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Developing Effective Social Media  
Strategies for Fan & Sponsor  
Engagement in the Sports Organization  
of Pakistan

파키스탄 스포츠 조직의 팬 및 스폰서 참여를 위한  
효과적인 소셜 미디어 전략 개발

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이 논문은 문화체육관광부와 국민체육진흥공단 지원을 받아 수행된 연구임  
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**Dedicated**

TO

My Father

This Thesis Is Dedicated To My Late Father, Muhammad Asghar, A Brave Farmer And P.E Teacher. Who Has Been Missed In My Life at Every Single Step But Today I Am Glad To Make his Dream Come True By Excelling In the Sports Sector.

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## **Abstract**

# **Developing Effective Social Media Strategies for Fan & Sponsor Engagement in the Sports Organization of Pakistan**

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Social Media has become a powerful tool of communication over the past two decades and its impacts are evident across different sectors of the economy in different regions of the world. Sports sector and leading sports organizations such as the International Olympic Committee, globally celebrated sports clubs and various International Federations have reaped the benefits of social media in a number of ways such as fan and sponsor engagement.

Following this line of argument, this study aims to provide a roadmap of effective social media strategies for fan and sponsor engagement to the sports organizations of Pakistan. A set of effective social media

strategies has been developed using mixed methods approach, quantitative data was collected from youth through a survey based on fan and sponsor engagement in Pakistan and analyzed using SPSS.

On the other hand, semi-structured interviews of local and international social media experts along with brand/sponsorship heads of local and multinational organizations were conducted. Despite primary data collection, information has been gathered from social media blogs, document search and websites etc.

Analysis of quantitative and qualitative information has provided a roadmap of effective social media strategies for the sports organizations of Pakistan. These strategies are robust enough to be used by any of the 28 Olympic and 7 Non-Olympic sports practiced in Pakistan.

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**Keywords:** Sports Organizations, Social Media, Strategies, Fan Engagement, Sponsor Engagement and Pakistan.

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## **Chapter 1. Introduction**

Due to the universality and cultural impacts the social media have gathered a great deal of attention from academics and practitioners. Almost 88% of 15-17-year-old and 86% of 18-24 years old use social media in Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011). The Internet users who are actively engage with social media platforms in the United States is 73% (Pew Research, 2013). The group of internet-based applications that allow for the creation and exchange of user generated content on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 is known as social media (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2009, p. 61). All the socially interacting stuff, Internet forums, blogs and social networks make social media (Rothschild, 2011). The new emerging trends over the Internet are also known as social networks (Zhang et al, 2010). Among the Internet users' social media is increasingly popular (Filo et al. 2015).

Report on Social Media Industry Index has provided a comprehensive analysis on the state of social media engagement over 40,000 companies covering 130 major industries. Sports and good related to sports have also been analyzed from the lens of four major social networks

that are Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn (Maven, 2016). Results from the report are shared in table 1 and table 2 below.

Figure 1: Social Media Industry Index 2016

<b>Sports</b>	<b>Facebook</b>	<b>Twitter</b>	<b>Instagram</b>	<b>LinkedIn</b>
<b>AVERAGE FOLLOWERS</b>	2,982,621	1,056,798	511,387	23,949
<b>AVERAGE POSTS PER MONTH</b>	646	1,819	492	28
<b>AVERAGE INTERACTION PER POST</b>	4,472	332	15,145	69

Figure 2: Social Media Industry Index 2016

<b>Sporting Goods</b>	<b>Facebook</b>	<b>Twitter</b>	<b>Instagram</b>	<b>LinkedIn</b>
<b>AVERAGE FOLLOWERS</b>	2,290,325	445,064	238,034	92,032
<b>AVERAGE POSTS PER MONTH</b>	94	237	116	114
<b>AVERAGE INTERACTION PER POST</b>	895	350	30,558	192

Average followers, post per month and average interaction per post can be clearly seen in the tables. When it comes to sports Facebook has the highest followers followed by Twitter. Whereas the interaction per post is far higher in Instagram as compare to the rest.

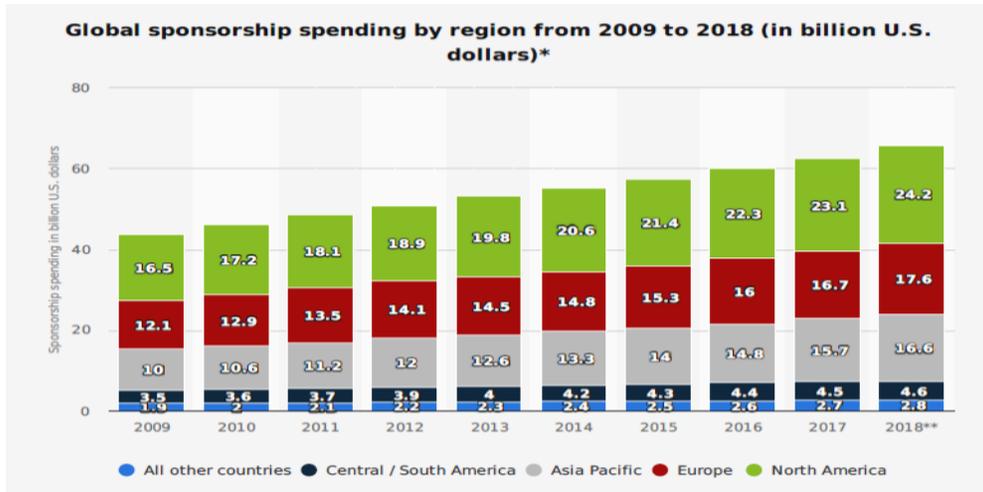
The sports brands invest significant amount of time and resources to drive engagement and relationship online just because of the popularity of social media. A number of brands including Converse, Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo and events such as the Super Bowl, FIFA World Cup and the Olympic Games expand significant resources to integrate social media practices into their marketing strategy. In a study conducted recently on Olympic Sports Social Media Rankings has analyzed the social media footprints of the IOC and its 40 International Federations to look at the effectiveness of social media engagement. Findings of this social media ranking reports highlights that the IOC has an active presence on social media and tops it's on league in ranking when it comes to Facebook, Instagram and YouTube. Interestingly, the International Football Association FIFA is ahead of the Olympics on Twitter. However, the Facebook page of the IOC has 19 million likes, 2.5 times the likes of UNICEF Facebook page, this brings the IOC on the top of all international

organizations. But, the Twitter accounts of the IOC despite having amazingly engaging content streams behind the UN and UNICEF (Marsteller/TSE Consulting, 2017). While mitigating the complications stemming from social media usage by athletes and consumers, such organizations face challenges developing social media polices that leverage the opportunities afforded by these technologies (International Olympic Committee, 2012; Mossop, 2012). Affordability and financial sustainability has always been one of the greatest concern of sporting organizations. Therefore, apart from fan engagement through Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube for reaching out to new audiences the sporting organizations have also focused on the commercial dimensions of engagement such as funds allocation and sponsorships (Marsteller/TSE Consulting, 2017).

In this context graph below shows total spending on sponsorship in the sports sector from year 2009 to 2018. It is a global analysis provided by statistics, an independent think tank. It is evident from the bar graph that the South Asian region that is covered in all other countries in blue has the lowest sponsorship spending whereas rest of the world is reaping the benefits of sponsorship spending. Lack of sponsors and fan engagement is

one of the key reasons of lower percentage of contribution from the sponsors in many Asian countries.

Figure 3: Global Sponsorship spending by Region



## 1.1 Problem Statement

Pakistan is a developing country and sports industry has been neglected in general. A career in sports industry is not considered as a popular profession. Elite athlete community has struggled to become star icon. The general public does not recognize athletes belonging to most of the Olympic sports. Although many elite athletes are using multiple social media platforms but are unable to catch attention of fans and sponsors. This lack of social and financial engagement with key stakeholders is now becoming one of the reasons behind athlete retention in sports. Because of

non-existence strategies and inadequate knowledge about the usage of social media athletes as well as sports organizations are facing a great deal of challenge in their social and financial sustainability.

This lack of fan engagement at the athlete level and lack of sponsor engagement at the sports organizations level is alarming for the sports sector of the country. It is pertinent to note that the situation in general across the globe is not like this; As discussed earlier in this study Internet is full of examples of athletes and sports organizations of many countries with thousands and millions of fans and numerous sponsors.

Even in Pakistan, a sport like cricket has an active fan and sponsor engagement. Multiple local and international sponsors along with people from different walks of life are involved in the projection and development of the sport of cricket. Sports fans and interested sponsors are very much there in the local settings of Pakistan, it's just that there are no developed strategies for utilizing social media for the development of sport. Despite being a country that has been Olympian in few sports, the current state of social media in most of the sports is close to non-existent.

## **1.2 Research Objectives**

This study has the following research objective:

- To develop effective social media strategies that can improve fan and sponsor engagement in the sports organizations of Pakistan.

## **1.3 Research Questions**

### **1.3.1 Specific- question**

RQ: How effective social media strategies can improve fans and sponsor engagement in the sports organizations of Pakistan.

### **1.3.2 Sub- question**

RQ a: Which effective social media strategies can increase fan engagement in the sports organizations in Pakistan?

RQ b: How social media can improve sponsor engagement in the sports organizations of Pakistan.

## **1.4 Identified Gap**

IOC Social Media Guidelines are very much their but no social media guidelines are provided to federations either by National Olympic Committee or Pakistan Sports Board despite being the two main stakeholders of sports in the country. Athletes have no written social media guidelines to project themselves.

Therefore, sports organizations fail to engage sponsors and fans in an efficient and meaningful manner. There is no doubt about the fact that sports organizations are in dire need of such social media strategies that can not only increase the fan following but can also facilitate the organizations to have financial benefits for potential sponsors. Literature has suggested that sports teams must commit resources for building their social media presence, interacting online with fans, and enhancing customer relationships (Abeza et al, 2013). But, unfortunately despite detail examination of the content posted by social media teams the measurable outcomes of connecting through social media are still in infancy. In such state of affairs, a strategic roadmap for effective fan and sponsor engagement in the sports organizations of Pakistan is the need of time.

## **Chapter 2. Review of Literature**

### **2.1 Social Media Platforms**

The importance, usage and influence of social media have shown significant growth in past few years. Social media has caused significant democratization of corporate communications along with a powerful communication tool (Fisher, 2011). Social networking sites, one type of social media, allow organizations to connect with customers through sharing content, facilitating interaction, and building community (Smith, 2013).

