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The comparison between Social Media Marketing Strategies in the United Kingdom and United States Professional Soccer teams

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Social Media Marketing Strategy in the United Kingdom and United States Professional Soccer
teams

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The Comparison between Social Media Marketing Strategies in the United Kingdom and United
States Professional Soccer teams

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Abstract

Communication is a lot different today than it was 20 years ago. People today spend hours on their social media where they receive the majority of the information about the world. Thus, social media is one of the most influential platforms in the professional sports industry to market sports and engage with fans. The purpose of this study was to gain an in-depth understanding of the common and different social media strategies adopted by professional soccer teams in the UK soccer leagues, and United States soccer league to market their products to consumers all over the world. YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and some other social media channels provide a powerful platform to help sports entities achieve their marketing goal. The results of this study suggested that both the Major League Soccer (MLS) teams and Premier League teams could learn from each other to better market their products by using social media. The Premier League teams are more effective on social media with the strategies that they apply to market that involves inclusive behind the scene content that is not provided by the media.

Keywords: Professional Soccer leagues, The United States, United Kingdom, Social Media Strategies

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Introduction

Social media marketing is the use of online social platforms to promote and build a brand. It has become a very influential tool in professional sports marketing with a heavy presence of sports teams on social media. It can be seen in Soccer leagues in the United Kingdom and the United States that use social media platforms to great effects. The United Kingdom has one of the most popular soccer leagues in the world that is demanded all over the world (Herrmann, 2018). The United States MLS league is constantly growing its social media presence with very unique strategies (Enge, 2014). Social media is a very unique platform that is used by both leagues that have been a great influence in the growth of both leagues in the United States and the United Kingdom. Social Media marketing does not cost a lot to market which makes it a very easy place to carry out marketing (Filo, Karg & Lock, 2015 p 3). Despite social media marketing is free, there is still a lot that needs to be done by a sporting organization to build a relationship with their fans and grow or build their brand at the same time. Having good strategies set in place will help these sporting organizations and leagues distinguish themselves from others.

Social Media provide the opportunity for professional teams to communicate with fans and interact with them in a way that is different and meaningful to consumers (Filo Karg & Lock, 2015 p3). Communication through social media is more personable where organization representatives can simply reply to a comment and create a form of relationship with a fan. Strategies used by UK and US soccer leagues have proven to be very beneficial because leagues

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are doing research and developing a target market on who to market their product to. The market is very competitive with soccer being the most popular sport in the world. The MLS is a newer league compared to the English Premier League and there is already a large fan base for the premier league in other countries outside of the United Kingdom. There are plenty of challenges that both leagues have to take into consideration. Facebook is the most popular social media platform with 2.3 billion users, it would have to be looked at as one of the most used social media destinations for professional leagues and teams to use to promote their brand. This literature review will focus on the strategies implemented in professional sports on social media to build their brand and how successful these strategies have proven themselves to be. This paper will discuss the difference between the marketing strategies of the MLS and EPL and give suggestions on how both leagues can improve to reach more consumers. Marketing through social media is fast and cost-effective and in the market, we have today it is a very beneficial thing for an organization to implement in their marketing strategies. The issue is that there is a gap between the marketing strategies of both MLS and EPL teams and this study will address what that gap is and how it could be closed.

Professional Sports Industry Social Media Marketing Strategies

Social media is simply used to sustain and cultivate relationships and in the professional sports industry that is exactly what needs to be done to keep a loyal fan base going. With the current Covid-19 pandemic going on today, marketing on social media is one of the main sources of marketing for many sports teams (Barnhart, 2020). Marketing has become a lot more online-based since the pandemic and teams have devised different strategies to engage with their fans.

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Teams are trying to engage more with their fans by having Q & A's with players on social media accounts and keeping fans up to date on the team's news (Barnhart, 2020). According to Alčaković Obradovic, Tasevski & Vyugina (2019) "To reach sports fans, marketers are focusing their efforts on anything that brings them closer to the action and discussion" (p245). The professional sports industry is in an unfortunate situation where fans are not allowed to live sporting events. To keep fans engaged sports teams are trying to give the best possible experience for fans across social media, in an attempt to fill consumers' needs for professional sports (Barnhart, 2020). Without fans, it's hard to successfully run a profitable sporting organization and keep fans engaged during a pandemic because this will help to keep the fan base engaged and included.

Live streaming is something that has become more common on social media with a lot of social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook now providing an option to live stream (Enoch, 2020). Live streaming gives the option of live content that fans crave and need to fulfill their need for sports content (Enoch, 2020). The team uses this to provide post game and pregame news and interviews to fans and some even live interaction with players. Live streaming gives the option to the sporting organization to expand their reach and get their content out to more people across social media. The sporting organization has the option of tracking or data of their target market and learning more on who to market their product to. These are tools that hold great value during the current Covid-19 pandemic because this is the main communication source for professional teams and their fans.

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A lot of sports leagues are now on social media and they have developed a very large fan base. The NBA, MLS, EPL, NFL, and MLB are the most popular leagues in the respective countries of their types. These leagues are all becoming more active on social media with all of them having accounts on all the major social media platforms like Twitter Facebook and Instagram. They all provide similar content, but they all have their own identity. The NFL made a partnership with Whistle Sports to create football-related content on social media (Burns, 2016). Other leagues tend to market their products or create their content themselves, but MLS chooses to use another firm to help promote their brand across social media. The goal of the NFL is to target Millennials and to do that they are hiring people who can do the research or people who've already done the research to find reach out to the younger population with their product. What this does for the NFL is it allows them to use a company that has the experience and know-how to reach their target audience to get their product out. Facebook is the most popular social media platform today and these leagues have a huge fan base on that platform.

