



Social Media and Sports: Engagement For Sports Fans

Muhamad Chaerul Ichsan^{1✉}, Heny Setyawati², Fajar Awang³

^{1,2,3}Universitas Negeri Semarang, Indonesia

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Abstract

Sports fans develop distinct and interesting relationships with their favorite sports teams, both in person and virtually. However, research on sports fan engagement is still limited in relation to social media. The purpose of this study was to understand why and how sports fans engage with sports athletes/teams on social media. A quantitative descriptive approach was used in this study with the help of questionnaires distributed through social media to 455 respondents. The sample techniques used are purposive sampling and snowball sampling. Researchers distributed the questionnaire through a google form with the help of social media and obtained as many as 394 respondents with the criteria of active social media users and sports fans. The results obtained in this study are mostly respondents are male and aged between 21 to 30 years. They are more active on social media every day with an intensity of 2 to 5 hours every day. People prefer social media as a medium to interact with their favorite sports athletes/teams. The conclusion in this study is that athletes or sports teams must develop the use of their social media as their marketing tool and become a liaison facility between athletes or sports teams and sports fans.

✉ Correspondence address:

Pascasarjana UNNES Jl. Kelud Utara 3, Gajahmungkur, Semarang

E-mail: chaerulichsan11@students.unnes.ac.id

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INTRODUCTION

Social media is a container that can be used for two-way communication via the internet. Since it was first discovered in 1844. History records the beginning of social media comes from a series of lines and dots on the telegraph machine. Only in 1969 appeared the name Advanced Research Projects Agency Network or Arpanet which was created in the United States. Arpanet is used to connect fellow researchers at four universities to share data and so on. Social media cannot be separated from people's daily activities (Paakkari et al., 2021).

According to Newman et al. (2017) social media is divided into several parts, namely publishing services that contain blogs, forums, wikis then media sharing services that contain social news websites, social bookmarking sites, video sharing sites, photos sharing sites, audio sharing sites, presentation sites and live streaming sites and the last is networking services that contain websites to support views, charitable causes and joint work.

Social media allows users to connect, cooperate, share, and communicate with other social media users online, forming social relationships (Puspitarini & Nuraeni, 2019). The first and most obvious purpose of social media is communication. Before reaching this point, social media was primarily concerned with creating a healthy communication ecology for users.

However, as the internet and technology advance, social media has evolved into more than just a communication tool; It has become a second world for individuals from all over the world to meet and connect. Social media manages to establish contact regardless of time or region. Branding is the second goal of social media. After successfully creating a gathering place for people from all over the world, social media continues to grow and meet various human needs, one of which is branding. Branding is a method of creating an image in the minds of many people.

Branding is a method of creating an image in the minds of many people. Simpler technological advances in social media can help create audience engagement at scale (Iyengar,

2017). The third role of social media is as a place to do business. After providing communication and branding effectively, social media gradually evolved in such a way that any user can start a business on the network or online. The fourth goal of social media is marketing. As a platform that is almost always used by the public, social media has recently succeeded in providing services that make it easier for businesses to launch and reach more consumers. This strategy has proven beneficial in increasing income and making it easier for consumers to obtain what they need.

Social media has been widely used as a means to market a club, inform about the activities of a sport, even to inform about a championship event. The rise of social media has had a significant influence on how exercise is delivered and consumed (Filo et al., 2015). Today, media and sports have a mutually beneficial relationship in which both have unlimited and reasonable influence (Nascimento et al., 2021). Not surprisingly, businesses of all sizes utilize social media as part of their marketing and public relations operations..

The widespread phenomenon of social media, as well as ongoing technological advances, clearly presents unique and significant potential for those who can take advantage of it, especially in the field of sports. There is an increasing number of new media through which sports leagues can distribute their content to fans (Pegoraro et al., 2021). But it is unfortunate that the use of social media in sports in Indonesia is still not optimal because only a few sports such as football which is the most popular sport in Indonesia have included it. Social media is one of the applications for new social media activists to share content and increase community engagement (Ma, 2022).