Facebook, used by 71% of online adults and visited at least once a day by 63% of its users in the United States, is the most commonly utilized social networking platform (Duggan & Smith, 2014). Facebook News room has 655 million Daily Active Users, a total of 1.1 billion Monthly Active Users (March, 2013). Twitter's users amounted 517 million accounts as of July 1, 2012 and it is considered to be another widely used online micro-blogging social network (Lunden, 2012). This platform is 7-year-old as Twitter was launched on 21<sup>st</sup> of March (Smith, 2013). Almost 200 million active users of Twitter who have 208 followers on average and 170 billion tweets are being sent daily (Smith, 2013). Only in the month of July around 1.058 billion public tweets were sent and it is ranked as the second best

social networking site after Facebook (Lunden, 2012). In three cities London, Tokyo and Jakarta people tweet the most although, most of the twitter users are from the U.S. Another online platform that focuses on professional networking is LinkedIn. In 2011 almost 100 million members are counted (LinkedIn.com, 2011). The impact of social media in today's online-population can be clearly seen in these numbers. The customers and consumers in general have transformed from silent, isolated and invisible individuals into noisy public and even more unimaginable than usual and social media have a significant role in this transformation (Patterson, 2012, cited in Zalgia, 2012; p.216).

Industries that need to actively involve consumers in day-today communications are focusing on the management and successful leveraging of social media. The tourism industry has proven a high interest and involvement in communicating through social media, being characterized by mainly perishable products and services. The presence of consumers in order to be delivered is required in sports events as these are particularly perishable. The maximum sale of tickets and to avoid empty seats or unsold tickets the sports events need to make the best use of social media communications.

## **2.2 Social Media and Sports Sector**

Throughout the past years, social media has grown in importance, usage and influence. In fact, apart from having proven to be a powerful communication tool (Fisher, 2011), social media has also caused a significant democratization of corporate communications (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011). There is an impressive growth in the numbers of active social network users and still it is growing.

The effect of social media and Internet technologies is profound on sport (Pegoraro, 2010, p. 501). In this way the interaction between athletes and their fans has been heightened (Sanderson, 2010). Twitter is the social media platform that is very helpful in reshaping the nature of athlete's fan. It helps in quick and dynamic interactions being a form of communication channel (Fischer & Reuber, 2011). The personalities of athletes are portrayed through Twitter as it provides best opportunity for this (Gregory, 2009). Thousands of professional athletes have developed a presence on Twitter because of its communication potential. Within the sports industry Twitter has become a permanent fixture and it is not so surprising (Wertheim, 2011).

In the sports industry social media have received increased attention (Pedersen, 2012). Researchers have started to explore how social media is

used by sports organizations, athletes and fans (Clavio & Kian, 2010). Social media is used as a platform to establish relationships with their respective audience by the sports organizations, teams and athletes (Blaszka et al, 2012). Athletes as key sport stakeholders have been affected the most (Browning & Sanderson, 2012; Sanderson & Kassing, 2011). The more aspects of athlete's identity are displayed through these platforms as an athlete take a more active part in the public presentation as compared to mainstream media coverage (Sanderson, 2008, 2011).

The attention of sports organization has been drawn from both academia and sports industry due to the usage of social media. In the sports industry Twitter has become the most popular social media form according to (Witkemper, Lim, and Waldburger, 2012). Most of the sports organizations use social media to communicate with public. Throughout the world the role of social media is significant in all aspects of life. The individual and organizations both maintained their connections with interested parties through social media. The sports organizations are increasingly using social media to communicate with consumers (Pedersen &Thibault, 2014).

Social media also provide different benefits from traditional communication strategies. First, social media offer organizations the ability to consistently communicate with customers without time or geographical limits (Egan, 2004; Jahn& Kunz, 2012; Pöyry, Parvinen, &Malmivaara, 2013). Second, social media afford organizations chances to connect with customers outside of traditional business interactions, such as at a sporting event. Finally, opening a two- way dialogue allows for the inclusion of fans in the creation of value, such as asking for their thoughts on event design, suggestions for giveaway items, or ideas for in-game promotions.

### **2.3 Impact of Social Media on the development of Sports**

The communication among companies, groups and individuals has greatly affected by the growth and advancement of media technology. The most popular way to communicate with a large audience is mass media outlets such as Internet, television and radio. The outlet for communication with large audience has become more convenient through social media in the past few years. In the present days, millions of people and business tycoons are using social media outlets globally.

The traditional media could not reach as much audience for professional sports teams but social media can easily access large number of

audience. Literature has observed the undeniable growth of social media in previous decade. A social networking tool like Wikipedia, which was developed in 2001 has more than 13million articles in its repository that are available in 200 different languages. In the trajectory of social media another social networking tool has shown remarkable response that was developed in 2004.

Through the concept of Global Village in the present days Facebook is facilitating more than 300 million members globally to stay in touch. The rank of Facebook would be 4<sup>th</sup> owing to its size if it was a country and it is commonly stated now. The growth rate of almost 1400% Twitter network cannot be ignored on the other hand (Qualman, 2009).

In the sports world social media has become popular (Hutchins, 2011; Sanderson, 2011). The social media is also supportive and architected to help community, collaboration, and peer-to-peer conversation (Meraz, 2009, p. 682). Along with multiple sport stakeholders these tools have embedded into many other aspects of sports. The social media networks provide the most updated information and the subscribers can freely subscribe. The information about the sports aspects and business of an organization is broadcasted through social media for the sports fans to strengthen the bond

between sports fans and professional sports teams and it is considered as an additional benefit (Pronschinske et al., 2012). The home viewing experienced has been enhanced by offering many new channels of social media applications to the fans by sports stadiums in United States and worldwide. These applications provide an innovative experience of the event like a live sporting venue to along with the comfort of the home to the sports fans and this idea is a joint effort of both sports teams and Internet providers (Sutera, 2013).

The relationship, communication and connection of professional sports leagues with their sports fans has greatly influenced by social media globally. The opportunity to increase brand awareness and fan engagement is enhanced by the social media platforms like twitter, Facebook or Instagram. The fans throughout the world can stay in touch with their favorite sports teams and athletes by using social media outlet. Almost 230 million Tweets are generated per day by 100 million active users of Twitter alone these are the findings of David. M. Sutera Sports Fans 2.0. A huge number of investment has been done by different professional sports leagues like Women's National Basketball Association, National Hockey League

and Major League Baseball to stay connected with fans in social media platforms.

Twitter is one of the social media platforms that have redefined communication among sports constituents (Fisher, 2009). Since its introduction in 2006, twitter has become a permanent fixture in the sport communication landscape (Clavio and Kian, 2010). To create specific hash tag pages some sports properties have actively engaged in partnership with Twitter (Lawler, 2012). By engaging athletes and teams in producing content actively Twitter and blogs have revolutionized sports media (Sanderson and Kassing, 2011).

#### **2.4 Challenges of Social Media in Sports**

Management of content information is very difficult due to social media and it is a new aspect that has been highlighted in a study conducted by Jimmy Sanderson. The social media has some threatening aspects like the confidential information is not safe as anyone can locate the information with the help of internet access and the secret information goes beyond the physical confines of the workplace (Sanderson, 2011 p. 42). Social media portray the displeasure and anger of sports fans and athletes against sports teams' decisions.

To avoid the upcoming problems a few sport organizations, prevent employees from using social media within the workplace. The usage of social media is controlled and monitored by many organizations within the workplace (Sanderson, 2011 p. 43). The use of social media can lead to particular judgments and negative consequences because social media liberates their personality.

The latest research on self-presentation and social media has focused more on text-based medium like blogs and Twitter (Sanderson, 2008) (Lebel & Danylchuk, 2012; Weathers et al., 2014). The fastest growing social media platform is Instagram as per the industry analyst similarly; these visual platforms such as Snap Chat and Instagram are increasing massively in popularity (Lunden, 2014). The most mediated interactions are possible on Twitter as it is a unique medium for both traditional and more interpersonal forms. It is necessary for the sports communication scholars to understand the nature and impact of these communication tools on fan athlete relationship as these social media platforms like Twitter provide multiple avenues for interaction (Clavio & Kian, 2010; Hambrick, Simmons, Greenhalgh & Greenwell, 2010). A focus has been made on what is actually communicated and how it is communicated through the usage trends of

Twitter are beginning to be established (Hambrick et al., 2010). The further examination of Twitter messages is necessary due to this lack of knowledge regarding communication through social media technologies (Clavio & Kian, 2010).

The importance of social media for all sports organizations has been realized stated by Sports Fans 2.0, David Sutera. Sports teams through social media now attract the unreachable fans easily. The online activities of sports fans can be track down easily with the help of social media. During live sporting events the sports stadiums and arenas provide web access so the fans can utilize social media to share their statuses, tweets and photos with others (Sutera, 2013).

## **2.5 Fan Engagement**

Building relationships with fans through social media is important for sports teams for two primary reasons. First, sports teams operating in a competitive environment need devoted fan bases to ensure future success because loyal fans are more tolerant of teams' failures and more likely to purchase additional team-related products (Bauer, Stokburger-Sauer, & Exler, 2008). Second, teams gain a competitive advantage by adopting a relationship marketing strategy to cultivate these devoted fans because

relationship marketing focuses on building and maintaining customer relationships (Buhler & Nufer, 2010; Lachowetz, McDonald, Sutton, & Clark, 2001; Shani, 1997). The marketing and customer service activities are enhanced through social media (Pronschinske, Groza & Walker, 2012; Walsh, Clavio, Lovell, &Blaszka, 2013) and social media also supports to monitor athletes by managerial personnel (Sanderson, 2011; Sanderson & Browning, 2013).

Passion, hope, esteem and camaraderie are the four key motives identified for using Facebook (Stavros et al, 2014). The sports manager better understands the engagement of fans with sports, particularly through social media, through awareness of these motives. Fans have large impact on several business segments, areas like sponsorship and media, they are also considered to be an essential part in creating the team sports product (Bauer et al, 2008). Several reports have suggested that social media positively impacts the affiliation of fans towards their club and has implications for the club's revenues by communicating specific facets of the team's image that increases the involvement of fans (Broughton, 2010, 2012).

Social media channels especially Twitter is the best tool available to build relationships with fans. The direct interaction with public is easily possible through social media and provides an opportunity to organizations (Saffer, Sommerfeldt & Taylor, 2013). The two-way conversation and dialogues with the public can be promoted through social media by the organizations (Mersham, Theunissen & Peart, 2009). The involvement of stakeholders and to build a community under an organization's mission and value can be improved through social media (Lo & Waters, 2012). The relationship among fans and professional sports teams can be strengthen by using social media as a tool and that is why sports teams used this tool effectively for publicity (Mathew, 2012). The sports fan spread information and communicates largely through Facebook (Pronschinske, Groza & Walkwe, 2012).

Facebook also allows organizations to create fan pages where they can share information and interact with consumers who have chosen to become Facebook fans by liking the pages. Sports organizations can use these platforms to enhance commitment and engagement of fans (Meng, Stavros, & Westberg, 2015). The sports fans can easily connect to Facebook and Twitter to share comments, photos and videos with their family and

friends as they watch games because the NFL teams are trying to enhance in-stadium experience by upgrading wireless capabilities as per a research conducted by Todd Weiss (2014). The sports fans can enjoy a lot of features provided by the social media such as engagement with the team, the ability to share your opinion and share videos and photos (William & Chinn, p. 433). During a discussion of sports the fans express their identity by using Twitter Hashtags (Reichart Smith & Smith, 2012). The fans also express their hateful and aggressive emotions against athletes through Twitter (Kassing& Sanderson, 2015).