Table 1

Professional Sports League Facebook Followers Overview

League	Facebook Followers
EPL	46 million
MLS	3.8 million
NBA	42 million
MLB	7.8 million

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NFL	17 million
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Note: The table above shows the follower count as of November 1st, 2020 on three very popular sports leagues with the English Premier League having the highest number of followers out of all the 5 sports leagues represented with 46 million followers. The NBA Is second for followers with a total of 42 million followers on its Facebook page. Out of all leagues, the MLS has the least number of followers among the sports leagues. The idea of this table is to show the gap on Facebook between 5 professional sports leagues which is the largest social media platform with over 3 billion users. The goal was to compare the premier league and MLS amongst three other leagues based on followers.

US Soccer League and teams Marketing Strategies on Social Media

The MLS is the longest and most successful soccer league in the U.S today which is constantly growing its fan base. The MLS Facebook followers currently sit at 3.8 million followers with a total of 3.3 million people liking the MLS Facebook page (Facebook, 2020). The number of followers and likes is expected to keep growing with the increasing popularity of soccer in the United States today and the MLS being the most popular professional soccer league in the country. The MLS does a lot of what is called relationship marketing where they try to build a sense of loyalty with their current consumers by having players interact with fans on their social media pages (Enge, 2014). A good example of relationship marketing by the MLS was In the 2013 MLS All Start game “At halftime Real Salt Lake and U.S. Men’s National Team midfielder Kyle Beckerman answered fan questions via a Google+ HOA from the tunnel

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outside the locker room.” (Enge, 2014). This form of marketing is a good way to have live interaction with fans and players because the fans get their questions answered on a level that will mean a lot to them. Popular players among fans are perfect for this type of marketing because fans are going to want to engage with them and get to know more about them.

Facebook with over 2.3 billion users with 30 million-plus representing MLS Fan and it is one of the most popular social media platforms used by MLS to market to its fans today (Costa, 2020). MLS uses Facebook to post an in-depth analysis of games and host a watch party where fans get to interact with each other on social media (Costa, 2020). This can be a good strategy for interaction with fans, but it can also sometimes provoke negative behaviors because of rival fans that take things seriously to the point that provokes conflict with other fans. Watch a party where the fans can interact with each other in live time and also watch in-depth analysis of games can be good for fans to share the passion with other fans from all over the world (Costa, 2020). Communication today is very fast and watching live in-depth analysis on Facebook allows fans to have back and forth conversations with people who would not necessarily be right next to them or even in the same country.

Twitter has 330 million users today which is a lot less than the 2.3 billion users Facebook has but, Twitter is still a popular platform among soccer fans. The MLS has approached the Twitter scene in a way that helps to distinguish MLS soccer content from others. The MLS initiated a partnership with Twitter where teams were issued their hashtag emoji (Jackiewicz, 2020). MLS wanted to create competition via social media and Twitter was a

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good platform to do so and it created excitement among fans with MLS all start voting.

According to Jackiewicz's article, this allowed MLS to use the platform to conduct 2018 MLS all star voting. This strategy not only made things convenient for the MLS but also gave fans a say by using their vote to choose all-stars for the all-star game.

Table 2

MLS Teams Engagement Rate

<i>Team</i>	<i>Posts</i>	<i>Engagement</i>	<i>Engagement rate</i>
<i>Inter Miami CF</i>	257	81,568	1.00%
<i>Chicago Fire</i>	156	27,222	0.93%
<i>La Galaxy</i>	355	156,998	0.88%
<i>Fc Cincinnati</i>	664	39,333	0.82%
<i>Minnesota United Fc</i>	385	56,932	0.79%
<i>Philadelphia Union</i>	456	60,299	0.70%
<i>Seattle Sounders</i>	702	152,811	0.68%
<i>LA FC</i>	583	71,350	0.67%
<i>San Jose Earth Squares</i>	426	79,521	0.62%
<i>Columbus Crew</i>	352	46,422	0.57%
<i>Dc United</i>	313	26,472	0.57%
<i>NYCFC</i>	194	24,135	0.51%
<i>Colorado Rapids</i>	372	12,599	0.47%
<i>FC Dallas</i>	651	29,072	0.47%

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<i>Montreal Impact</i>	362	34,569	0.46%
<i>New York Red Bulls</i>	574	31,406	0.46%
<i>New England Revolution</i>	887	24,909	0.46%
<i>Real Salt Lake</i>	523	17,936	0.44%
<i>Portland Timbers</i>	393	42,741	0.42%
<i>Houston Dynamo</i>	454	42,594	0.41%
<i>Atlanta United</i>	403	197,502	0.40%
<i>Sporting KC</i>	260	42,640	0.38%
<i>Toronto Fc</i>	289	36,480	0.36%
<i>Vancouver Whitecaps</i>	812	42,246	0.29%
<i>Orlando City Sc</i>	671	39,523	0.26%
<i>Nashville SC</i>	384	22,501	0.16%

Note: (Jackiewicz 2018) The table above shows the engagement rate on Twitter of all clubs in the MLS from March 2020 to May 2020. Inter Miami lead with a 1% engagement rate, the New England revolution had the highest number of posts with 887, and Atlanta United Had the most engagement with 197,502 engagement on their posts between March and May in 2020. While Inter Miami posted less than the New England revolution on Twitter their post-engagement was a lot higher. The conclusion that can be made from this is that they were more effective with their 257 posts, and as a result that their engagement rate was a lot high than all the other 25 teams.

