%), "question"

(1.78%), and "other" (0.20%).

Table 13. Communication Tool: Successfulness

Communication Tool	Successful (N = 464)	Unsuccessful (N = 505)	Difference
Photo	37.72%	47.33%	9.61%
Link	28.66%	20.20%	8.46%
Status update	20.91%	23.37%	2.46%
Video	10.34%	7.13%	3.21%
Question	2.37%	1.78%	0.59%
Other	0.00%	0.20%	0.20%

Note. n = 969

The results demonstrated both popular and unpopular clubs used

"player" (34.65%, 29.68%) and "team performance" (20.93%, 22.82%) the

most as brand association tools (see Table 14). The rest of the brand

associations used for the popular clubs as followed in the order of most used:

"Fans" (10.00%), "home city" (5.35%), "goodwill" (5.12%), "team

characteristics" (3.72%), "rivalry" (3.72%), "social interaction" (3.49%),

Table 14. Brand Association: Popularity

Brand Association	Popular (N = 430)	Unpopular (N = 539)	Difference
Player	34.65%	29.68%	4.97%
Team performance	20.93%	22.82%	1.89%
Fans	10.00%	5.19%	4.81%
Home city	5.35%	7.42%	2.07%
Team characteristics	3.72%	8.91%	5.19%
Rivalry	3.72%	4.64%	0.92%
Goodwill	5.12%	2.23%	2.89%
Coach	3.02%	6.31%	3.29%
Social Interaction	3.49%	0.74%	2.75%
Stadium	1.16%	2.97%	1.81%
Ex-player	0.93%	0.56%	0.37%
Team history	0.47%	0.93%	0.46%
None	4.10%	5.19%	1.09%
Other	3.42%	2.41%	1.01%

Note. n = 969

"other" (3.42), "coach" (3.02%), "stadium" (1.16%), "ex-player" (0.93%), and "team history" (0.47%). The unpopular teams employed brand association categories in the different order: "Team characteristics" (8.91%), "home city" (7.42%), "coach" (6.31%), "none" (5.19%), "fans" (5.19%), "rivalry" (4.64%), "stadium (2.97%), "other" (2.41%), "goodwill" (2.23%), "team history" (0.93%), "social interaction" (0.74%), and "ex-player" (0.93%).

As the clubs were divided by successfulness, "player" was the most frequently used category for the successful clubs (40.95%) and unsuccessful clubs (23.56%; see Table 15), notably used by the successful clubs. "Team performance" for the successful clubs (21.12%) was similar to those of unsuccessful clubs (22.77%). The successful clubs used following brand

association the most, followed by the "player" and "team performance":

"Home city" (5.60%), "fans" (5.60%), "coach" (4.31%), "other" (4.09%),

rivalry" (4.09%), "team characteristics" (3.23%), "goodwill" (3.02%), "none"

(2.59%), "stadium" (1.72%), "team history" (1.51%), "ex-player" (1.08%),

and "social interaction" (1.08%). The unsuccessful clubs employed brand

association in the following order: "Team characteristics" (9.70%), "fans"

(8.71%), "home city" (7.33%), "none" (6.73%), "coach" (5.35%), "rivalry"

(4.36%), "goodwill" (3.96%), "social interaction" (2.77%), "stadium"

(2.57%), "other" (1.78%), "ex-player" (0.40%), and "team history" (0.00%).

Table 15. Brand Association: Successfulness

Brand Association	Successful (N = 464)	Unsussful (N = 505)	Difference
Player	40.95%	23.56%	17.39%
Team performance	21.12%	22.77%	1.65%
Fans	5.60%	8.71%	3.11%
Team characteristics	3.23%	9.70%	6.47%
Home city	5.60%	7.33%	1.73%
Coach	4.31%	5.35%	1.04%
Rivalry	4.09%	4.36%	0.27%
Goodwill	3.02%	3.96%	0.94%
Stadium	1.72%	2.57%	0.85%
Social Interaction	1.08%	2.77%	1.69%
Ex-player	1.08%	0.40%	0.68%
Team history	1.51%	0.00%	1.51%
None	2.59%	6.73%	4.14%
Other	4.09%	1.78%	2.31%