## **2.6 Crucial Role of Athletes in using Social Media**

Social media allow organizations to use two-way communications to build social bonds through interaction and information sharing (Abeza et al., 2013; Buhler & Nufer, 2010), while also enhancing engagement and strengthening the connection between consumers and organizations (Pentina, Gammoh, Zhang, & Mallin, 2013). The needs of the athletes and users such as information gathering, diversion and entertainment meet through social media and it also changed the traditional way athletes interact with their fans (Hambrick, Simmons, Greenhalgh & Greenwell, 2010). Researchers now investigate twitter-based relationships between sports organizations and fans.

Professional athletes maintain personal relationships through social media (Hambrick et al, 2010).

To develop relationships between organizations and the public strategies have been provided for communication professionals to use the internet (Kent and Taylor, 1998). The information sharing and promotion is involved in professional relationships. The detail about games and training sessions or recent events and results that is an insight into athletes, teams, or sports is defined as information sharing (Hambrick et al, 2010). The links to pictures, videos and other websites are also included into it. The discounted tickets, giveaways and publicity related to sponsorship is known as promotion (Hanbrick et al, 2010).

All the decisions made by the professional athletes on and off the playing field/ court are judged and they are accustomed to be in the spotlight. Either good or bad information about the professional athlete will be seen on the news or scroll through social media. The celebrities and professional athletes have been able to reach and engage a much large audience than before since the rise of Internet particularly through social media platforms.

Key societal and cultural issues are influencing athletes. The social media platforms provide an opportunity, promotion and voice that impact not only

a specific issue or event but also the world as a whole. Many professional athletes like Annika Sorenstam, John Carlos, Tommie Smith, Muhammad Ali and Jackie Robinson fought for a cause and used their ‘celebrity’ status to reach and engage a larger audience through various media outlets. After winning Gold and Bronze medals in 200-meter sprint Smith and Carlos fight for equality and used the 1968 Summer Olympics which was a highly broadcasted event on media platforms of this time. When receiving their medals both men held their arm up in support of ‘Human Rights’, wore black gloves and Olympic Project for Human Rights badge on their clothing. Throughout the world it was featured and still is shown in newspaper, radio, T.V and magazines, this was a televised event that received significant attention following the games. In the very divided America these men were fighting for equality. These two African American men use their fame and popularity to send a message to a larger audience without the help from any social media platforms and used opportunity of the Olympic Games to influence others (Travis, 2006).

Cristiano Ronaldo, Lionel Messi, Neymar, Ricardo Kaka and David Beckham are all soccer players and shockingly are the top 5 athletes in the world based on Facebook likes and Twitter followers. They have almost 55

million fans. LeBron James is the first athlete on the list, who doesn't play professional soccer, comes in at number 7. Between two social media platforms James Tallies has around 40 million fans.

Athletes possess the most influential accounts and profiles on social media. Including the digital presence in a brand's sponsorship strategy the athletes have such large social reaches. The return on investment increases by using athlete's digital platform to promote products through social channels. The companies are maximizing their brand exposure through turning to this avenue after seeing these results (Mamajeck, 2016).

## **2.7 Sponsor Engagement**

The supporter of any particular sports club very well recognizes the level of sponsor's repute, affinity and overall engagement of sponsorship. This credibility of the sponsor has a strong influence on supporters/ fan's decision for any sponsor (Wakefield and Bennett, 2010). Sponsorship is not a new modern phenomenon; it started off back in 590 BC in the state of Greek when athletes were given financial compensations (Lee & Ross, 2012). In a specific target group for creating a business-to-business relationship with sports team in order to gain publicity and awareness, sponsorship is a company's investment in cash or kind, via the support of an

activity not directly associated with their business (Biscaia, Correia, Rosado, Ross & Maroco, 2013). The sponsors are more willing to invest in sport associations and clubs as sports is a natural area for sponsorship, which has a mass audience with strong bond because goodwill towards them is possible to be communicated to the sponsor's brands or products (Madrigal, 2001).

The US market can be referred to see the scale of sports industry. The sports industry is accounts for 2.5 percent of world trade, whereas in US the sport industry worth 93.8 billion in 1995 and is known as the eleventh largest market-place (Harverson, 1997). The image (positive or negative) of the sponsor can have spillover effects on the brand image of the club (Bauer et al, 2008), one should also note that in regard with sponsor and in line with the extant literature sports fans express higher level of loyalty toward those companies that financially support their favorite team (Kerr, 2008). The social media is used in order to reach and engage with fans and establish and foster an interactive long-term relationship (Richellieu, 2004; Vallerand et al, 2008), whereas the strong emotional attachment between sports clubs and fans, the prominence and attractiveness of sports brands and the contribution of social media toward brand management in a number of industries have

made the sports industry an ideal business (Mangold and Faulds, 2009; Ballouli, 2010; Williams and Chinn, 2010; Kietzmann et al, 2011; Wallace et al, 2011).The brand building benefits of social media have been realized and all sports organizations at all levels, from high school and amateur sports organizations to top professional clubs, try to maintain an online presence in several social media outlets (Coyle, 2010; Loakimidis, 2010).

To examine the impact of an actual sponsor's image on football fans' purchase attentions and to point out the key variables in the sponsorship relationship the following model was developed (Fig 2). The factors involved in enhancing the sponsor's image between football fans is suggested in the model presented depending upon the sponsorship literature. In enhancing the sponsor's image between football fans, and the subsequent impact on their purchase was investigated more specifically through the role of sport activity involvement, team achievement, and team attachment. A potential moderator effect of the sponsor's product fit to the purchase intention was examined too.

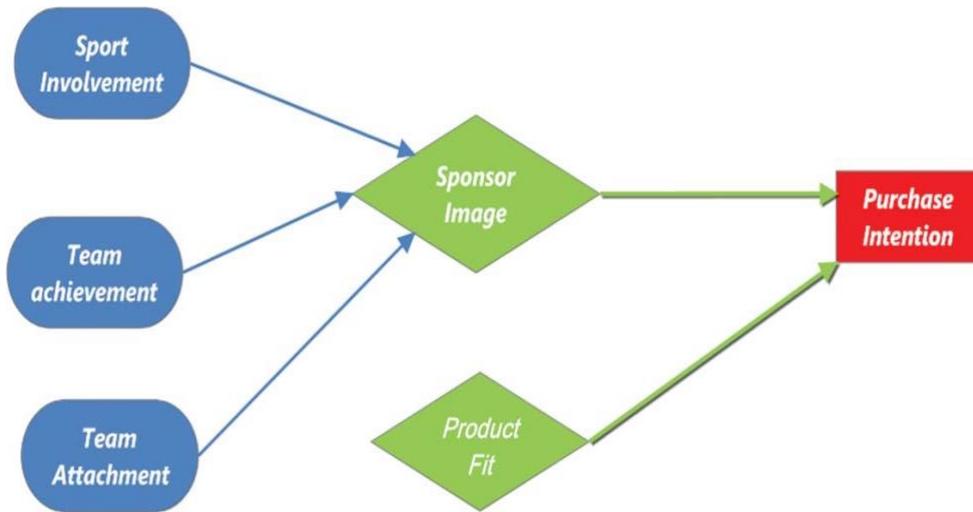


Figure 4: Sport sponsorship Effectiveness Model

The main attitudinal constructs that play a critical role in the formation of sponsor image are sport activity involvement; team attachment and team achievement, by extension in sponsorship behavior outcomes, such as purchase intention are sport (Alexandris, Tsaousi, & James, 2007; Lings & Owen, 2007). The degree to which an individual shows interest in a particular sport activity is related to the sport activity involvement and is positively related to attitude towards sponsors (Biscaia et al, 2013)

An imperceptible motivation or enthusiasm about a recreation activity is described as sport activity involvement. In the sport environment an individual's inclination to a specific sport is also known as sport activity

involvement (Havitz & Dimanche, 1997). The attitude toward the specific sponsor within the sport category can also be contemplated as equivalently important except from sport category involvement that can be perceived as a significant predictor of fan's reactions to the sponsorship (Olson, 2010). The hours spent on watching sports on television and on field, taking updates about sports and participation refers to a fan's degree of involvement (Shank & Beasley, 1998). The more an individual is involved in a sport, the higher the possibility to come up toward any sponsorship than a non-participant, and by extension to be more able to recall the sponsor-ponsee link (Walraven, Koning, & Van Bottenburg, 2012).

Attraction and centrality are the two dimensions involved in sport activity. The anticipated significance that an activity holds for an individual refers to attraction. On the other hand, the position an activity has in a fan's style of living expresses as centrality (Kyle, Graefe, Manning, & Bacon, 2004). A form of psychological connection towards a sports club represents team attachment, the anticipation of the sports club's success and failures as one's own inhibition to engage in behaviors and attitudes to that club and by extension, the sponsor. The individuals have been found more capable to cope or label the sponsor, characterized by a high level of team attachment

(Gwinner and Swanson, 2003). The firms try to benefit from the emotional attachment of the individuals who are emotionally involved when attending sporting events to connect with the consumers (Santomier, 2008).

The attitudes and behaviors towards the sponsor are affected by the sponsor's investment in professional sport teams that generates a goodwill effect among fans (Meenaghan, 2001). The spectator's perceived experience of the team's failings and successes is defined as team achievement that is directly connected with the team identification (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). The fans tend to have a positive association with a winning team enhancing their self-image at the same time (Boen, Vanbeselaere & Feys, 2002). For the concerning supporters of a winning team the team success is the most important factor (Wakefield and Fisher, 1998). The fans supporting historically successful and unsuccessful teams have different effects on the identification of team success.

The sponsor image and purchase intentions are a variety of attitudinal and behavioral variables addressed in recent research, as high-level sponsorship outcomes (Alexandris et al, 2007). Two principal factors stem an individual's intention to purchase, first is to keep a positive stance towards the firm and second, firm familiarity which comes from prior

utilization and exposure (Pope & Voges, 2000). Increasing brand awareness and building, enhancing or altering their brand image are the important reasons to undertake sponsorship for a firm (Gwinner, 1997). There are many meanings credited for brand image like the brand affiliations held in consciousness which are echoed by attitudes about a brand (Keller, 1993). In this way brand image is considered to be a multi-faced variable make up of a broader set of brand associations.

The transfer of meaning is mainly image transferring between the sponsee and sponsor and constitutes one of the main results of sponsorship (Grohs, Wagner, & Vsetecka, 2004). The image of the sponsored property is likely to be assigned to the sponsor when the sponsor or the sponsored property bears upon an individual's mind intentionally or unintentionally (Gwinner & Eaton, 1999).