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YouTube today is a very good tool for information and people tend to use it to find just about anything you can think of including soccer content. YouTube has over 2 billion users today which makes it a very good place to conduct marketing. The platform is unique compared to other social media platforms where it consists of a lot of video content and this is very beneficial to any sports fan because it provides, full games game highlights, interviews, and tactical analysis of games. The MLS has over 613k followers on YouTube today which is a significant increase from the 150k followers in 2014 (Engel, 2014). The MLS YouTube page has highlights of recent games, key moments in games, soccer history, and tactical analysis of games (YouTube, 2020). Content being provided on the MLS YouTube channels is in high demand for soccer fans because they want to see their favorite player, team, other results of games, and how other teams play because fans like to make their analysis of games as well. Sports is talked about in households and groups and having all this information of key moments in games gives fans knowledge of what went on to give a thought-out response in discussions.

La Galaxy is the most popular MLS soccer team on social media in the United States with a total of 4.1 million social media followers (Medios, 2020). The La Galaxy takes a unique marketing strategy to social media where it tends to show personality through their social media account (Poch, 2015 p30). According to Poch (2015 “after the five-zero playoff wins over western conference rivals Real Salt Lake on Nov. 9, 2014, the Galaxy official account (@LAGalaxy) wrote: ‘They weren’t able to handle it’” (p30-31). This post shows the confidence in the personality on social media of La Galaxy and this is very attractive to fans because some fans feed off controversy or comment like this. The La Galaxy social media accounts are set up in a way where they can provide quality content and have two-way conversations with their fans

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(Poch, 2015 p30). The personality used on their social media accounts reflects, confidence, controversy, and authenticity (Poch, 2015 p30). According to Social Blade, La Galaxy has a total of 524,940 followers on Twitter, with an average of 991 monthly gain of followers, an average of 33 daily followers, a total of 94,847 tweets, a monthly average of 303 tweets, and a daily average of 10 posts per day. (November 2020). These are decent averages for a team of La Galaxy's stature but there are plenty of other teams who are more active on the Twitter social media platform. On Facebook, the number of followers is significantly higher compared to Twitter with 2.3 million followers on Facebook and a total of 2.2 million people who like their Facebook page. Keeping fans engaged and learning about what they want is very important on social media which will result in more followers and likes. La Galaxy's Marketing strategy seems to be failing them at the moment with losing the number of likes their Facebook page receives daily and monthly. According to Social blade, La Galaxy loses an average of 3,949 likes monthly and 131 likes daily on their Facebook page. (November 2020). The marketing strategy they have on their Facebook page does not seem to work as effectively as their Twitter account and this could be for many reasons. Something to think about when there is a drop-in social media engagement is to check out the content being provided and see in what ways it can be improved to fulfill the consumer needs to help the brand grow. On Instagram, La Galaxy has a total of 1.3 million followers and 10,561 posts. According to Social Blade, the monthly and daily averages of both the daily follower count are declining with monthly followers going down at an average of 1050 followers monthly and 35 daily followers. (November, 20202). The daily and monthly posts on Instagram are very low compared to other professional sports teams at 3 posts daily and 90 posts monthly. Other sports teams tend to post a lot more frequently than La Galaxy

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does which can be a factor in the decline of followers on their Instagram page. Teams in the EPL post a lot more compared to LA galaxy which could be a result of their decline.

New York City Fc is the second most popular soccer team in the MLS with 3.2 million followers across social media. When New York City First came to the MLS they made a name for themselves on social media through the caliber of players they signed from overseas, (Medios, 2020). This is a very popular way to approach the market on social media for fans because there is a lot of fans who are loyal to a player than club and player already have a very high presence on social media among fans. The current strategies of New York City revolve around creating a relationship with fans promoting what goes on inside the club and giving fans an insight of not just players but the way they take care of their most loyal staff. Relationship marketing is one of the main strategies that is applied on the social media page which is something that is in place to create a bond or relationship with all its fans by showing how they carry out business. On Facebook, NYCFC has 2.1 million followers and 2.1 likes there is a decline in the monthly average of 4,338 likes and 144 likes Daily on the Facebook page of NYCFC. Social Blade (November 2020). There are areas in which this team lacks which is showing in the number of followers they lose daily which they need to address to increase their presence on this platform. According to Social Blade, NYCFC has 664,394 followers on Instagram, average likes of 1581.40, and an average comment of 9.65. (November 2020) These numbers are very low and to build a brand on social media, they will need to find another way to engage more followers. According to Social Blade, “NYCFC has 393,381 followers, 23,738 likes, 38,516 tweets on Twitter”. (November 2020). According to

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Social Blade, “Monthly average shows that they average a total of 1308 followers and 365 tweets each month on Twitter” (November 2020). This is a lot more positive compared to the stats on other social media platforms like Instagram and Facebook. Their Twitter presence seems to be growing but not the presence on Facebook and Instagram. The strategies on these other platforms are not as engaging because there is no growth on those platforms. NYCFC needs to learn about their consumers and find an effective social media marketing strategy that can help them grow. Premier League teams tend to use history as a very good strategy that we will further discuss on how effective it is.

