

## Original Research Article

### **THE INFLUENCE OF MARKETING COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES ON FANDOM DEVELOPMENT IN TANZANIA: A CASE OF SELECTED PREMIER LEAGUE FOOTBALL CLUBS**

#### **ABSTRACT**

*The purpose of the study was to investigate the influence of marketing communication strategies on fandom development in Tanzania: A case of selected premier league football clubs. The study specifically assessed the influence of advertising on club's fandom development; explored the influence of social media on club's fandom development; and to assess the influence of corporate social responsibility on club's fandom development in Tanzania. The targeted population was 910 fans leaders whereby from this population sample size of 185 fans was drawn. The research employed descriptive research design where mixed research approach was applied. Simple random sampling was used to select fans of Simba SC and Mbeya City FC while purposive sampling technique was used to select clubs leaders. The findings revealed that advertising strategy, the use of social media and involvement in corporate social responsibility have a great influence in football clubs' fandom development in Tanzania. The adjusted  $R^2$  of the regression output was equals to 0.667 implying that the model explains about 66.7% variations in the clubs' fandom development. Therefore, advertising strategy, social media and corporate social responsibility were significant predictors of clubs' fandom development in Tanzania premier league football clubs. Therefore, the study concludes that marketing communication strategy is of vital in influencing fandom development in football clubs. The study recommends that for a club to expand its fandom, its marketing communication strategy should be set in such a way that it can easily be accessed by the majority of the public. Its contents and mode of delivering should be touching the majority of the public. Clubs are required to innovate and intensify the use of effective and efficient marketing communication strategies in promoting clubs' brand to the public.*

**Key Words: Marketing Communication strategies; Fandom development; Advertising; Social Media; Corporate Social Responsibility.**

#### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The transformation of football from a sport into a business has not left behind the need for incorporation of marketing strategies in particular marketing communication in their operational. Since supporters are no longer seen as fans but a captive market whose support is vital for clubs success, their engagement is crucial for the development of the clubs. For a club to ensure full

engagement of its fans as well as fandom development, strict marketing communication strategies are needed (Silva and Casas, 2017).

Teletov, (2019) describes Professional Football Club's marketing communication strategies as an aid to create measures aimed at awareness of fans, sales and marketing intermediaries, contact audiences as well as the general public about the club, stimulating demand for club's products with a view of promoting it on the market. Marketing Communication is targeted interaction with customers and prospects using one or more media such as direct mail, newspapers and magazines, television, radio, billboards, telemarketing, and the Internet. The marketing communication simply refers to the blend of advertising, selling, public relations and sales promotion.

Another theory suggests that originally fans counted on sportswriters, talk radio hosts and TV commentators to lead the conversation about their teams but the emerging of social media platforms has started to take control of the conversation in recent years. The influence of social media on sport organizer and clubs is growing rapidly as channel of communication. An increasing number of professional sports leagues are relying on internet, social networking site and mobile technologies to market their teams, citing it as a cost effective avenue for reaching a large audience of sport fans (Silva and Casas, 2017).

On the other hand Didi, (2018) points that fans engagement and in general fandom development cannot be achieved through the use of a sole marketing communication tool. For a club to achieve full fans engagement the use of various strategies such as social media, advertising whether on Tv or otherwise and the implementation of Corporate Social Responsibility is inevitable. In supporting such an idea Wysoczanski, (2018) details that besides other communication tools, all sixteen Polish top division clubs are active in the use Corporate Social Responsibility as a means to interact with their fans.

Fay, (2019) points that with the aids of various communication strategies such advertising, Corporate Social Responsibility, Social Media (Instagram, Facebook) and the like Manchester United increased its fan base by 400 million fans from 700 million fans in 2012 to 1.1 billion fans in 2019.