Social media is an important tool not only for teams, but also for sports fans and athletes (Coward, 2020). Fans can use social media to quickly and easily find news, browse images and videos, get a behind-the-scenes look at their favorite teams and athletes, and more. One of the most significant advantages is the possibility to increase engagement and develop a true bond between supporters and their team. Sports and

media have a close relationship, they depend on each other (Haryati et al., 2017).

Greater loyalty is often developed with new and improved bonds with their teams, which can bring more benefits to today's company. The modern era of social media provides a unique opportunity for teams to make money for their programs while providing better brand visibility, fan interaction, and awareness events at a much lower and sustainable cost.

Social media has emerged as a significant place to create interaction among sports fans. Social media platforms are easier to convey ideas in real life (Hussain et al., 2021). Social media remains a vital medium for sports fans to interact and exchange news with others, as well as participate in two-way conversations with sports businesses.

Lastly, team members can use social media to engage with their fans, build individual brands, and support them. Since video reactions help fans and viewers develop bonds with organizations and teams, it also increases their interest in the games and sports that those teams seek to promote (Hilton & Rague, 2015).

METHODS

This study uses a quantitative approach by describing the results of the study to draw conclusions. Data collection using a closed questionnaire. A closed questionnaire is a questionnaire whose answers have been determined by the researcher so that the answers from respondents do not come out of the problem formulation. The questionnaire was then disseminated using a Google form to respondents through social media. Sampling in this study is purposive sampling and snowball sampling techniques, namely those who actively use social media and are sports fans. The questionnaire used is a questionnaire that has been validated by expert validators in the field of social media. The questionnaire is a development of previous research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study aims to analyze the use of social media in sports related to engagement between athletes or sports teams with sports fans. In the results of the study, several analyses were carried out related to general data such as age and gender as well as key data regarding the use of social media in sports, and sports fan engagement. The following is the data of respondents in general by gender and age.

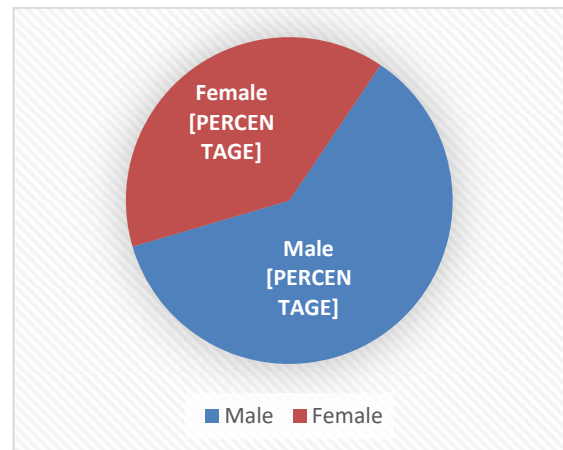


Figure 1. Statistics based on Gender

In the gender statistics diagram, we can see that 61% of the respondents were male and 39% of the respondents were female. The data shows that 394 respondents are included in the category for analysis, while 61 respondents are not included in the sample criteria because they are not sports fans but have their own charm to be analyzed as social media users.

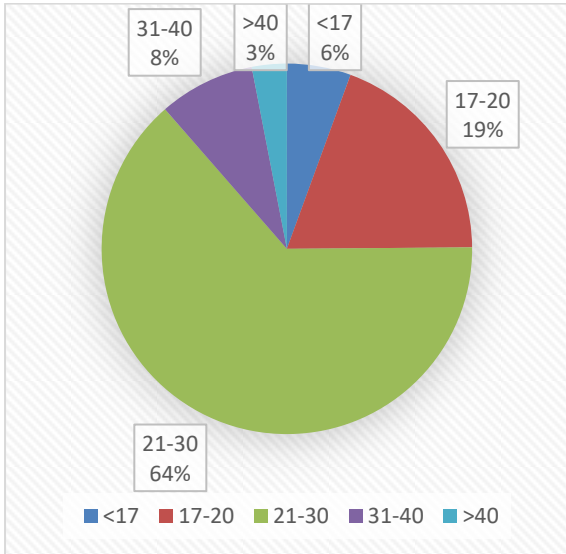


Figure 2. Statistics based on Age of Respondents

In the statistical diagram based on the age of the respondents, it is known that many of the respondents who filled out the questionnaire were in the age range of 21-30 years with a percentage of 64%. The table above also explains that 6% of respondents are under 17 years old and 3% of respondents are over 40 years old.