Los Angeles Football Club does a very good job marketing on social media because of its inclusive and organic marketing strategies. La Fc went as far as including their fan's topic the color of their jersey and stadium design when first developing the fan base for their club (Bassam, 2020). As a result of the strategies on social media, La Fc developed a very loyal and proud fan base because fans are included in decision-making that is propelled by social media posts that require interactions with fans (Bassam, 2020). According to Bassam's Article "Since their Major League Soccer (MLS) debut in April 2018, the club has sold out every fixture at their 22,000-seat home in Exposition Park” (Bassam, 2020). Selling out all home games is not something a lot of MLS teams can confidently say they do. The success they have shown how good of a job the marketing department does with social media. LA FC is fairly new to the MLS, but they are one of the most well-marketed teams on social media, and other teams in the MLS and Premier League could learn from their marketing strategies. They allow their fans to weigh in on the decision and that is something that fans do not take lightly, and it gives fans a voice in

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the organization. YouTube is the official shirt sponsor of la FC as a result that La FC was awarded its tv channel on YouTube tv. (Wallenstein, 2018). The club had plenty of nationally televised games and also games that were only available on their YouTube tv channel (Wallenstein, 2018). This marketing strategy allowed La FC to have something to themselves where they are the only ones in charge of where their games are played and to target a certain audience with the content. People who would most likely pay for the YouTube tv subscription to follow their games would most likely be fans of the club and this allows them to provide something just for fans or supporters who are very attached to the club.

Inter Miami is a new soccer club based in Miami Florida. David Beckham is one of the founders of the club which makes it a very attractive place for fans of David Beckham who is a legend of the English game and played at many different top clubs across Europe and the LA Galaxy in the MLS. Among all MLS teams, Inter Miami has the highest engagement on Twitter among its fellow competitors between March and April in 2020 with 257 posts and 81,568 engagements (Bassam, 2020). What are the marketing strategies of this club that have influenced the high engagement among social media posts people may ask? Inter Miami posts live games updates, line ups of games, links, and videos of highlights, and behind the scene footage of what it is like in the dressing room (Twitter 2020). Social media pages of this club are used to provide content to its fans that they demand because fans love these things because some people cannot afford or don't have the opportunity to have tours of what goes on during game days but the videos of the dressing rooms are something that can take the place of that. The Twitter pages of Inter Miami promote merchandise and games as well. What this does is give reminders to fans

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and make it easier for fans to access merchandise through links. The table above shows stats from March to May on the engagement rate of fans on the Twitter page of Inter Miami which was 1%. The Strategies Inter Miami uses on Twitter between those two months seem to be more engaging than the other 25 teams in the league. Inter Miami Twitter page is fairly new, and it was created in January 2018 (Twitter, 2020). According to Social Blade, “Inter Miami total 153,176 followers, 1,729 likes, 3,819 tweets, 202 average increase in monthly followers, 6 average daily followers increase and an average of 310 tweets each month” (November 2020). This is very common among teams in the MLS where the amount of posts per MLS team seems to be significantly less than other sports leagues. There are positives to take from their Twitter account because they are increasing followers every month but not at an exponential rate. To Grow their Twitter fan base, they will need to post more content on this platform that will engage fans. Inter Miami CF Instagram page totals 900,974 followers, engagement rate of 1.98, a content total of 858, average likes of 17,769.80, and average comments of 92.15 Social Blade (November 2020). Unlike many other MLS teams, Inter Miami has some of the best numbers when it comes to engagement. According to Social Blade, “followers increase with an average monthly increase in followers on Instagram of 11,220 and a 120-increase monthly average of media unloads to their Instagram account. (November 2020). On Facebook inter Miami sees an increase in the number of likes their Facebook page receives monthly with the average being 1,802 likes per month and a total of 191,154 likes in total on their page. (Social Blade, November 2020). The one area on their Facebook page that there is a decrease is the number of people who talk about their page on Facebook with their being a significant decrease of 17,708 monthly in the number of people who talk about Inter Miami. While they are gaining likes there

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is still something, they need to do to create more buzz around their Facebook account. Posting more often and trying to engage fans with Q and A is a good way to create buzz for this club because fans want to feel a part of the club and this allows them to have a two-way conversation.

UK Soccer league and teams Marketing Strategies on Social Media

In England, the English Premier League is the most popular in the country that is nationally televised all over the world. As of October 30th, 2020, the premier league has over 46 million followers on Facebook and a total of 43million who like their page. Social media is cost-effective which makes it a good channel to market products and in this case soccer. The premier league does a fairly good job of marketing their product because the premier league is watched, and it is a demand in many countries outside of England. According to Alčaković, Obradovic, Tasevski, Vyugina (2019) “The top Premier League clubs are usually using four content formats combined with nine content types” (p 244). The premier league has official pages on all the major social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. The premier league content on their pages is targeted at everyone and it does not just produce new content but the content of things in the past as well. On the premier league Facebook page, you can find pictures and videos of some of soccer's most influential players, plays, and highlights of major games in the past. This marketing tactic helps them to reach all fans on a level where they are providing history to the older population and giving the content of idols of the younger population that grew up watching a certain player or team. The dominant content on the premier league team's social media accounts and the premier league itself comes in the form of visuals (Caffyn 2017).