A number of actors and groups interact in the social institution of sports in its shifting daily constitution (Agostini, p.60, 1995). The sports bodies, media and sponsors are better positioned for strategic development as the development of relationships instills commitment to a network. With particular sports a number of commercial interests have successfully

developed long-term relationships, as instanced by Smurfit and horse racing, Benson and Hedges and snooker, Coca Cola and soccer.

## **2.8 Social Media in Sports \_ Context of Pakistan**

Developed countries are not alone in using social media as this trend is growing globally. The developing countries like Pakistan are also showing exponential growth in this specter of social media. In 2012 the use of social media has grown by 50% (Reader telecom exclusive, 2013). The total population of Pakistan is around 193 million (Haque, 2013). There are almost 29 million Internet users, 121 million mobile subscribers and 8 million social network users as per the statistics (Reader telecom exclusive, 2013).

In the recent years the users of social networking sites (SNS) has shown significant growth. As per the latest records Twitter is the youngest member of the SNS family with almost 2 million users whereas, Facebook has acquaintance with 10 million registered users on its panel (Haque, 2013). The number of users on LinkedIn is around 1.5 million who are registered on LinkedIn.com and almost 1.7 registered bloggers on bloggers.com in Pakistan (Alam, 2012).

The increasing trend of the Pakistani audience towards social media usage is clearly evident as per the above-mentioned statistics. The youth of Pakistan is more involved in using SNS sites because according to the records of Express Tribune 2013 most of the users of SNS sites are in the age group of 18-24 (Eijaz, 2013).

More than 4 million users of Facebook and Twitter belong from Pakistan as it is among the fastest growing social media using population (Martin, 2011). There are more than 5 million Pakistani users between the age of 18 to 50, according to Facebook target audience estimation more than 3 million are males and more than 1 million are females and 20 million Pakistani are regularly online (Martin, 2011).

More than 3 hours a day the youngsters from age group 18-25 spend on the Internet. The awareness about the social network is showed by 98% of the same age group. In the Pakistan the increasing usage trend of social networking sites is observed as from this survey we see that age group 50+ is also aware. Mostly users log in 3 times a day and a large number of users log in daily to the social networking websites (Martin, 2011).

Despite the growing trends of social media usage in Pakistan, literature of social media is almost non-existent when it comes to the linkage between sports and social media. Policy research is also silent in this regard.

## **2.9 Theories related to Social Media & Sports**

There are a number of theoretical models, conceptual frameworks and grounded theories that have been discussed in the literature related to sports and social media. But, as per the scope of this study network theories are more related. The work of the IMF (Industrial Marketing and Purchasing) Group and early Swedish research on network phenomenon has evolved from the confluence of sources a network theory. A specific type of relationship linking a defined set of persons, objects or events is known as a network (Knoke and Kuklinski, 1991). The issues of power, dependency and relationships are three significant concepts in the network literature.

The interconnections between different parties or actors in a network are seen as concept concerns relationships. The actors are seen connected to each other. Forming coalitions with other actors and through corporation are the ways through which that are not dominant will look to improve. By reducing the power advantage of the dominant actor, the power may be gained in a network situation through the consolidation of resources

amongst less powerful actors. In order to protect the autonomy as well as to protect against a loss of power the powerful organizations are more likely to enter into symbiotic relations with organizations performing dissimilar functions (Cook, p. 75, 1977).

There are a number of intersecting relationships as it is apparent in observing the sports network. Sport media nexus and sport sponsor's nexus are two relationships that are now discussed. A critically important backdrop to any discussions on relationships in the sports network is the ability of a sport to generate an audience, either proximately or through media. Each is in fruitful and dynamic interaction with the other as the combination of popularity and immediacy has created a symbiotic relationship between sport and media (McRae, 1996).

The corporate marketer has become a notable partner in the commercialization of sport through advertising support and sponsorship because of phenomenal media interest in sport as program material capable of attracting audience. The current trends in business have ensured the development of a parallel symbiotic relationship that of the sports organization and sponsor, just as there is a symbiotic relationship between media and sport. To increase exposure for the sport itself this relationship

enables the sports organizations to generate revenue. To reach their targeted audience this provides companies seeking to market their products and services with a conduit.

## **Chapter 3. Methodology**

This study has used mixed methods approach, being the very first research of its kind in the sports and social media dynamics of Pakistan gathering information and validating it from multiple stakeholders was extremely important. Following a two-step methodology, blended approach has been used and qualitative methods have validated the data collected through quantitative techniques ( Rogers et al, 1997). Two main tools survey/questionnaire and semi-structured interviews have been used in this study. Apart from it evidence from literature and number of online resources such as websites, reports, documents, interview blogs and international sports organization repositories have been studied to propose effective strategies for the sports organization of Pakistan.

Questionnaire/Survey development was a well-thought and time taking process as it involved conceptualization of the purpose of the study, incorporation of the research design of the study, back and forth revision of the questions and finally drawing up the final version (Giesen, 2012).

For drawing the survey for this particular study, more than ten online surveys and feedback forms from fan and sponsor perspective were researched. Challenge was to develop questions with the local context of

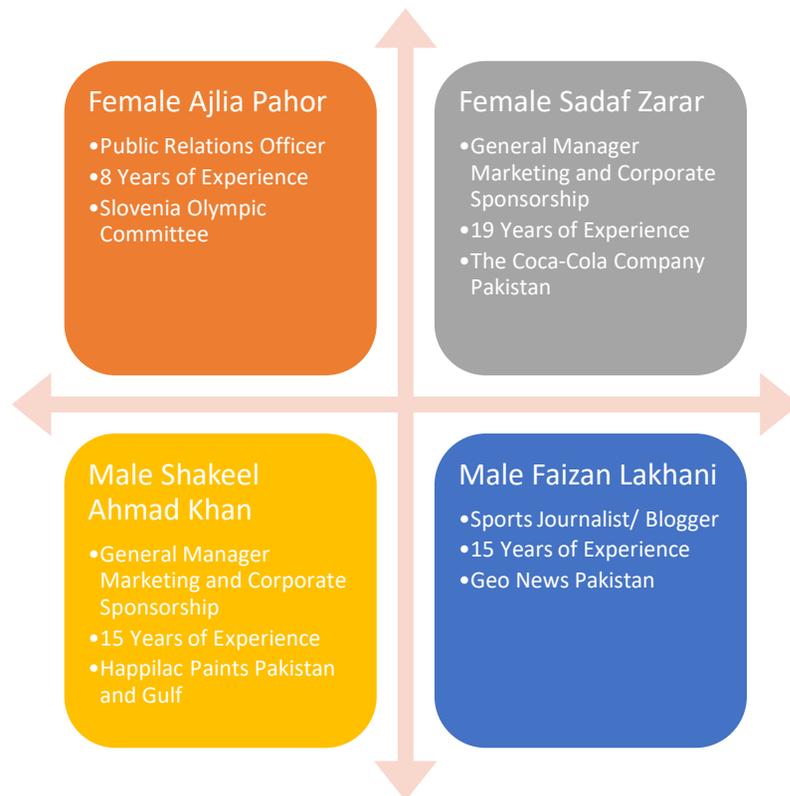
Pakistan as all online available information was from countries across the globe and was suitable to their sports environment.

### **3.1 Sampling and Data Collection**

Literature of social media engagement has suggested that youngsters particularly 16 to 24 are the ones that frequently use social media platforms. Therefore, cluster sampling was used for gathering information from specific age group from both genders. Different clusters as per the age, location and interest in sports and social media were developed. It was found that apart from youngsters ‘middle-aged people ranging from 25 to 30 were also pro-sports and pro-social media. Respondents from all clusters were given chance to fill the survey online as well as offline.

A total of 275 responses were collected. On the other hand, experts were chosen using the purposeful sampling as; it is the most reliable sampling technique in qualitative analysis (Mack et al., 2005). Individuals having extensive experience and knowledge on the subject were purposefully interviewed (Creswell & Clark, 2011). Valuable insights from the following experts has been analyzed not only to validate the quantitative data but also to add value to the findings of the study:

Figure 5: Demographics of Experts



### 3.2 Data Analysis

#### ➤ Quantitative Data Analysis

Collected quantitative data has been analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences Version.21). Before analyzing the data, it was important that data is scrutinized and is made clean and appropriate for further analysis. Therefore, the processes such as imputations and outliers'

removal were carried out. After that descriptive analysis has been carried out. Cross-tabulation, Contingency analysis and Legacy Dialogues for Chi-Square testing have also been used further.

➤ Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative data was gathered through semi-structured interviews, reports and online blogs/websites. Narrative and Discourse analysis of the stories and perspectives shared by each expert along with the text of related reports and blogs was conducted. All interviews were conducted online through WhatsApp and were transcribed later from the rough notes taken over the phone. Extracts of online blogs, websites, information from reports along with the transcribed interviews text was analysed using below mentioned steps:

- Most commonly occurred words and phrases were identified
- Missed information in the quantitative data was researched
- Primary and Secondary data was compared for meaningful linkages

Data was then summarized after back after analysing the findings back and forth. Meaningful findings were drawn through interpretation and discussions. The specific and sub-specific research questions have been answered through findings of both quantitative and qualitative data that are discussed together in the next chapter.

## **Chapter 4. Results and Discussion**

This study has been conducted for the sports organizations of Pakistan and word “organization” has been used strictly in the context sports organizations. To begin the analysis, first of all missing values in the data were identified. Missing values have been estimated using mode and mean of the same variable. Estimated modes or means have been replaced to fill the missing values of all variables of the data set (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007).

Another issue with the appropriateness of data was the existence of outliers. Outliers are actually the extreme values and have the capacity to affect the data set quite significantly (Hair et al., 2010). For treating the data against outliers, Z-scores of all variables were computed for identifying the extreme values on both ends. All cases where z-value exceeded  $\pm 2.8$  have been removed from the data.

Table 1 and Graph 1 below depict the dynamics of gender of the sample. It is interesting to note that 66.9% of the respondents were females and 32 % males. Despite collecting data from different clusters and also through different channels such as Google shared link, Email, Facebook,

Institutional level across different cities of Pakistan gender ratio remained 30 to 70.

Graph 1 has also provided the bar graph in which 180 respondents are females and 86 are males.