Note. n = 969

As seen in the results in Table 16, both the popular and unpopular

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clubs focused on distributing general information about their clubs. "Event

coverage," "individual coverage," and "team coverage" altogether consisted of

more than 75% of the portion for both groups. For the popular clubs, "event

coverage" (36.74%), "individual coverage" (23.49%), and "team coverage"

(14.88%) were the top three marketing strategies used on Facebook. Similarly,

the unpopular clubs used "event coverage" (42.67%), "individual coverage"

(20.59%), and "team coverage" (16.51%) most frequently. The rest of the

marketing strategies produced by the popular clubs are as followed: "Event

marketing" (6.51%), "promotions" (6.05%), "other" (5.58%), "guerilla

marketing" (1.86%), "ticket sales" (1.63%), "none" (1.63%), "sponsorship"

Table 16. Marketing Strategy: Popularity

Marketing Strategy	Popular (N = 430)	Unpopular (N = 539)	Difference
Event Coverage	36.74%	42.67%	5.93%
Individual Coverage	23.49%	20.59%	2.90%
Team Coverage	14.88%	16.51%	1.63%
Event Marketing	6.51%	4.64%	1.87%
Promotions	6.05%	4.45%	1.60%
Guerilla Marketing	1.86%	1.11%	0.75%
Ticket Sales	1.63%	0.37%	1.26%
Sponsorship	1.40%	2.60%	1.20%
Merchandise	0.23%	0.74%	0.51%
None	1.63%	0.56%	1.07%
Other	5.58%	5.75%	0.01%

Note. n = 969

(1.40%), and "merchandise" (0.23%). The marketing strategies most likely to

be employed by the unpopular clubs followed by the general information were:

"Other" (5.75%), "event marketing" (4.64%), "promotions" (4.45%),

"sponsorship" (2.60%), "guerilla marketing" (1.11%), "merchandise" (0.74%),

"none" (0.56%), and "ticket sales" (0.37%). Event marketing and promotions

revealed slightly higher coverage in the popular clubs than in the unpopular

clubs.

Similar to the groups divided by popularity, both the successful and

unsuccessful clubs employed general information as their marketing strategies

most frequently. As seen in Table 17, the three most likely to be produced for

the successful clubs were "event coverage" (38.79%), "individual coverage"

(27.80%), and "team coverage" (14.01%) while for the unsuccessful clubs the

order was "event coverage" (41.19%), "team coverage" (17.43%), and

Table 17. Marketing Strategy: Successfulness

Marketing Strategy	Successful (N = 464)	Unsuccessful (N = 505)	Difference
Event Coverage	38.79%	41.19%	2.30%
Individual Coverage	27.80%	16.44%	11.36%
Team Coverage	14.01%	17.43%	3.42%
Event Marketing	3.88%	6.93%	3.05%
Promotions	4.53%	5.74%	1.21%
Guerilla Marketing	0.86%	1.98%	1.12%
Ticket Sales	1.29%	0.59%	0.70%
Sponsorship	1.29%	2.77%	1.48%
Merchandise	0.43%	0.59%	0.16%
None	0.43%	1.58%	1.15%
Other	6.68%	4.75%	1.93%

Note. n = 969

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"individual coverage" (16.44%). The rest of the categories were as followed

for the successful clubs: "Other" (6.68%), "promotions" (4.53%), "event

marketing" (3.88%), "ticket sales" (1.29%), "sponsorship" (1.29%), "guerilla

marketing" (0.86%), "merchandise" (0.43%), and "none" (0.43%). For the

unsuccessful clubs, the list of the categories as followed: "Event marketing"

(6.93%), "promotions" (5.74%), "other (4.75%), "sponsorship" (2.77%),

"guerilla marketing" (1.98%), "none" (1.58%), "merchandise" (0.59%), and

"ticket sales" (0.59%). The unsuccessful clubs tended to post more "event

marketing" and "sponsorship" than the successful clubs did.

V. Discussion

The current study investigated how the Korean professional football clubs employ social media, particularly Facebook, in terms of marketing and engaging with their fans. It is evident that Facebook has been placed as an active marketing tool for companies, including professional sport organizations, while it enables a two-way communication between the companies and their consumers. The medium allows a new level of interaction between business and people, building a new suitable platform for promotions and brand management. While reaching consumers have become easier in the social media environment, it is essential to acknowledge how to encourage an active engagement from them.