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The abundance of video-related content on premier league accounts is used to introduce new signing, game previews, pre-match press conference, reposts of premier league teams' content, and post-match interviews. Tottenham hotspurs were recorded with 8,883 posts on Facebook from January to august in 2018 (Herrmann,2018). The Reach of the premier league on social media is very huge because of the number of followers both the premier league and teams in the premier league have. The premier league has 1.6 million followers on YouTube, Unlike many premier league clubs, the premier league's official YouTube channel only post around 1-2 times a week (YouTube 2020). The content provided by the premier league's YouTube channel relates to fantasy leagues and video games suggesting the best players on FIFA video games as well as some highlights but not a lot.

Data was gathered from Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram on followers of 5 of the premier league's most successful clubs tallying the number of followers they each have on 3 of the social media most used platforms. The table below is a representation of the data that was gathered from those platforms (November 12, 2020).

Table 3

EPL Teams Twitter Facebook & Instagram Follower Overview

Team	Twitter Followers	Facebook Followers	Instagram Followers	YouTube Subscribers
Liverpool FC	15.7 million	38 million	28.5 million	5.3 million

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Manchester City	8.6 million	39 million	21.2 million	2.8 million
Manchester United	23.5 million	72 million	37.6 million	3.44 million
Chelsea FC	15.4 million	48 million	24 million	2.38 million
Leicester City	1.7 million	6.7 million	4.6 million	275 thousand

Note: The table above shows the reach the top 5 premier clubs in the 2019-2020 season has on social media with Manchester united having the highest reach of 137.4 million followers across all social media accounts and Leicester city having the lowest reach with a total of 13.2 million followers. Of all these 5 teams it would look to it as Manchester United who can have the greatest influence on social media if their marketing strategies are good enough to keep all 137.4 million followers engaged. Having a high engagement should be a goal for Manchester United, and the way of doing that is to make sure that they research to catch the interest of their fans.

Instagram has a total of 1 billion users and this platform is a visual content sharing platform that allows sports teams to post promotional videos and pictures to market their brand. The premier league Instagram account has a total of 41.5 million followers and the content on the premier league Instagram pages focuses on picture results and key highlights from each round of play each weekend. Live content is something that has dominated social media platforms because it makes things instant for the club because they can get on their accounts and

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provide immediate content to their followers without much effort (Sugrue,2017). People at times are away at events and do not have access to a TV, Premier League teams use Instagram to provide live updates of games. Fans love the idea because Social Media provides instant updates and people can avoid the need for mini radios when not around to a Television set to keep updated on games (Sugrue, 2017).

Table 4

EPL Top 5 Teams Instagram Engagement

Club	Instagram Engagement Percentage
Manchester United	.36%
Chelsea Fc	.57%
Manchester City	.31%
Liverpool Fc	.70%
Leicester City	.50%

Note: The Table above was gathered from a data collection website (Social Blade) it shows the engagement percentage on Instagram of 5 of the premier league's current most successful teams.

Liverpool the 2019-20 champion has the highest engagement rate of all of the top 5 teams in England with .70% engagement on Instagram. The lowest engagement rate belongs to Manchester City with .31% engagement. (2020)

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Manchester United is present on just about any social media city that you can think of and they've worked very hard to develop a large fan base on all those platforms. A study done analyzing the top posters on social media from January 2018 to August 2018 showed that Manchester United is the top posters among all premier league clubs in England during that time with 2,005 posts across Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram (Herrmann 2018). On Manchester United's Facebook page, the content is directed at fans to give them an insight behind what is not provided on the television. Manchester United has done a good over social media with the content they provide targets the region based on their audience, different languages for people who speak different languages, use key players to drive content and engagement, and providing content that is relevant and makes their followers feel as if they are a part of the team. These are all very good practice to follow because this allows them to develop loyalty among its fans. The fact that they provide content that is not just in one language helps them to reach a very large audience and that will result in a higher engagement rate and makes it easier for them to attract fans at events when they play overseas. Manchester United has the highest number of followers on social media and their marketing strategy that fills the needs of consumers all over the world by communicating with its fans through their language shows just how much they try to include their fans and make them special. This tactic is beneficial because they are promoting another language other than English which expands their reach on social media to different countries. Manchester United has the highest likes total of all premier league clubs with 73 million and among pages sports team pages ranked at 54 on Facebook (Social Blade, November 2020). Manchester United Receives a monthly average of 35, 947 likes, 1,199 daily likes, there is a decrease of 229,675 people who talk about Manchester United (Social Blade, November 2020).

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The significant decrease is very common among other sports teams at the moment and part of this can be a factor of the global pandemic of 2020. On Instagram Manchester United has 37million followers, 15,533 unloads, average likes of 133,830, average comments of 532, and an engagement rate of .36% (Social Blade, November 2020). Manchester United has a monthly average of gaining 482,640 followers where they post 390 posts on an Instagram monthly (Social Blade, November 2020). Manchester United posts very often on Instagram which you can see through their monthly average, and daily they post 13 posts per day on Instagram which is a very good number (Social Blade, November 2020).