Table 1: Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	86	32.0	32.3	32.3
	Female	180	66.9	67.7	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>266</b>	<b>98.9</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

Graph 1: Graphical Representation of Gender

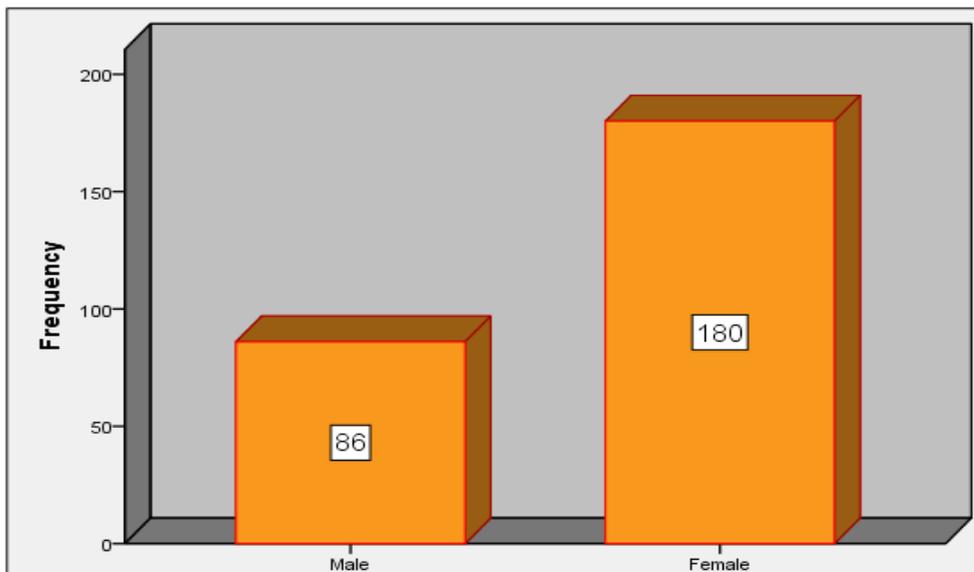


Table 2 shows the dynamics of the age of the respondents, based on the evidence from the literature (Eijaz, 2013; Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011) these five age categories were selected for the clusters of respondents. This study has shown a similar trend in respondents' age as shown in a number of social media surveys. Graph 2 depicts that only 16 % and 7 % of respondents are above 25 and below 16 years of age respectively. Most of the respondents are from the same youth bulge as discussed in many studies in Pakistan as well as other countries. 81 % of the respondents are from the age clusters of 16 to 25 collectively.

Table 2: Age

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
<16	2	.7	.8	.8
16-21	115	42.8	43.4	44.2
Valid 21-25	104	38.7	39.2	83.4
25-30	44	16.4	16.6	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>265</b>	<b>98.5</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

Graph 2: Graphical Presentation of Age

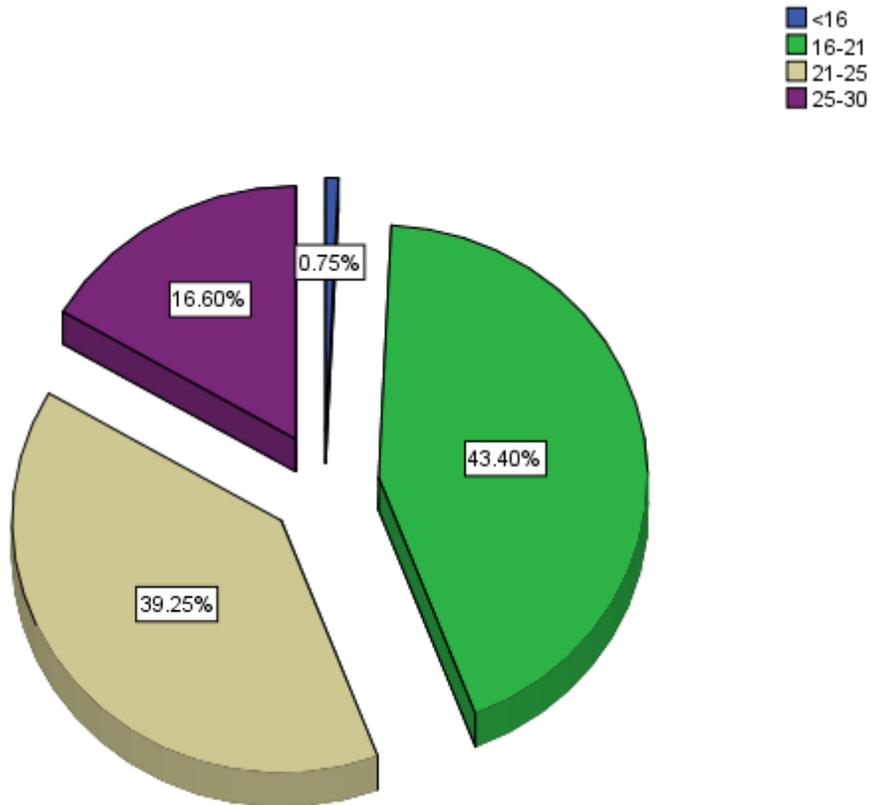
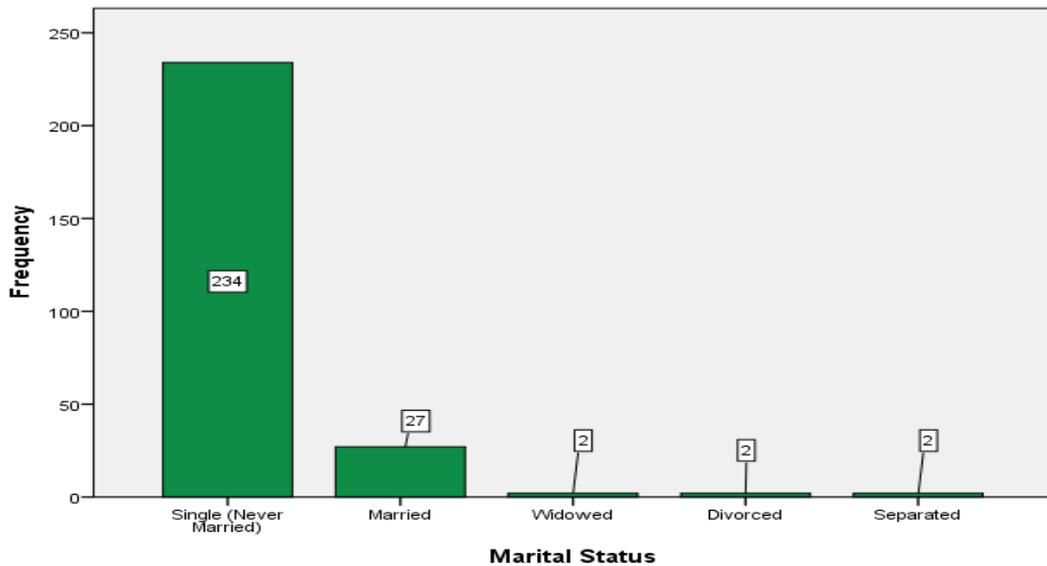


Table 3 illustrates the marital status of the respondents. It is evident to note that pro-sports and pro-social media respondents who have filled the survey are mostly single. Only a small cluster of the respondents that is around 13 % as per Graph 3 are married. Remaining 87% of the respondents of this study are single or never married.

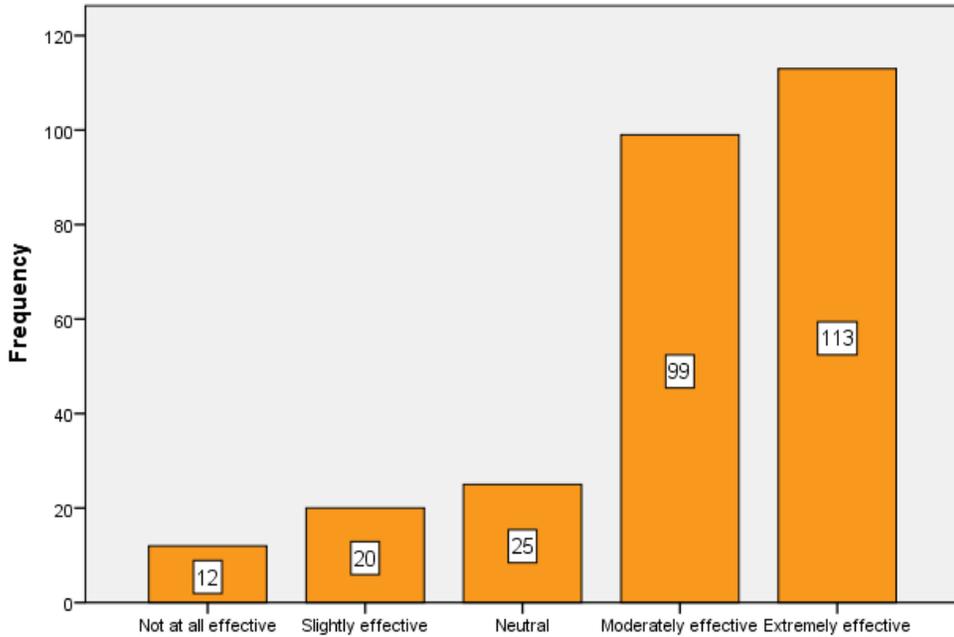
Table 3: Marital Status

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Single (Never Married)	234	87.0	87.6	87.6
Married	27	10.0	10.1	97.8
Widowed	2	.7	.7	98.5
Divorced	2	.7	.7	99.3
Separated	2	.7	.7	100.0
Total	267	99.3	100.0	

Graph 3: Graphical Presentation of Marital Status



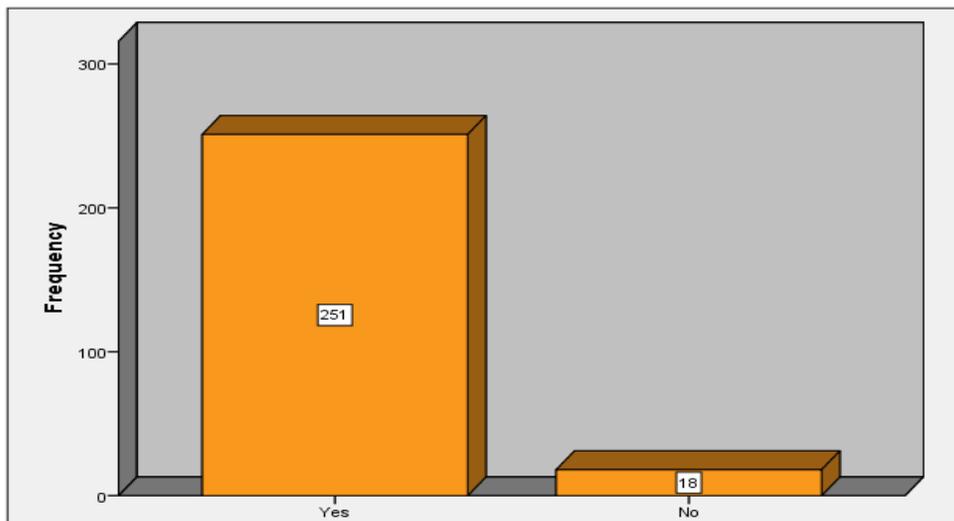
Graph 4: Effectiveness of Social Media



Before getting into the details of social media related constructs, Graph 4 shows the perception of the respondents about social media. It is evident that the tallest bars are of extremely and moderately effectiveness of social media in projecting any sector. Findings are in line with the fact that social media is a quick and dynamic communication channel for interactions (Fischer & Reuber, 2011). So, in the next graphs and tables a deeper insight to the sports-fans and sponsor nexus has been developed.