After the data were analyzed in general based on gender and age criteria, 394 respondents were found who could be analyzed according to the criteria and 61 respondents who did not fit into the criteria for analysis. However, the discussion will analyze the uniqueness of these respondents.

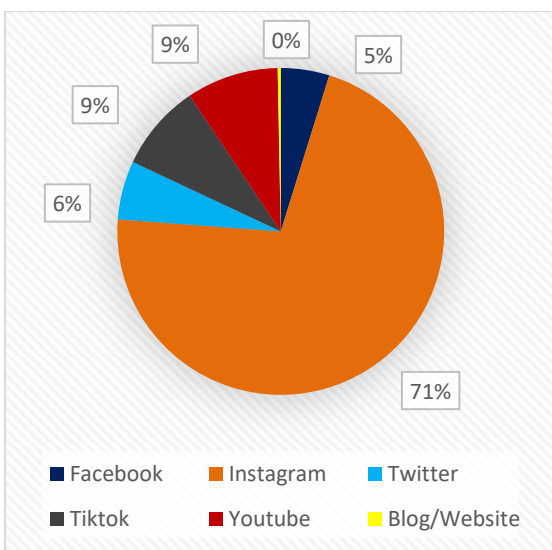


Figure 3. Favorite social media used in interacting with athletes/sports teams

Evaluating the diagram above, it is clear that Instagram continues to be the most prominent social media platform used by most of the people to interact with athletes/sports teams. 71% of sports fans use Instagram to interact. Youtube ranks second, followed by Tiktok and Twitter. What matters is Facebook and websites, which are not the respondents' favorite social media. Based on the data above, sports fans and non-sports fans make Instagram their favorite medium for interaction.

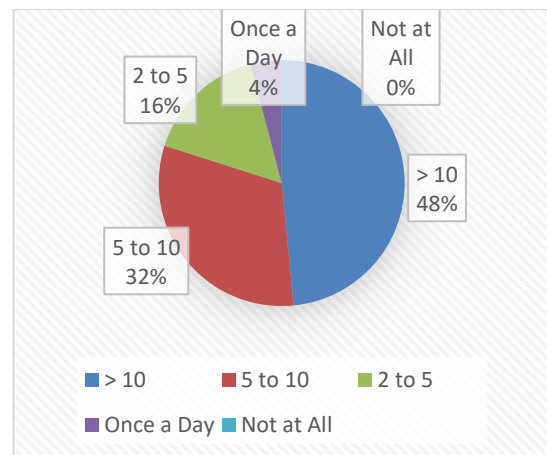


Figure 4. The intensity of social media use every day

Evaluating the diagram above, most of the respondents in the sample spend and view more than 10 times on social media every day, indicating 48% of the sample. With the advent of smartphones, people seem to be looking at social media more often than ever before.

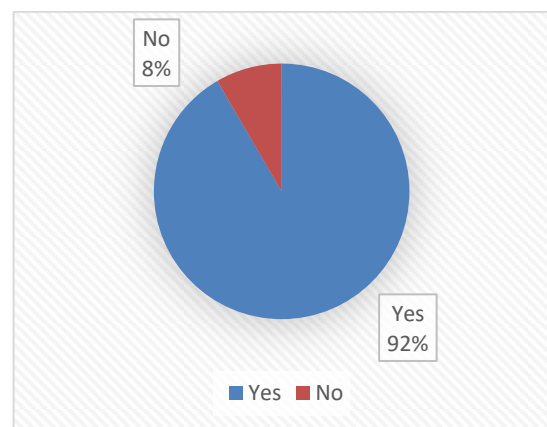


Figure 5. Statistics of respondents who follow your favorite athlete/sport team on social media

Examining the diagram above, 92% of sample respondents follow their favorite sports athletes on social media whereas only 8% choose not to. This remains an almost equal difference between the two and it shows that not everyone is involved and interested in following games or sports athletes on social media.