Chelsea Fc has the second most followers of the top finishers in the 2019-2020 season on their social media pages with a total of 87.4 million followers across Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. Chelsea's approach to social media marketing is different in ways compared to the practice of the premier league and other teams that are a part of the premier league. They provide short snappy content of goal footage and kit launches on their Twitter account. (Caffyn 2017). Short videos that are right to the point is a good way to market things because it is straight forwards and people can get all the information, they need in a shorter time compared to longer videos with the key points scattered. On YouTube, the content provided is very similar to Instagram, but the videos are longer. Every week Chelsea unloads unseen footage of what went on in training the week before and highlighting key moments from games as well as key competitive moments in practice. Chelsea has a total of 2.33 million subscribers on YouTube and a total of 3.1k videos. Chelsea's yearly earning from marketing on YouTube is between 65.6k to 1million dollars (Social Blade, November 2020). Just like plenty of sports teams across the globe

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Chelsea uses YouTube to provide video content of behind the scenes footage and live matchday footage as well. This strategy allows them to relate to consumers on a level that gives them the feeling of being closely involved with the club. Fans want to see things that are not on television and this helps to build the club's brand because not all sports teams go through this process of trying to get their fans as involved as Chelsea does it.

Manchester City is a very popular soccer team in England that uses social media as a very important marketing medium for their products. Manchester City wants to provide content on social media that is personalized with exclusive information to fans where they feel as if they are very close to the club (Tobin, 2018). Giving fans this experience helps with fan loyalty and, sometimes gives them something they cannot get anywhere else which leads to loyal fans. During Manchester City's Title parade in 2018, they provided 360 videos from the top of their parade bus that giving fans an insight on what was going on closer (Tobin, 2018). There is a benefit to using this marketing strategy with fans because fans want to see the things that are normally limited to the outside eye and just about anything that brings them closer to the action of their favorite clubs. On Instagram, Manchester City has a tremendous number of followers with 21 million (Social Blade, November 2020). Manchester City has a total of 11,400 posts, average likes of 67,967, average comments of 198.35, 300 monthly posts, and an engagement rate of .31% across Instagram (Social Blade, November 2020). Among the top teams in the premier league, Manchester City is ranked last place among the top 5 teams based on engagement percentage with Liverpool having the highest engagement rate on Instagram. Despite having a low engagement rate on Instagram Manchester City gains on an average 337,020 followers monthly on their Instagram page (Social Blade, 2020). The Engagement rate

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is low, but they are gaining a significant number of followers monthly. On Twitter, Manchester City has 8.6 million followers (Social Blade, November 2020). On average they gain 132,116 followers monthly on Twitter, 135,021 total tweets, and tweet 977 times on an average monthly (Social Blade, November 2020). While Manchester City's brand is growing on Twitter and Instagram it is currently struggling with a loss of followers on their Facebook page where they have a total of 39.9 million followers and losing on an average 20,464 followers monthly (Social Blade, November 2020). Despite losing followers monthly Manchester City still has a monthly average of 242,096 people who mention or talk about the club over Facebook.

Liverpool Football Club is one of the most successful premier league clubs to date with the recent success of being the 2019 – 20 premier league champions and 2019 champions league winners. Social media has a pivotal role in the success of relationships with Liverpool football club and their fans. Social media makes it very easy for clubs to communicate and it's very fast which makes the platform so helpful to all clubs, not just Liverpool. Liverpool's social media marketing strategy is directed at initiating engagement with international fans on social media (Bodet & Kenyon, 2017 p 8). Social media provide the opportunity for clubs to reach fans from all over, which is what Liverpool does to reach an international audience. Liverpool's Social media help "Supporting the press office and retail departments in delivering digital content related to player interviews, kit launches and merchandise, events featuring club 'legends' and other press-related engagements" (Bodet & Kenyon, 2017, p8). Fans want this type of content. Such as kit launch information and merchandise because these are things fans use to show their support for a specific club. Liverpool has an official social media account on Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube where they carry out most of their social media marketing. According

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to Social Blade, Liverpool has 36 million page likes on Facebook, an average of 4,020 daily likes, and 120,585 monthly likes on Facebook (November 2020). These are very good numbers and they are positive numbers because with the current pandemic in 2020 it is hard for some teams to keep being positive on social media and some have seen negatives in their engagement numbers on Facebook like some MLS Teams. According to Social Blade, Liverpool's official Instagram account has a total of 28 million followers, average likes of 205,713, an engagement rate of .72%, average comments of 464.15, and a total of 13,816 media uploads. (November 2020). Liverpool's current daily and monthly averages of followers are positive and there's a current monthly average of 414,210 followers and a daily average of 13,807 followers.

(November 2020). Instagram is a very good platform because it is popular, and a lot of fans use it. According to Social Blade, Liverpool's Twitter account has a total of 15 million followers, total likes of 13,225, a total of 91,699 tweets, average monthly followers of 254,329, and monthly tweets of 678. (November 2020). According to Social Blade, on YouTube Liverpool has a total of 5.3 million subscribers, 954.5 million views, total uploads of 1,483, a yearly gain of 960 thousand subscribers, and yearly revenue of \$81.9 thousand - \$1.3 million. Not only does YouTube provide a platform to build a brand but it also pays you to post (November 2020).