Current status of social media usage is portrayed in Graph 5 where 251 respondents are regular social media users whereas only 18 claimed to be irregular users. Findings suggests that this particular age group is a frequent user of social media so the respective organizations of any sector must keep the preferences and opinions of their regular users in mind before developing their social media strategies. Some of the opinions of the regular social media users will be discussed in the later sections of this chapter.

Graph 5: Status of Social Media Users



To analyze the behaviors of regular social media users further, Table 4 shows a cross-tabulation between the type of social media users and their

level of satisfaction with the quality of content of social media platforms of sports organizations of Pakistan.

Findings have suggested that out of 251 regular social media users, 89 the highest number are unsure about the quality of content of social media platforms of sports organizations. 59 users have shown dissatisfaction with the quality of content and 85 regular users are found to be satisfied with the content.

A very small number of respondents 4 only have been found to be very satisfied with the quality of content. These findings have raised a question on the kind of engagement these users have, as despite being regular users of social media they are either unsure or just satisfied with the quality of content of social media platform of local sports organizations. This also highlights that social media dynamics in Pakistan are not that clear to the larger audience.

PR Expert from Slovenian Olympic Committee also stressed on the quality of content by advising that sports organizations must learn to experiment with content and organizations must be clear that there are no set rules in social media. It is the job of the social media manager to develop content for different targeted audience. Particularly on content she said:

“In terms of content sports organizations must go few extra miles to make it compatible to their audience as well to the channel through which content is projected”.

The expert from Coca-Cola Pakistan has also reiterated this by saying that: “CONTENT IS THE KING”. Using such tactics can not only improve the satisfaction level of the social media users but can also play a vital role in making full use of this affective digital platform that can be used to establish relationships with their respective audience by the sports organizations, teams and athletes (Blaszka et al, 2012).

Table 4: Level of Satisfaction of Social Media Users

Cross-Tabulation

		Regular Social Media Users		Total
		Yes	No	
Quality of Content of Social Media Platforms	Very dissatisfied	14	0	14
	Dissatisfied	59	2	61
	Unsure	89	8	97
	Satisfied	85	7	92
	Very Satisfied	4	1	5
Total		251	18	269

To further analyze these respondents were particularly asked about their engagement with sports organizations at a local level. Findings shown in Table 5 suggests that despite many of them being regular users of social media only 48% are engaged with the social media platforms of sports organizations. Remaining 45.7 % showed no association with social media platforms of local sports organizations. Findings shed light on the low level of engagement sports organization in Pakistan that clearly reflects lack of existence of effective strategies social media in the sports sector of Pakistan.

Table 5: Social Media Engagement with Sports Organizations

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	129	48.0	49.2	49.2
	No	123	45.7	46.9	96.2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>252</b>	<b>97.4</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

Understanding the dynamics of social media associations respondents were asked about the platform of social media they are frequently using as sports organizations can use these platforms to enhance commitment and engagement of fans (Meng, Stavros, & Westberg, 2015).

Graph 6 below depicts the association of respondents with four different social media platforms. Most of the respondents have chosen Facebook and Instagram as the most frequently used social media channels. Twitter is being used by a very small number of respondents. Interestingly, these results coincide with that of a case study conducting in the context of Pakistan where Twitter was considered as the youngest member of the SNS family with almost 2 million users whereas, Facebook has acquaintance with 10 million registered users on its panel (Haque, 2013).

Findings are also closely linked to the demographics of the respondents as shown in Graph 2 that approximately 80% of respondents are youngsters.

Expert from *Coca-Cola Pakistan* also validated this by stating:

“Demographics play a key role in the decision making of brands and their sponsorships”.

Development of content and its projection through the right medium are closely linked with each other and sports organizations must choose carefully what to post where. These findings validate the crucial role of what is actually communicated and how it is communicated especially in serious communication platforms like Twitter (Hambrick et al., 2010).

One of the experts at Facebook has very well developed an analogy that explains the nature of all three platforms depicted in graph 5. While talking about social media platforms he said at a conference that was referred by the PR Expert of Slovenian Olympic Committee:

“Imagine Facebook it is like a park everybody goes to the park, Instagram is a party where everyone wants to look good, post photos but only specific people go to parties and Twitter is just like your living room where

you have discussions and talks on various serious matters”

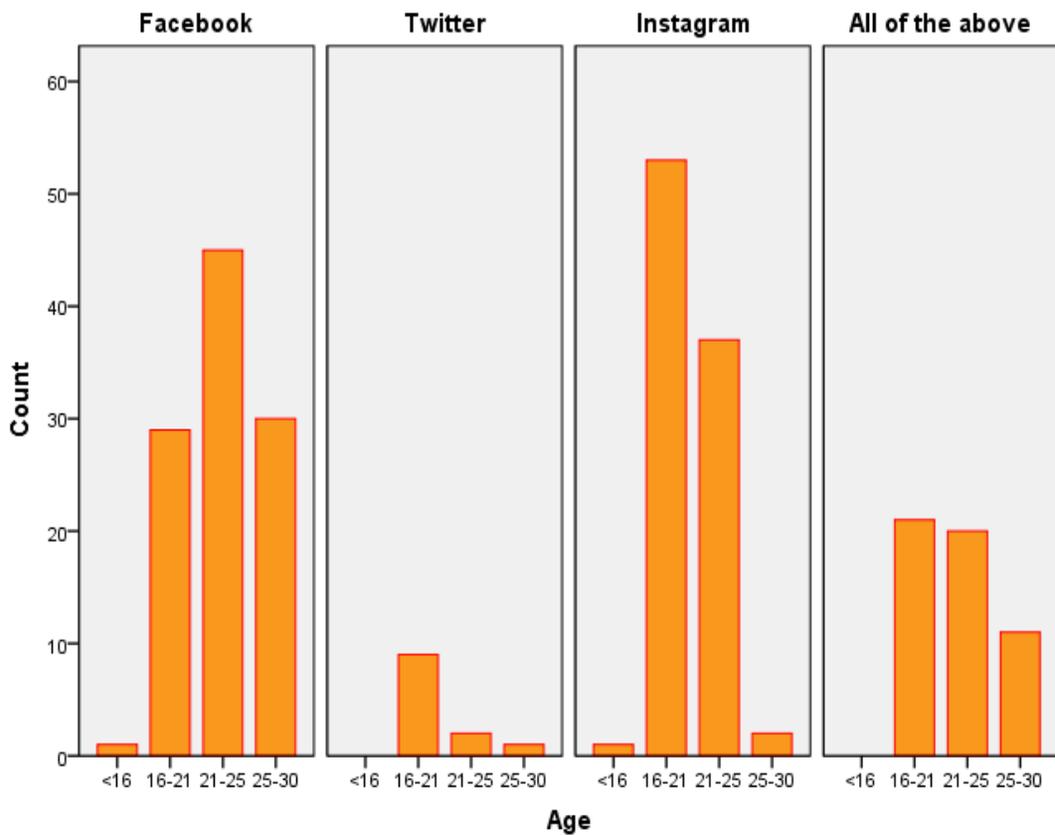
So, engagement at different social media platforms and content development at its projection plays a key role in fan engagement. Different social media platforms are for a specific segment of targeted audience and sports organizations must try to reach out to diverse target audience. PR Expert from Slovenian Olympic Committee said:

“Facebook is a platform that has the most diverse users, usually all three generations of a family are using Facebook being a platform that helps to connect with family and community. Whereas, teenagers and youngsters of the age 20 to 30 prefer using Instagram that is all about photos and videos. On the other hand, Twitter is something for more intelligent people and for serious discussions. It is considered as the most serious channel and is used by bloggers, writers, and journalists to share contents such as ranking, results and reports etc”.

Keeping in view the varying nature of these platforms, it is necessary for the sports communication scholars to understand the nature and impact of these

communication tools on fan athlete relationship as these social media platforms provide multiple avenues for interaction (Clavio & Kian, 2010; Hambrick, Simmons, Greenhalgh & Greenwell, 2010). Also, sports organizations must try to reach out to greater audience by interacting at all mediums and must not neglect Twitter that has become a permanent fixture within the sports industry (Wertheim, 2011).

Graph 6: Engagement with Social Media Platforms



To understand the depth of engagement of respondents with the strategic objectives and core values of sports organizations, contingency analysis was run. Chi-Square test of independence has been used to check the association between these two categorical variables. It is a nonparametric test and utilizes contingency analysis through cross-tabulation to test the association between to independent variables. In simple words, Chi-Square tests hypothesized the association between two categorical variables and contingency analysis allows quantifying their association. Table 6 below shows the crosstab between respondent’s engagements with the social media platforms of sports organizations of Pakistan and their vision, mission, core values.

Table 6: Engagement with sports Organization

		Core Values of the Sports Organization					Total
		Not at all familiar	Slightly familiar	Somewhat familiar	Moderately familiar	Extremely familiar	
Engagement with Social Media Platform of Organization	Yes	19	31	37	28	14	129
	No	47	19	29	26	2	123
<b>Total</b>		66	50	66	54	16	252

Only 42 out of 129 engaged respondents claimed that they were moderately or extremely familiar with what the organization believes in. However, Table 6.a below shows that the chi-square test statistics are significant confirming that there exists association between a respondent’s engagement with the social media platforms of a particular organization and the core values of the same organization. These results validates that involvement of stakeholders to build a community under an organization’s mission and value can be improved through social media (Lo & Waters, 2012).The Marketing Expert of Happilac Paints has also validated this as he said:

“The way any organization or a brand project its values, mission and vision through its social media platforms definitely impact the level of fan engagement”

Table 6.a  
Chi Square Test

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	37.578 <sup>a</sup>	12	.000
Likelihood Ratio	41.730	12	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	7.198	1	.007
N of Valid Cases	262		

a. 10 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .24.

Table 6.b

Contingency Analysis

		Value	Asymp. Std. Error <sup>a</sup>	Approx. T <sup>b</sup>	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by	Phi	.379			.000
Nominal	Cramer's V	.219			.000
	<b>Contingency Coefficient</b>	<b>.354</b>			.000
Ordinal by	Kendall's tau-b	-.168	.056	-3.023	.003
Ordinal	Kendall's tau-c	-.144	.048	-3.023	.003
	Gamma	-.255	.084	-3.023	.003
N of Valid Cases		262			

a. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

Table 6 b shows the results of the contingency analysis. The value of contingency co-efficient 0.354 based on the chi-square is between 0 to 1 with a positive direction that again confirms the association of engagement with social media platforms and core values of that particular organization.

Table 7: Effective Sponsors Engagement with Sports Organizations

	Popularity of the sport	Entertainment generated through sports	Presence of Star Athletes
Chi-Square	11.245 <sup>a</sup>	58.086 <sup>a</sup>	54.428 <sup>a</sup>
df	1	1	1
Asymp. Sig.	.001	.000	.000

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 134.5.

b. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 85.0.