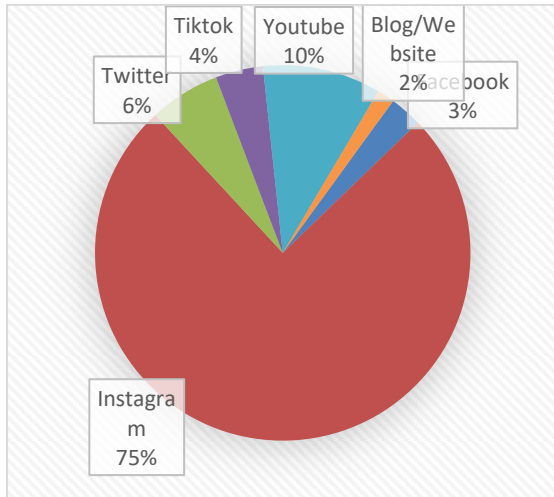


Figure 6. The media used as access to the main information

Examining the diagram above, 75% of sample respondents use Instagram as the media they access most often to get information about their favorite athletes/sports teams. Then followed by Youtube as the platform most often used by respondents to access information, namely 10%. While blogs/websites and Facebook are platforms that are rarely used with a value of less than 3%.

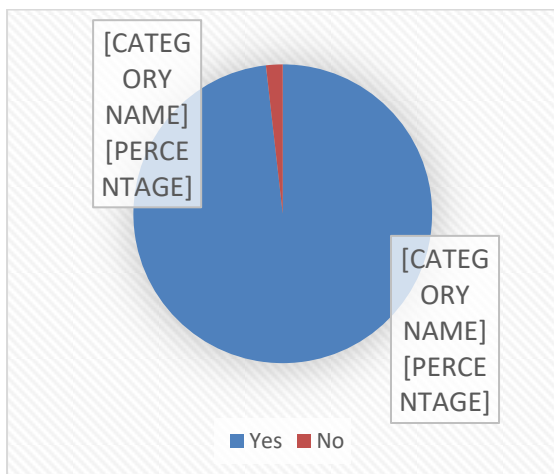


Figure 7. Match or player information on social media

Respondents were asked if they could get improvements as well as valuable information about games or players through sports videos/photos uploaded on social media. The majority of respondents 98% answered 'Yes' whereas only 2% answered with 'No' stating that watching sports videos for sports marketing on social media is a necessary aspect to attract people towards more sports as well as a match. Because when people have information about something, they end up being interested in knowing more about a certain topic, such as in this case sports and matches.

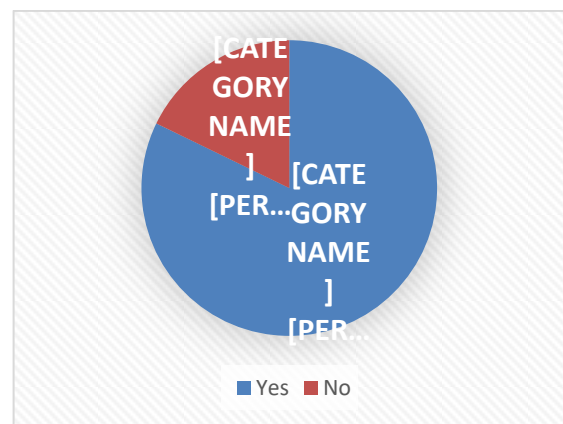


Figure 8. Activeness on social media during sporting events

Examining the diagram above, 82% of respondents are active on social media platforms during sporting events or events. In addition, only 18% did not. Throughout a sporting event or event, people tend to show more involvement or interest in sharing their views on the event with their family and friends. Sport limits how people feel and most of the interconnection on social media occurs during sporting events.

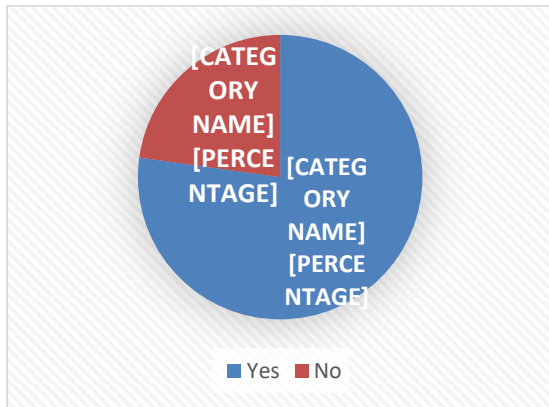


Figure 9. Update information about your favorite athletes/teams

The chart above shows that 77% of people tend to check social media platforms for updates. Only 23% of people use the team website to check for updates.