As professional sports world has been adapting to the new media environment, some noticeable patterns were recognized in the management techniques of the K League clubs in terms of the use of communication tools, branding, and marketing strategies. The following sections will provide an evaluation and review to each research question, accompanied by interpretation of data.

RQ 1: Type of Communication

The type of communication has a potential to influence the way content is delivered and viewed, affecting the way the users interact. As mentioned in the previous section, the relationship management has become

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an important part of sport industry (Pronschinske et al., 2012). While social media has been introduced as an ideal platform for relationship management, it is essential to use the medium strategically to learn about consumers most effectively. Consumer or user information can be earned through active interaction, and type of communication tool is one approach to influence the way users respond to contents.

Among the five communication tools selected by the current study, the K League clubs used "photo" the most by a significant amount, generally as complements to text. This indicates that content on Facebook can be expressed abstractly through visual image rather than through written text. As found in previous research, an individual processes image more quickly and automatically, while "the connection between an image and its meaning is more direct than it is for words" (Townsend & Kahn, 2013). Most of the clubs attached one or more photos when they posted on Facebook, aiming to facilitate fans' understanding or simply to catch the fans' eyes on the content they uploaded.

"Link" and "status updates" were the second and the third most frequently used types of communication by the clubs. The clubs frequently posted links to websites outside Facebook, encouraging the users to obtain more information on contents. In terms of posting status updates, the clubs concentrated on distributing quick information on matches, especially for fans

who could not visit stadiums or who are just not interested to follow or watch match broadcasts and news. Status updates also played a role of bulletin board between the clubs and their fans to communicate, distributing notifications from time to time.

On the contrary, the clubs did not employ "video" and "question" type of communication frequently, which implies the possible lack of variety of communication tools used. This also indicates the limitation of potential Facebook user interactions on the clubs' pages. Specifically, video was employed less than expected while it can potentially generate more fan interaction while it is distinguished from other communication tools (Mehdizadeh, 2010). Similarly, though the "question" type of communication could yield more involvement from the fans, the clubs failed to employ the feature to its full potential. Beside the five communication tools introduced, one other Facebook feature that one club employed was "event," which acted as a notification of hosting an event and an invitation platform for the event, figuring who is attending or not. The clubs neglected to use the other Facebook features such as "notes," "votes" and "discussion."

RQ2: Type of Communication and Fan Engagement

Type of communication and fan engagement was measured and studied in order to find out if the communication type had an effect on fan engagement level. The results of the study revealed that "video" was the most

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popular type of communication that yielded the most amount of fan interaction. Notably, "video" was most likely to be "shared," which is a feature on Facebook that allows companies to conduct an indirect marketing as the content shared appear on one's timeline and his or her friends' newsfeed as well. The fans tended to share visually appealing contents more than texts— "video" and "photo" were the first and second sharable types on the pages. This was also evidenced for pressing "likes," where visual presentation seemed to affect the users quickly as decide to click on "like" would involve less complicated cognitive process than writing a comment or sharing. A previous research on visual preference heuristic noted that consumers prefer visuals than texts that will permit them to engage in a quick and easy decision process (Townsend & Kahn, 2013). In addition, visual elements have potential to affect people emotionally while they quickly draw attention. Thus, posting photos would be beneficial for the clubs since visually appealing and easily digested images can encourage people to interact. Furthermore, previous researches noted that consumers tend to interact to photos the most on SNSs (Clavio & Kian, 2010; Mehdizadeh, 2010).

While the clubs posted photos the most, which was found out to be a favorable behavior for them, "video" and "question" types were the least used communication tools among the clubs. In general, posts with visual aid provoked fan engagement the most on Facebook pages, followed by contents

in question form which asked the fans to interact. The most commented type of communication tool was "question" while the clubs preferred to provide simple information in texts rather than throwing interactive questions to engage with their fans. Regardless of the interactive nature of social media, the clubs were not leveraging the dialog aspect of the medium. The clubs should attempt to engage in two-way conversation with their fans more, opening up for the fans' opinions through using visual and question type of posts. For example, uploading more poll, vote, Q&A and survey should allow the clubs to obtain better engagement control and learn better market characteristics. While the clubs were actively employing "status update" and "link," the types found out to be relatively unsuccessful in generating Facebook user engagement than the other tools. This can be explained by the extra "work" required to process the post types—reading texts and visiting external sites, leaving Facebook. As Wilson et al (2010) noted that the type of communication tools and content coverage has a positive connection with consumer behavior, the clubs should employ a mixture of communication tools with different types of content to positively motivate the fans to engage in active interaction.