Leicester City has an official social media page on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, and Tik Tok. Facebook is a very important medium for marketing for Leicester City where they have 6.6 million followers, according to Leicester City's official website "Facebook is where you can receive breaking news, exclusive videos and all the key updates on a matchday." (2020) The marketing strategy on Facebook provides exclusives and confirms major news within the club. According to Social Blade Leicester has a monthly like average of 13,819

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likes and 73,403 people talking about the club over Facebook. (November 2020). Twitter is another medium used by the club with 1.7 million followers and according to Leicester's official website "You can receive all of the latest news and information from around the club as well as minute by minute matchday updates from the first team and development squad fixtures".

(2020). The strategy taken on by Leicester on Twitter is a very good one because fans want these things. On Twitter, threads are easily started and the set-up of Twitter makes it easy to post matchday updates. According to Social Blade, Leicester has a total of 4,339 likes on Twitter 69,455 tweets, a monthly average of 26,028 followers, and 1,328 monthly tweets on Twitter.

(November 2020). Instagram is another social media platform that has a great amount of content for fans, according to Leicester's official website "you can view exclusive behind the scenes imagery from our training ground and the best photos from home and away first teams matches.

There are also exclusive foxes Instagram stories, quizzes, reels, and more." (2020). Like many other premier league clubs Leicester provides similar content, and these are very good strategies to follow on these platforms because fans crave exclusive content. According to Social Blade, Leicester has 4.6 million followers, engagement of .44%, average likes of 20,288.30 per post, average comments of 104.40 per post, 8,307 media uploads, a monthly average of 77,670

followers monthly and a total of 240 posts per month. (November 2020) YouTube is unique in many ways because it profits teams in more than one's ways and on this platform, clubs make money and also build a brand and reach out to more consumers. According to Leicester City's Official website, on YouTube "you can watch exclusive videos from around the club, including press conference clips, development squad highlights, and our popular tunnel Cam for first-team matchdays! It's also easy to access our entire YouTube archive if you fancy a trip down memory

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lane." (2020). The YouTube channel provides plenty of exclusives, things fans don't get to see on national television, and historical things from the past so that fans can look at how the club was before and now. According to Social Blade, Leicester's YouTube page has a total of 275 thousand subscribers, video views of 56,705,561, 2,755 unloads, monthly views of 4,386,927, monthly subscribers of 16 thousand, and monthly earnings of \$1.1 sounds to \$17.5 thousand. (November 2020).

Difference Between Premier League and MLS Teams Social Media Marketing Strategies

The MLS focuses a lot on marketing individual players that are more popular among fans but they do market the league as a whole a good way but there are ways, they can improve to further reach more people across the globe. If MLS wants to market their product in England, they will need to learn about what attracts English fans to the game and promote that to them. English fans love the fact that the premier league is competitive at the top and bottom and in England, the bottom three teams are relegated but, in the MLS, everyone is safe despite the setup of the league. The premier league market the league on social media by providing engaging content of key moments and key fixtures that will bring excitement to games. The relegation battle is a common theme towards to end of the season that is all over social media that does a breakdown of the teams that are fighting to stay in the premier league for the next season. This is very different compared to the way the Major league soccer league market their product in the US, they market it on social media with playoffs and very engaging posts that fall under the tradition of many other sports leagues in the United States. The premier stands out because there

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are plenty of rivalry games that are documented with a name such as the London derby and Manchester derby which tend to bring history and a competitive edge among fans to the game. The MLS markets their product on social media very similar to the NBA with all-star voting one of the main practices done on Twitter by the MLS to market the league to fans in the United States. This is a good way to market but if they want to reach out to more people all over the world, they will need to do the research and learn what fans in other countries like. The premier league tries to keep fans engaged by encouraging them to tag them on social media posts which is something that helps to keep fans and Clubs engaged.

Sports teams in general need to create newsbreak and interesting stories to be successful (Alčaković, Obradovic, Tasevski & Vyugina, 2019, p245). Communication is necessary, but sports organizations need to figure out the needs and want of consumers to have a successful social media campaign (Alčaković, Obradovic Tasevski & Vyugina, 2019, p245). MLS tends to fill their social media pages with not many previews that involve showing snippets of games in the past with teams but more heavily focused on what is to come and what is happening right now. The Premier League provides the content of games from 10 plus years and new short documentaries are being produced almost every week by clubs. These documentaries give sports fans in the UK an insight into the lives of players and coaches. For example, Chelsea's instance Chelsea's YouTube page provided the content of all academy players from when they joined the club to them making it and developing into first-team players. This type of thing is what fans want and crave because it helps them get to know players and they feel a lot closer to them. This is where fan loyalty starts to develop because fans are getting to know players on a level that gives them a snippet of their life and all the struggles they went through as a player trying to

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make it in professional soccer in England. The premier league as a hold likes to provide documentaries that focus on the history of the league with all or some of the major fixtures, players, and teams that have helped to shape the premier league to what it is today. This not only educates fans, but it gives them a view that they don't get to see every day or something with the history that will keep their interests. The MLS YouTube page does not do that and that is a tactic that the MLS can adapt to marketing their product to reach more sports fans because this normally brings a sense of buzz around the league and you can see it with the likes and views of these specific videos being very high on the YouTube and other social media platforms.