While things are as foresaid at Manchester United, in Tanzania things are not moving smoothly despite the effort undertaken by various clubs in association to fandom development. For example, Simba Sport Club (Simba) uses its Simba Tv for advertising. It also has social media accounts like Instagram, Facebook and Tiktok accounts through which it disseminates itself to the public. Moreover, Simba is well involving itself in Corporate Social Responsibility. But with all those initiatives Simba still have few fans. According to the statement issued by Tanzania Premier League Board and posted on the Tanzania Football Federation social media platforms, Simba with its Mkapu stadium of 60,000 people capacity only recorded 138,518 spectators for all their 2020/2021 premier and championship matches. Considering the fact that Simba had an average of 20 matches at its stadium per 2020/2021 season, it is clear that it had an average of

6,926 spectators per match which is almost 11.54% of its stadium attendance rate per match (Said, 2021).

However, there was no evidence of any study that had ever been conducted in addressing such football uncertainty phenomenon in Tanzanian. It is in that view; a study of Tanzania premier league clubs' marketing communication strategies needed to be conducted so that to ascertain their influence on fandom development.

## **2. LITERATURE SURVEY**

### **2.1 Theoretical Review**

This study was guided by Competitive Dynamics Theory which was developed by Ken Smith, Walter Ferrier, and Hermann Ndofor in 2001. Competitive dynamics theory helps to explain the interaction and impact of firm actions and competitor reactions in a given industry. The competitive dynamics model looks at both the firm initiating a competitive move as well as the reaction of the rival firms (Bruhn, 2017). The applicability of this theory in study based on the assumption that football clubs are not excluded from the competitive nature of business. The theory require a firm to examine the causes and consequences of its action and what might be its rival firms' reaction. Firms in this case are football clubs whose causes and consequence includes club's decision on new product introductions, pricing, market signaling and promotions (marketing communication). Clubs act creatively in introducing new promotional tools like Advertising, social media and corporate social responsibility to enhance or improve profits, competitive advantage and industry position. Successful actions (actions which generate new customers or fans in case of football) promote competitive reaction as rivals attempt to block or imitate the action.

### **2.2 Empirical Review**

Tabie (2021) conducted a study on "The Impact of Advertising on Consumer's buying behavior: a case of McDonald's: Using Purposive sampling a total of 53 respondents were selected worldwide. Primary Data were collected using close-ended questionnaires and descriptive statistics were used as data analysis's tools. The findings conformed to the objectives of the study which were to establish whether advertising has an impact on consumers' buying behavior. Since Tadie, (2021) findings were rooted from a study of McDonald fast food whereas it was concluded that advertising has an impact on consumers' buying behavior, it is here thought that the same can be replicated in football industry. However, and in order to be in a position to firmly conclude the impact of advertising in football industry, a study on the influence of marketing communication strategies on fandom development in Tanzania where advertising as one of the marketing communication strategy focused on was to be conducted.

Likewise, Parganas and Anagnostopoulos, (2015) conducted a study on "Social Media Strategy in Professional Football: a case of Liverpool F.C". The study was done on Liverpool's social

media use to examine how relevant content increases engagement with fans for growth of fan bases. Cross-sectional study was employed whereby 50 respondents were involved. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches were applied in this study. Data analysis was done through descriptive and content analysis. The study revealed that the use of Liverpool's social media for increasing the engagement with fans for growth of fan bases builds and promotes the clubs. Since the application of research findings might be limited to location, it is not necessary that whatever worked in Liverpool in terms of how the use of social media influenced fan bases development could work in Tanzania. Therefore such findings could only be truly applied in Tanzania if another study in the same context could have been conducted in Tanzania and replicate the same findings.