RQ3: Facebook as a Marketing Tool: Brand Association

By examining the brand association types the clubs posted, their organizational goals and projected images could be identified. The clubs

featured players the most in terms of branding themselves on Facebook. They advertised the players as their valuable assets, starring them as differentiating factors from the other clubs. On the clubs' Facebook pages, various types of coverage on players were presented, from the players' achievements to hobbies while the achievements were highlighted as if they were the clubs' own. Or the images of players were simply attached to any type of posts possible, such as match information or promotion.

The second most used brand association type was "team performance," which portrayed the game experience through team success and efforts. Followed by "players" and "team performance," the clubs continued to brand themselves through the product-related brand associations, such as "team characteristics," "coach," and "rivalry." As previous research noted, product related traits have been linked with greater purchase intentions while it is a factor that stimulates consumption behavior (Gladden & Funk, 2002). "Team characteristics" was used the fourth most while the type talked about uniforms, club color, club nickname, etc. to differentiate themselves from the other teams. The clubs were employing Facebook to further enhance the brand image of their products, exposing the fans on a regular basis to reinforce the experience of the game. "Stadium" type of post was not used as frequently as the other product related categories were, while it could foster the perception of attending the game.

Among the non-product related types of brand association, the clubs employed "fans" most commonly to brand themselves. The "fan" type of branding association attempted to inspire the fans by touching upon their dedication and passion for their supporting clubs. In addition, the post worked as evidence that the clubs possessed loyal fans, which helped them to be viewed as popular and likable. The clubs often leveraged Facebook in performing agenda-building strategies through "home city" and "goodwill" types of branding. As Clavio and Miloch (2009) reflected, the agenda-building strategy offers unique chances to manage a favorable public perception. Volunteering for facilities of the clubs' home cities or creating events especially tailored to target home citizens was the most common types. These activities emphasized the clubs' care and gratitude for the place they are residing in, possibly attracting more future fans that are remotely close to their stadium. The "goodwill" type was used to better their brand image in general, giving an impression that they are following the social issues and willing to help the weak of the society.

RQ3: Facebook as a Marketing Tool: Marketing Strategy

For leveraging Facebook as a marketing platform, most of the clubs focused on building long-term relationship with their fans rather than activating short-term marketing. The clubs concentrated on distributing general information about events including game matches, club individuals,

and clubs themselves, without directly promoting consumption. Followed by the general information type of marketing strategies, "event marketing" and "promotions" were used more regularly than other short-term marketing types such as "sponsorship," "guerilla marketing," "ticket sales," and "merchandise." While providing general information can result in cultivating loyal fans in the long-term, the clubs should leverage Facebook's potential as a promotional platform—Facebook is a suitable place to do short-term marketing with its features. In addition, the general information distribution type of posts should be provided in more engaging form, in terms of type of communication and content converge.

RQ4: Brand Association and Fan Engagement

While the clubs did not actively employ ex-players to associate their brands, "ex-player" type was the most liked and the second most commented branding type on the clubs' Facebook pages. This indicates ex-player could be a crucial branding tool for clubs when used properly—depending on the player's past and current performance. For example, when an ex-player is currently playing for a renowned club, associating the player to a club's brand should be more effective. The second most liked brand association type was "player," signifying that fans tend to relate players the most when they think of clubs they support. A notable aspect of fan engagement on the type of brand association was that fans tended to press "like" for product related posts rather

than they did for the non-product related posts. For example, "ex-player," "player," "stadium," "team characteristics," "rivalry," and "performance" types were more liked than "goodwill," "fans," "coach," "home city," "social interaction," and "team history" types.