Methodology

Research Design

This research was conducted in the form of a scoping review where the types of evidence were discovered to clarify concepts of research by identifying key information to analyze the knowledge gap of social media strategies. The research question was “what is the difference between social media strategies of the English Premier and MLS teams and how can the MLS fill the gap to, increase its brand awareness and be more effective?” Case study research is very common in soccer-related studies, but this study was done with a mixture of more than one source of information. The examination of 25 sources of the academic journal, articles, blogs, and data collection websites was needed to put the research together. Data collected was a mixture of self-attained data and data collected from a second source. The available evidence was in the form of previous studies done and data collected from social media pages on

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Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube of some of the most popular soccer clubs in the premier league and Major League Soccer league. To conclude and analyze the effectiveness of the social media strategies in 5 Premier league and Major league soccer team's data was gathered from their social media accounts on averages of followers monthly, engagement percentages and likes averages. Data was collected from Socialblade.com an existing website that provided an analysis of popular social media pages where most of the numbers were gathered from. Data was gathered in a quantitative method where data was observed and meanings of each type of data were confirmed before concluding where each data belongs. According to Snelson, (2016) "The most commonly used research approaches involved collecting data from people through interview, focus group, and survey methodologies." (p1)

Previous research done was directed towards social media strategies of sports leagues and not much on the individual teams in the league on how they build their brand. The only obstacles with this research were trying to figure out what each set of data meant and what its relevance was to answer the research question or question at issue.

Key Concepts

1. Social Media Marketing strategies reflect the approach that teams take on social media to interact with current fans and also gain new fans.
2. EPL -English Premier League
3. MLS – Major League Soccer

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Results

As a result of this study, the difference between the strategies of EPL teams and MLS teams were distinguished. The EPL has a stronger presence on social media and the follower counts are a lot higher with the most popular team on social media in the EPL Manchester United, having 137 million followers across Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. MLS team's social media strategies bring a lot of content that fans like but there is not enough content that is engaging enough for fans. The Premier League provides a lot of exclusives and behind the scenes which are very beneficial because fans grave these things and it brings them closer to the club. The premier league provides old content as well that highlights past legends of the clubs as well as very old games that show the history of the club. There are a lot of fans that love this type of content because it brings them closer to the club. The Premier is already very established on social media, but they are constantly growing in followers on social media. MLS teams are growing but at a very slow rate compared to teams in the EPL. The table below shows the most popular teams on Facebook in each league based on the total amount of likes the page has and the monthly growth.

Teams	Followers	Monthly Growth
Manchester United	73 million	35,947
La Galaxy	2.3 million	-3,930

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Note: The table represents the two most liked soccer teams in both the MLS and English Premier with the English premier league club growing monthly with receiving a total of 35,947 likes each month while the MLS team is losing likes.

Premier League teams are more effective with their social media strategies because they are finding a way to market their product to fans by being exclusive with their content and the MLS provides content in the form of highlights and not much inside the content of what is going on within the club. There is a distinct difference between the effects on social media of teams from each league. Premier League teams post more often, they have more followers, engagement is higher despite having more fans, and the content they provide catches the interest of soccer fans all over the world.

Discussion

This section represents the findings that were analyzed through articles and data observed throughout the study. It shows the difference between the MLS clubs and Premier League club's marketing strategies and highlights what they both do a good job of and what they lack. The second sections address the benefits of having good social media strategies in place and how it can help to build a brand of an organization. The study as a whole identified the effectiveness of social media strategies by teams in each league by measuring engagement and followers on different social media platforms.

Social media marketing is very important in marketing today because it is easy to market and it's free. Teams in both the MLS and EPL show good strategies ways to market on social

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media but the difference between them is the fact that EPL has more to offer on social media compared to the MLS. The EPL provides many different strategies on different forms of social media platforms and one of the main things they all have in common is the exclusiveness that they bring. The MLS does not bring a lot of exclusiveness to their social media accounts but what they do a very good job of is that they interact with their fans in many different ways. MLS teams hold watch parties over a medium like Facebook that is specifically used to get live feedback from fans.

Having a good social media strategy helps to set up clubs for success and success for these soccer clubs is growing a fan base. When a fan base is constantly growing it provides the opportunity for clubs to garner more profit from their product which is soccer in this instance. The history approach by teams in the EPL along with exclusive content is a part of what helps to keep the fan base of these clubs growing. Consumers want to be prioritized and feel as if they are wanted in an organization and that will keep them interested in staying apart of that organization. The exclusive behind-the-scenes content the Premier league uses serves a great purpose in helping to keep fans interested. The MLS does the same but, there are more exclusive contents being provided by premier league teams in the form of documentaries, and in-depth interviews where the lives of players in that organization are highlighted.

Conclusion

There are plenty of positive strategies already being applied by Teams in the United States MLS league but, they have a lot they can learn from the MLS. The MLS could borrow the strategy of History content that the EPL uses as well as exclusive documentaries on players where fans get to know more about those players and not just know them from what they see on

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the field. Chelsea FC does a good job of this because they use that a lot with their players and sometimes these players who are featured give fans a different perspective of who they are. If MLS wants to promote their league to UK fans there are plenty of things that they would have to adapt and part of that is learning about what English fans like which is exclusiveness. If the EPL wanted to promote their league in the United States there are plenty of things they would also have to take into consideration. Fans in the United States love the personality that some MLS and other sports leagues like NFL show through social media. LA Galaxy is an MLS soccer team that has plenty of personality throughout their social media page which is an attempt to create a relationship with fans with a sense of humor. EPL teams have already done a good job marketing in the United States with a very large population of fans who reside in the U.S. There are many things both leagues have to learn to further consolidate their social media strategies because things are constantly changing and adapting is something they both need to do to keep building their Brand.

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