DISCUSSION

The results show that using social media for sports marketing is an important aspect for engaging with fans and also for attracting more people to matches. Everyone doesn't have a lot of information about everything, although by watching videos from social media they can get at least a bit of news and information that they are sure to share where a network of messages and communications can be made direct to attract more people towards games and sports (Thackeray et al., 2008).

The findings in this study were from a total of 455 respondents who answered the survey 13% or 61 people who answered the question were not sports fans but had an interest in sports and were active on social media. The discussion at the end will explain the comparison of respondents according to the criteria in addressing the use of social media as a media for sports marketing and involvement with sports fans and the answers of respondents who are not fans in addressing the flow of social media in sports marketing.

Previously, it was very brave for the sports community to have good interaction among the members. With the advent of social media, now team managers can communicate and update athletes to provide important information on a

daily basis and engage in personal and efficient communications. Using social media clearly helps management to efficiently enable marketers to engage effectively and also attract fans to actively share concrete goods and facilities hence increasing brand reach (Miller & Lammas, 2010). Likewise, this opportunity allows management to evoke feelings of satisfaction in fans so that they perceive themselves as part of a team that ultimately maintains confidence in their product and brand (Miller & Lammas, 2010).

The results of the study explain that the majority of people prefer watching videos on social media rather than written text either in print media such as newspapers and magazines or on Instagram or Tiktok, and Youtube. The main common cause given by the respondents is that social media whether Youtube or Instagram are easily accessible to them compared to newspapers or magazines and watching videos on social media is much easier than reading stories from magazines and newspapers. In addition, they stated that videos on social media make ideas clear as well as dispelling the misconceptions commonly associated with written texts that are completely devoid of expression and emotion. In addition, watching videos does not take much time, with not too long pauses and therefore also saves time. These results show that social media is quite effective and efficient than any other platform to attract more people to sports.

This result is in line with previous research. For example, one of the previous studies recommended that viewers prefer watching videos on social media to written text that is updated and the content is exactly the same. As video reactions help fans and viewers to grow one's relationship with organizations and brands, it also helps increase their interest in the games and sports that the brand wants to promote (Hilton & Rague, 2015). The use of video-based social media or visual content such as photos or videos is increasing rapidly on social media platforms (McNely, 2012). Among the illustrations emerging from this platform is Instagram, an image and video uploading site that allows one to upload videos and images, as well as to communicate and like videos and images from various people.

Instagram remains one of the most expansively used social media platforms among university researchers, often larger than Facebook as well as Twitter (Clavio & Walsh, 2014).

Another finding is about how a small number of respondents who are not sports fans are active in using social media, especially Instagram as their favorite social media. Then in the use of social media every day fans and non-fans have in common that is more than 10 times a day with an intensity of 2 to 5 hours every day. The interesting thing about this second respondent is that 93% of them get valuable information from social media about sports athletes/teams through uploaded videos and photos. However, other findings state that 54% of respondents who are not sports fans are not active on social media when sporting events take place and 57% of them also rarely check the websites of athletes/sports teams to get updated information.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, we can conclude that using social media platforms to create relationships with sports fans leads to increased happiness and loyalty over time. As observed in this study, social media platforms (especially Instagram, Tiktok, and Youtube), especially through video content, are the best way that can be leveraged to encourage reciprocity with followers. As a result, it gives sports managers an idea of the type of information that will be used from these platforms to effectively increase fan interaction. It is clear that sports marketing with social media is an important component of marketing, and many marketers understand the potential of platforms to develop sports in the direction of business. The same is true for sports teams, which see the same potential for team growth by utilizing these social media channels. People and followers are spending more and more time online on the internet these days. The bottom line is that sports marketing with social media should be a good supplement to support the financial growth of the team and the popularity of the sport itself.

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