On the contrary, the results on leaving comments demonstrated the opposite result: The non-product related type of posts mostly got more comments than did the product related type of posts. The more commented brand association types involved "home city," "team history," "fans," and "social interaction" while the less commented types involved "player," "performance," "rivalry," "team characteristic," and "coach." This contrast can be explained through the extra cognitive process involved in writing a comment than merely liking a post. According to Flower and Hayes (1981), the act of writing involves a set of distinctive thinking that "itself is a goal-directed thinking process, guided by the writer's own growing network of goals" (p. 366). As the non-product related posts were generally associated to the fans themselves, the posts seemed to motivate the fans to engage in a deeper interaction like writing comments. To put differently, the non-product related post types tended to encourage two-way communication than the product related post types did, asking for fans' active engagement. For example, "team history" type of posts was often posted in a quiz form. There was no significant engagement pattern observed for shares, while the average

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number of shares was generally low except for a post that particularly asked the fans to share the post.

RQ4: Marketing Strategy and Fan Engagement

The clubs posted a significantly more amount of general information than they posted short-term marketing strategies. The general information types of posts rather aimed to build a long-term relationship with fans while they generated more "likes" from the fans. Except the "ticket sales" type, which was the most "liked" marketing type on the pages, the general coverage of the clubs obtained more number of "likes" compared to the short-term marketing types such as "guerilla marketing," "merchandise," "promotions," "event marketing" and "sponsorship." The results indicate that distributing free information can result in building brand loyalty among fans, which is beneficial for the clubs in the long-term. On the contrary, the short-term marketing types tended to be commented more than the long-term marketing types. This result may propose that fans are more likely to comment on topics that would directly benefit them, earning a chance to be rewarded. For example, the most commented short-term marketing types of posts mostly involved asking the fans to participate via commenting in order to win a prize—whether it's taking a photo with players or a merchandised product. While "liking" a post can be done without specific purpose, commenting appeared to be done with a certain purpose in mind, that of getting something

in return. Though small amount of numbers were involved, similar

phenomenon happened with "sharing" on Facebook. Fans were more willing

to "share" the short-term marketing types of posts than they did the long-term

ones, possibly to benefit themselves or their friends directly.

RQ5: Use of Facebook by Popularity: Type of Communication

There was no significant difference observed for the clubs' use of

communication tools when they were divided by popularity. Both popular and

unpopular clubs used "photo" as the most common type of communication.

The popular clubs posted more status updates than the unpopular clubs,

mainly due to the fact that most of the popular clubs broadcasted their matches

through their pages in text form. The popular clubs also tended to upload more

videos than the unpopular ones did, which can be perceived as a positive

behavior as the present study has revealed that video provokes the most

amount of fan engagement. On the other hand, the unpopular clubs preferred

to upload links though the type found out to be the least successful

communication tool in motivating fans to interact. Furthermore, the popular

clubs posted more question type of posts than did the unpopular clubs that is

likely to engage fans in two-way communication.

RQ5: Use of Facebook by Popularity: Brand Association

Both popular and unpopular clubs branded themselves via player and

team performance the most while the popular clubs' use for player was a

slightly higher. Both groups also considered "home city" type as a relatively significant branding tool, implying their effort to make connections within their residing city and the importance of building a relationship with home fans. The popular clubs posted more about fans, given the higher number of fans they possess on Facebook than the unpopular clubs do. The popular clubs often employed their fans as a branding tool while branding themselves as popular and likable clubs. In addition, the popular clubs appeared more caring about their operational image and public perception as they put some effort in posting "goodwill" type of posts. The unpopular clubs tended to employ "team characteristics"" as branding tool, possibly in an attempt to advertise their teams' distinguished features to earn more attention. Uniquely branded team characteristics can lead to future revenue opportunities and exclusivity to brands. Both groups did not perform much branding through "ex-player," "team history," and "stadium category."

RQ5: Use of Facebook by Popularity: Marketing Strategy

In terms of marketing strategy, both popular and unpopular groups used long-term marketing types—general coverage on clubs—more frequently, attempting to build long-term brand loyalty. Distributing free information was the top priority for both groups while the popular clubs focused on individual coverage when the unpopular clubs concentrated on event coverage. This indicates the popular clubs' intention to market themselves through popular

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players given the possibility of the clubs having more popular players than the unpopular clubs do. Player can be perceived as a positive factor among fans in following a certain team. While both groups posted "event marketing" and "promotions" as their next most common marketing tool, the popular clubs employed significantly more amount of posts than the unpopular clubs did. Both groups hardly used "merchandise," "ticket sales," "guerilla marketing," and "sponsorship" as marketing strategies on the Facebook pages. The unpopular groups notably posted more on sponsorship than the popular ones did, which would imply their importance of getting sponsorship given their lack of popularity.