In terms of sponsors engagements with sports organizations table 7 depicts reasons that sponsors have for sponsoring a sporting event. Test statistics are all significant with degree of freedom 1 and it has been validated that popularity of sport, entertainment generated through sport and presence of start athletes are the key reasons for which sponsors go for sponsoring sports events. Expert from Geo News has also validated this by saying:

“For sponsors visibility, thrill and mileage are what matters. As long as any sporting event is providing them these things they keep spending money”.

The opinion the Expert from Coca-Cola Pakistan was slightly different as she said that there are deeper things and long-term connection a sponsor looks for while sponsoring a sport. So, it is not just about any particular event at one point of time it is actually the legacy of that sport a sponsor takes up by sponsoring. She also added:

“Sports organizations of Pakistan need to understand that brands look for symbiotic relationships and are not very keen to work on charitable grounds at least for sports”.

Interestingly, fruitful and dynamic combination of popularity and immediacy has already created a symbiotic relationship between sport and media (McRae, 1996).

Graph 7 below depicts the effective ways through which sports organizations engage with their fans. Most of the respondents have claimed that live streaming of events, prompt feedback and reply and sharing athlete’s stories could be the most effective strategies to engage with fans. Results reflects very well on the fact that fans can enjoy a lot of features provided by the social media such as engagement with the team, the ability

to share your opinion and share videos and photos (William & Chinn, p. 433).

Findings also validate the crucial role two-way conversation and dialogues with the public play in promoting the organizations through social media (Mersham, Theunissen & Peart, 2009). The Marketing Expert from Happilac paints also validated this and said shared similar views:

“Effective and engaging communication with fans can serve as an active strategy to develop online communities that in turn serves the purpose of chain marketing for a sport”.

Moreover, the Expert from Coca-Cola Pakistan emphasized a lot on sharing athletes’ stories and went on saying:

“Sports Organizations of Pakistan must try to sell their stories rather than selling the sport. Sharing athlete stories is the best way to connect to fans and to get sponsors attention”.

These results are very much in line with the evidence provided in the literature on athlete’s stories. Athletes possess the most influential accounts and profiles on social media. Therefore, including the digital presence in a

brand’s sponsorship strategy the athletes have large social reaches. The return on investment increases by using athlete’s digital platform to promote products through social channels. Sharing athlete’s stories is one of the key strategies to enhance brand exposure (Mamajeck, 2016).

Graph 7: Effective Fan Engagement with Sports Organizations

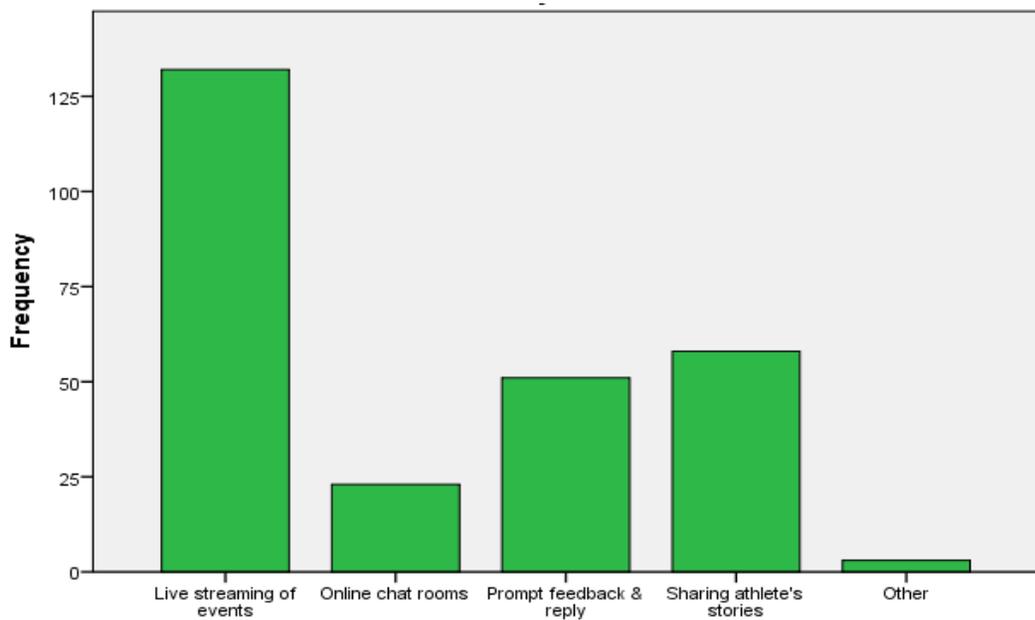


Table 8 below shows the level popularity of different sports amongst the respondents. Cricket has been claimed as the most likeable sport by maximum numbers of respondents followed by Badminton and Football. Social Media can act as an active tool to make many other less popular

sports more likeable amongst the general public. The Expert Coca-Cola Pakistan said on this:

“Social media can play a major role in popularizing a sport. Two major approaches can be used in this context. Top Down Approach is to portray the glamour and drama of sport on social media platform for catching the attention of masses and Bottom-Up Approach is engagements at grass root level”.

The Marketing Expert of Happilac Paints also validated this by sharing his experience with Pakistan Hockey and Pakistan Squash Federation. He mentioned the missing element of stardom among the athletes of other sports. Expert also claimed that lack of professionalism and communication within the organizational structures of many federations of Pakistan is also one of the reasons they are not doing well with sponsors and fans. The Sports Journalist of Geo News also brought this into discussion and said:

“Before engaging fans and sponsors sports organizations needs to bring their own house in order, lack of good governance and compliance to charters is eminent in many sports federations of Pakistan

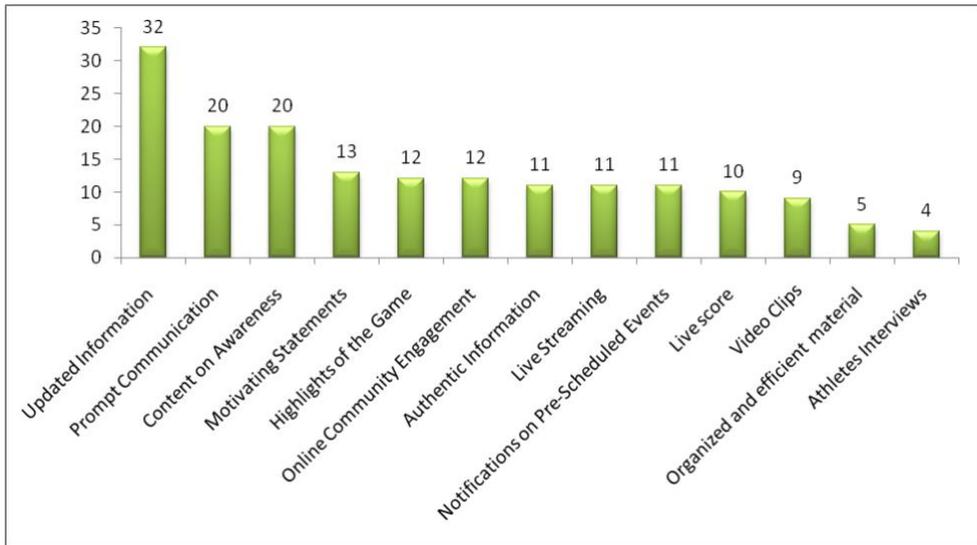
that becomes a question mark on their credibility while approaching a sponsor and engaging fans”.

Table 8: Popular Sports in Pakistan

	Football	Cricket	Hockey	Kabaddi	Badminton	Basketball	Others
<b>Most Favorite</b>	58	116	13	20	86	42	14
<b>Slightly Favorite</b>	58	61	22	12	65	51	4
<b>Neutral</b>	45	31	53	57	26	45	8
<b>Not Favorite</b>	17	11	41	37	12	16	2
<b>Not at all Favorite</b>	18	7	29	33	8	20	9

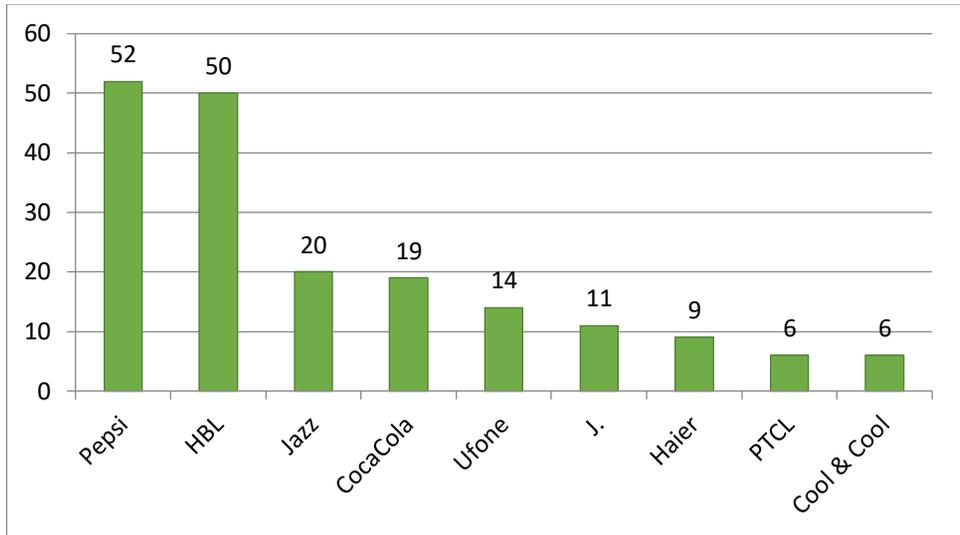
Graph 8 shows the key qualities most engaged social media platforms have as per the respondents. A long list of these qualities was created and mostly occurred are shown here in the graph. 32 respondents said that platforms that share updated information are most engaging. Whereas, 20 respondents have claimed that content that makes them aware and prompt communication are the key qualities of engaging platforms. Some of these qualities can be used for developing effective engagements with fans and sponsors in the sports originations of Pakistan.

Graph 8: Most Engaged Social Media Platform



Apart from key qualities of engaging social media platforms, respondents have provided their opinion on the brands and companies they often see sponsoring sporting events in Pakistan.

Graph 9: Sports Sponsors in Pakistan



Eminent sponsors of the industry are depicted in the graph 9. Most of these brands are now sponsoring content that has public messages that can resonate to a larger audience. The Expert at Coca-Cola Pakistan said:

“A brand is always eager to sponsor campaigns that have the element of social change. We prioritize any online activation that is innovative enough to enhance brand love and are able to integrate in the lifestyle of our fans. For instance, Music, Food and Sports are all interlinked with the lifestyle of our fans”.

These findings are in line with the role of attraction and centrality that a sport activity holds in a fan's style of living (Kyle, Graefe, Manning, & Bacon, 2004). Apart from life style, firms try to build on engagement by generating benefit from the emotional attachment of the individuals with sporting events (Santomier, 2008).