RQ5: Use of Facebook by Successfulness: Type of Communication

No significant difference was observed among the successful and unsuccessful clubs' use of type of communication tools. Both groups used "photo" as the most common type of communication, while unsuccessful clubs tended to post more photos than the successful clubs did. Successful clubs uploaded more links than the unsuccessful clubs, which mostly contained news articles from external websites. This result possibly reveals the popular clubs having more opportunity to be covered by media while they possess stronger performance and skilled players than the unpopular clubs do. Similarly, the successful clubs uploaded more amount of video than the unsuccessful ones did, as they would have more winning match highlights to

show. Both groups did not actively use "question" type of communication, implying more diverse method of communication is needed on their Facebook pages to encourage fan interaction.

RQ5: Use of Facebook by Successfulness: Brand Association

Both successful and unsuccessful clubs employed "player" and "team performance" as the most common types of brand association. However, the successful clubs put an extra effort in branding themselves through "player" than the unsuccessful clubs did. This possibly indicates the successful clubs having more amounts of star players and strong squad that they are proud to advertise. On the contrary, the unsuccessful clubs focused on using "team characteristics" in branding. This result may reflect their effort to differentiate themselves through unique features while they have weak performance to be used in branding. Both groups considered "fans" and "home city" as crucial tools of brand association, while the unsuccessful clubs posted a slightly more of the two tools. The result may signify the unsuccessful clubs' attempt to draw their fans' attention back to the clubs regardless of their poor performance by showing their dedication and love for the fans and the home city. Both groups did not pay much attention on posting "goodwill," "social interaction," "stadium," "ex-player," and "team history" as branding tools.

RQ5: Use of Facebook by Successfulness: Marketing Strategy

Both successful and unsuccessful groups focused on distributing general information (i.e. "event," "individual," and "team coverage") to foster brand loyalty among their fans. Successful clubs notably employed "individual coverage" as a marketing tool more than the unsuccessful clubs did, similar to the popular clubs' behavior: As the successful clubs are likely to own skilled players, they have more motives and resources to advertise themselves through players. On the other hand, the unsuccessful clubs posted a slightly bigger portion of "team coverage" than the successful clubs did. Both groups further focused on employing "event marketing" and "promotions" besides the other short-term marketing strategies while the unsuccessful group used the types a little more. The result may indicate the unsuccessful clubs' effort to attract fans to matches via providing incentives and rewards when their performance is not so strong. Neither of the groups actively used "merchandise," "ticket sales," "guerilla marketing," and "sponsorship" as part of their marketing strategies. The unsuccessful clubs placed a little more effort on mentioning their sponsors, similar to the behavior of the unpopular clubs'.

VI. Limitations and Future Research

It is essential to note on the limitations of the sampling period of the current content analysis. Though the 2013 season was considered the best period to collect abundant data at the time of the study written, the sampling period can be extended to observe any changing patterns possibly occurred in the managerial practices of the clubs. The more timely advanced data could be obtained through examining the 2014 season, while it could not be included in the sampling period since the season was ongoing before the completion of the present study.

In terms of the design aspect of the content analysis, it would be vital to compare K League with other domestic or foreign leagues to study how the other club teams manage social media. Doing so, a deeper analysis would be carried out while generating potential suggestions for the K League to benchmark. In addition, a qualitative analysis of Facebook user comments and shares would offer more specific data on user interaction and consumer behavior on Facebook. Lastly, while the present study only focused on examining Facebook, looking at other social media platforms would provide more sophisticated observation of the clubs' adaptation practices to the new media environment.

VII. Conclusion

The findings from the present study revealed several approaches to assess a sports organization's social media platform management. As a majority of sports fans consume information of their favorite clubs on social media nowadays while interacting with the clubs at the same time, learning how to approach the fans through social media has become crucial for sports organizations. Social media, especially Facebook, is noted as a suitable platform to brand and market a sport club's image the way it wants to be perceived.