Above-mentioned findings of quantitative data and information from transcribed interviews have provided valuable insights in developing a roadmap for effective social media strategies for fan and sponsor engagement in the sports organizations of Pakistan. This has been demonstrated in the findings and discussions that engagement is a complex phenomenon and sports organizations needs to work on a range of different strategies for developing effective engagement with fans and sponsors. Understanding the current dynamics of social media in the sports organizations of Pakistan, all of the local experts agreed to the fact that before reaching brands sports organizations must get organized internally. So, training athletes, social media managers and developing customized content that can not only catch the attention of fans but can also lead to symbiotic relationships with sponsors have the capacity to enhance engagement.

Findings have also suggested that there is a dire need to engage more people on the social media platforms of sports from diverse backgrounds and this can be made possible by improving the quality of engagement on the platforms. Athletes Image, Stardom of Champions and making the unpopular sports popular using different approaches have been found exceedingly useful for the sports organizations of Pakistan.

A brief summary of all strategies is provided in the recommendations section of next chapter. In a nutshell, if sports organizations can start follow the roadmap of these strategies they will be able to bring a visible change in the dynamics of their existing social media platforms.

## **Chapter 5. Recommendations**

### **5.1 Recommended Effective Strategies**

#### Effective Fan & Sponsor Engagement Strategies for the Sports Organizations of Pakistan

- Develop creative, emotional and engaging content for the targeted audience.
- Develop and enhance online fan communities by engaging fans in different activities related to the sport and to their lifestyle.
- In the eye of the sponsor, Content is King. So such content must be developed that can create brand love and compel the sponsor to engage with the organization.
- Demographics matters so organizations must develop content compatible to the platform through which it is to be projected.
- Projection of the vision, mission and strategic objectives of the organization to the fans as well as sponsors to develop symbiotic relationships between sporting organization and brands.
- Making the sport popular through social media engagement using Top-Down Approach and Bottom- Up Approach.

- Training and development of athlete's image for making them true ambassadors of their sport.
- To organize matters within the administration of the organization for effective communication and compliance.

## **5.2 Limitations of the Study**

The scope of this study is limited to the sports organizations of Pakistan. Limited numbers of responses were gathered from different sources and the demographics of the sample are unique and very specific. My physical absence from the country refrained me from having focus groups with the sports organizations having some level of presence on social media. But the diverse expert opinion has made the findings and recommendations robust enough for the sports federations and other sporting organizations in Pakistan.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

Social Media has broken the barriers of power and has made information available to masses. This great medium has reached out people beyond the benchmark of being educated and has enabled people to raise their voice. No doubt that social media has provided unlimited opportunities to access information but in a country like Pakistan people are still struggling to maintain discipline in channelizing information through this engaging medium. Therefore, this study aimed at providing a roadmap for a set of effective social media strategies for the sports organizations of Pakistan.

Using a mixed methods approach data has been collected through quantitative and qualitative techniques and has been processed and analyzed using SPSS and Transcription. Finds of both data forms have been discussed and put forward in a very comprehensive manner. Recommended effective social media strategies provided above can serve as a roadmap for a number of sports organizations having low profile presence on social media platforms. Effective implementation of these strategies can boost the current level of fan and sponsor engagement on social media platforms of sports organizations of Pakistan.

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## Appendix

### Appendix A

#### Questionnaire

##### Survey

#### **Developing Effective Social Media Strategies for Fan and Sponsor Engagement in the Sports Organizations of Pakistan**

The purpose of data collection through this survey is purely academic; all collected information will remain confidential. Survey is to be filled by youth who are pro-sports and pro-social media. Findings of the survey will be used to propose effective social media strategies to the sports organizations of Pakistan.

#### Respondent's Profile

##### 1 -Gender

- Male
- Female
- Other

##### 2 -Age

- < 16
- 16 – 21
- 18 – 25
- 25 – 30

##### 3 - Marital Status

- Single (never married)
- Married
- Widowed
- Divorced
- Separated

##### 4- Are you a regular user of Social Media?

- Yes
- No

##### 5- Which platform of social media do you use the most?

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Instagram
- All of the above

##### 6- Do you agree that social media is an effective tool for the promotion of any sector?

- Not at all effective
- Slightly effective
- Neutral
- Moderately effective
- Extremely effective

7- What's your favorite sport? You may select more than one.

<b>Sports</b>	<b>Most Favorite</b>	<b>Slightly Favorite</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Not Favorite</b>	<b>Not at all Favorite</b>
Football					
Cricket					
Hockey					
Kabaddi					
Badminton					
Basketball					

8- In your opinion, which sector is best projected on social media in Pakistan?

<b>Sector</b>	<b>Not Projected at all</b>	<b>Slightly Projected</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Highly Projected</b>	<b>Remarkably Projected</b>
Education					
Fashion					
Food & Beverages					
Sports					
Travel & Tourism					
Telecommunication					
Real State					

9- How effective do you think are the social media platforms of sports organizations of Pakistan?

- Not at all effective
- Slightly effective
- Neutral
- Moderately effective
- Extremely effective

10- Have you liked the social media platform of any sports organization of Pakistan?

(Example, Pakistan Cricket Board, Pakistan Hockey Federation or Pakistan Olympic Association Etc.) If YES please write specific name in "Other" option.

- Yes
- No
- Other

11- How satisfied you are with the quality of content of social media platforms of sports organizations of Pakistan?

- Very dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Unsure
- Satisfied
- Very satisfied

12- Are you familiar with the vision, mission and values of the above-mentioned sports organization?

- Not at all familiar
- Slightly familiar
- Somewhat familiar
- Moderately familiar
- Extremely familiar

13- What do you think is the best way for a sports organization to engage with fans? Select any two.

- Live Streaming of Events
- Online Chat Rooms
- Prompt Feedback & Reply
- Sharing athlete's stories
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

14 - Rank (1 to 6) the below mentioned statements for suggesting the sports organization about content development for their social media platforms.

Athlete and Sport Related Content (Athletes Stories, Travel Diaries, Achievements)	
Engagement & Community Management (Social Events)	
Fan Generated Content (Fan Messages and Videos)	
Information on promotion of Sports (Rules, Facts, Tips)	
International News on your favorite Sport (Results and Rankings)	
Entertainment (Fun Loved Moments)	

15- How satisfied are you with the level of engagement of social media platforms of sports organizations of Pakistan?

- Very dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Unsure
- Satisfied
- Very satisfied

16- Do you think social media is helpful in increasing fan following and fan engagement of the sports organizations?

- Not at all helpful
- Slightly helpful
- Neutral
- Moderately helpful
- Extremely helpful

17 - Are you a fan of any particular athlete (National/ International)? If yes, which social media platform you use to follow your star athlete write it in "Other" option.

- Yes
- No
- Other

18- Specify any three key qualities of a sport organization social media account/page must have:

Short Answer

19 - Have you liked social media platform of any International Sports Organization? If yes please specify the name in "Other" option.

- Yes
- No
- Other

20- What are your views about sports sponsorships in Pakistan?

- Easily available to all sports
- Available to sports to a limited extent
- Not at all available to sports

21- In your opinion, what attracts sponsors the most for sponsoring a sporting event?

- Popularity of the Sport
- Entertainment generated through sports
- Presence of Star Athletes
- Other\_\_\_\_\_

22- Can you enlist any four sponsors that you have seen sponsoring sporting events in Pakistan?

Short Answer

## **Appendix B**

### **Interview Guide**

#### **Developing Social Media Strategies for effective fan and sponsor engagement in the sports organizations of Pakistan**

In your opinion what is the scope of social media in today's world?

What are your thoughts on the status of social media platforms in Pakistan?

Where do you think the social media platforms of sports organizations of Pakistan stands?

How do you think a non-popular sport can be made popular with the involvement of social media?

In your opinion what matters to a fan of any sport organization?

Most of the respondents think that sharing athlete's stories is one of the best ways to engage with fans through social media? . What is your stance on this?

Do you think that fan engagement on social media can bring sponsors?

Do you think by engaging fans on social media from sports organizations can add more value and open new communication channels with audience for sponsors/sports right holders?

Do you think the effective use of social media is the next great frontier for sports sponsorship?

What were your key objectives as a brand when you entered into sponsoring a sports event in this era where there are multiple platforms for brand promotion?

What can be the best way for sports organizations to integrate sponsors and fans on social media activities?

How you compare the social media activities of Pakistan sports organizations with International social media?

What are the benefits and challenges of social media in brand enhancement?

How other sports organizations in your county are managing social media? What contribution your NOC has in uplifting affiliated units.

What competitive advantage you had before going to the social media?

How do you manage direct athletes engagement on your social media platforms?

What factors you consider/evaluate before sponsoring sports organizations/clubs/athletes?

What role demographics such as gender, age and marital status of fans play in developing social media strategies

Which social media platforms in your opinion are most popular in youth from 16 to 25

What sports organizations can do to attract more fans and sponsors?

What was the impact of bringing the FIFA Trophy to Coke Festival

Coco Cola has sponsored all kind of events, What are their objectives while sponsoring sporting events.

What do you think a sponsor look for when sponsoring a sporting event?

As a sponsor how do you rate outreach through social media?

What do you think sports organizations in Pakistan must do to engage sponsors?

Would you like to mention some key challenges sports organizations of Pakistan are facing in terms of social media engagement?

## 초록

# 파키스탄 스포츠 조직의 팬 및 스폰서 참여를 위한 효과적인 소셜 미디어 전략 개발

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지난 20 년간 소셜 미디어는 강력한 커뮤니케이션 수단이 되었으며 그 영향은 세계 각지의 다양한 경제 부문에서 분명하게 나타난다. 스포츠 부문과 국제 올림픽위원회(International Olympic Committee), 세계 유명 스포츠 클럽 및 다양한 국제 연맹(International Federations)과 같은 주요 스포츠 단체는 팬 및 스폰서 참여와 같은 다양한 방식으로 소셜 미디어의 혜택을 누리고 있다. 이에 본 연구의 목적은 파키스탄 스포츠 조직에 팬과 후원자 참여를 위한 효과적인 소셜 미디어 전략 로드맵을 제공하는 것이다.

본 연구는 효과적인 소셜 미디어 전략 개발을 위하여 양적 및 질적 연구 방법을 진행하였다. 파키스탄의 팬 및 스폰서 참여를 기반으로 한 설문 조사를 통해 청소년으로부터 양적 데이터를 수집하고 SPSS 를 사용하여 분석하였으며, 지역 및 다국적 기업의 브랜드/스폰서십 전문가와 지역 및 국제 소셜 미디어 전문가의 인터뷰를 실시하였다. 또한 소셜 미디어 블로그, 문서 검색 및 웹 사이트 등에서 정보를 수집하였다. 이와 같은 양적 및 질적 정보의 분석은 파키스탄의 스포츠 조직을 위한 효과적인 소셜 미디어 전략의 로드맵을 제공하였다. 또한 이러한 전략은 파키스탄에서 실시된 28 개의 올림픽 및 7 개의 비 올림픽 스포츠에도 충분히 적용할 수 있을 것으로 보여 진다.

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**주요어:** 스포츠 조직, 소셜 미디어, 전략, 팬 참여, 스폰서 참여,

파키스탄

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