Most of the K League clubs were most likely to upload photos to communicate with their fans on Facebook, while video was less featured than expected. The fan engagement on different communication types revealed that providing visually appealing contents promote the fans to react to the content while also motivating them to interact. Most of the clubs associated their brands with their players the most, followed by their performances as a club. While the clubs branded themselves more through product related type of tools than through non-product ones, the fans tended to engage in a higher level of interaction when they encountered non-product related type of posts. In terms of marketing on Facebook, though it is essential for the clubs to build a long-term relationship with their fans through providing general information

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on themselves, they should further leverage the promotional feature of Facebook, given the medium's beneficial features.

No significant difference was observed when the clubs were divided by popularity and successfulness, except the fact that clubs seemed to use Facebook accordingly based on their strengths and weaknesses. For example, popular and successful clubs tended to brand themselves through their players the most while potentially having better squad in terms of fame and skill. On the other hand, unpopular and unsuccessful clubs posted on sponsorship a slightly higher, signifying the importance for them to manage and satisfy their sponsors. In addition, the unsuccessful clubs posted more promotions and event marketing in order to make up for their weak performance and to attract fans to matches.

The findings of the study demonstrate that social media can influence the way consumers behave and interact, potentially in ways professional sports clubs desire. Used with right contents and clear purpose, social media can be an ideal platform for the sports organizations to brand themselves. Through social media, sports organizations can promote and advertise what they are great at while doing their best on covering what they lack of at the same time. It is significant to note that the outcomes of the present study suggest the strategic management of social media contents would enhance a sports

organization's brand image while facilitating two-way communication among

fans.

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Abstract in Korean

한국 프로축구 구단의 페이스북 사용 내용분석

이 지 영

서울대학교 대학원

체 육 교 육 과

본 논문은 프로스포츠 구단들이 소셜 미디어를 마케팅 및 브랜딩 관점에서 어떻게 사용하는지 살펴보고자 하는 목적으로 연구되었다. 현대 기술의 발전과 더불어 커뮤니케이션 방식이 진화하며, 소셜 미디어는 일반 기업들이 소비자에게 직접적으로 다가갈 수 있는 도구가 되었다. 한편, 스포츠 산업이 미디어와 밀접한 관계를 가짐에 따라 스포츠 조직들 또한 소비자와의 소통 방식을 진화시키는 것이 중요해졌다.

특히 한국 프로축구는 타 스포츠 및 해외 스포츠와의 경쟁으로 인기가 감소된 것이 현실이다. 따라서 본 논문은 한국 프로축구 구단들이 어떻게 소셜미디어, 그 중에서도 페이스북을 브랜드 경영과 마케팅면에서 사용하는지 분석하고, 기존 팬 및 신규 팬 유입을 위한 소셜 미디어 활용의 개선점을 제시한다. 이를 위해 11 개 한국 프로축구 구단들의 페이스북 사용을 2013 년 시즌을 바탕으로 9 주 동안 내용분석 하였다.

이를 토대로 본 논문에서는 프로스포츠 구단의 전략적인 소셜 미디어 활용에 대한 방법을 제시한다. 먼저, 시각적으로 매력적인 내용을 게시하는 것이 팬들의 반응 및 소통을 촉진하는 가장 효과적인 방법이라고 주장한다. 또한 구단의 제품(product)과 관련된 속성(attribute)을 사용하는 것 보다는 제품과 관련되지 않은 속성을 사용하여 구단을 브랜딩하는 것이 팬들과의 더 깊은 소통을 이끌어낸다고 제안한다. 마지막으로, 구단에 관련된 일반적 정보를 무상으로 제공하는 것이 팬들과의 장기적인 관계 발전에 도움이 되나, 마케팅에 적합한 페이스북의 특성을 또한 더욱 적극적으로 활용하여야 한다고 제시한다. 결론적으로 본 논문은 효율적인 소셜 미디어의 사용이 소비자들의 행동 및 소통 방식을 스포츠 구단이 원하는 방향으로 변화시킬 수 있으며, 구단의 이상적인 브랜드 이미지 구축에 일조한다고 주장한다.
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주요어: 소셜 미디어, 브랜드 매니지먼트, 커뮤니케이션, 스포츠 마케팅, 프로축구

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