In addition, Didi, (2018) conducted a study on 'The effect of Corporate Social Responsibility on Fans' engagement: Evidence and implications for a professional Soccer club'. Using online survey of 1840 fans selected by a random independent survey out of 67,800 total ticket buyers (from Turkey football ticket buyers database) and using regression analysis, the study revealed that neither the overall non-transactional fan engagement nor its attributes (sport consumption, experience sharing and fan involvement) are influenced by CSR. On the other hand, the study demonstrated that there is an association between CSR and non-transactional fan engagement, sport consumption intention, experience sharing intention and fan involvement intention. By considering the findings of Didi, (2018) study done in Turkey, one would wish to conduct a study on the same context in Tanzania so that to be in a position to know to what extent does those findings conform to Tanzania Football Industry. And of more interesting is that besides CSR this study extended its focus to include other marketing communication strategies like advertising and Social Media so that to be in a position of concluding on how marketing communication in totally influence fandom development.

### **3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The research employed mixed method research approach where descriptive design was used to gather data to answer the research problem and summarizes the results. The targeted population was 910 fans and four clubs leaders (two from each club) whereby a sample size of 185 fans and two clubs leaders was drawn out of it using simple random sampling and purposive sampling respectively. Since this study incorporates both quantitative and qualitative data, data analysis tools for quantitative data and qualitative data was used in data analysis. For analyzing quantitative data, a researcher used both descriptive statistics and regression analysis. Empirical review of Liu and Schwarz, (2019) study on assessing the community beliefs about the Corporate Social Responsibility practices of professional Football Clubs in China where descriptive statistics and regression were used as analysis tools justifies their application in this study. On the other hand content analysis was used for analyzing qualitative data obtained from clubs' managements via semi-structured interview.

In case of validity of the study, it was rooted in three aspects namely content, face and construct. The content of this study was extracted from empirical and theoretical review. From empirical and theoretical review of the theory of Competitive Dynamics the study rooted both its independent and dependent variables. Data collection method which explains the face aspect of the validity of this study was considered by modifying questions of formal studies in respects to this study. In order to ensure validity of qualitative findings, a researcher correctly extracted constructs from the Competitive Dynamics Theory so that to attain both theoretical and generalizability validity. Moreover the use of modified data collection methods from studies of other researchers who did studies in relation to the topic in question also ensured factual and accuracy of the data thus descriptive validity.

According Prasad, (2018) research reliability varies in quantitative and qualitative. Reliability in qualitative research is essentially a synonym for credibility, transferability, dependability and conformability over time, over instruments and over groups of respondents. Through the use of modified data collection methods of the previous other studies of Şahin, (2020), Didi, (2018) and Tabie, (2021), a researcher was of no doubt that the findings that was obtained through this study is credible, transferable, dependable and conformable.

Moreover the study also considered ethical issues by paying respects and giving freedom to all respondents in fill the questionnaires as well as keeping their information confidentiality for academic purpose only. In addition, the researcher looked for University research clearance form.

## 4. RESULTS & DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Descriptive Analysis Results and Discussion

The researcher wanted to investigate the influence of marketing communication strategies on fandom development in Tanzania. To answer this objective of the study, five statements were given to the respondents to rate using Likert scale of agreement. The response to these statements is indicated in Table 1.

**Table 1: Clubs' Fandom Development**

Statement	SD		D		N		A		SA		Total
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	
My football club is aiming at increasing number of clubs' fans	8	4.3	5	2.7			47	25.4	125	67.6	185
My football club uses advertising as a marketing communication strategy to increase number of clubs' fans	14	7.6	5	2.7	8	4.3	81	43.8	77	41.6	185

My football club uses social media as a marketing communication strategy to increase number of clubs' fans	14	7.6	8	4.3	33	17.8	73	39.5	57	30.8	185
My football club uses corporate social responsibility as a marketing communication strategy to increase number of clubs' fans	24	13.0	38	20.5	31	16.8	63	34.0	29	15.7	185
Marketing communication strategy is vital in fandom development	20	10.8	39	21.1	20	10.8	67	36.2	39	21.1	185

**Source:** Field data (2022)

Table 1 shows that out of 185 respondents, 172 (93%) respondents agreed that football club is aiming at increasing number of clubs' fans while 13 (7%) of respondents disagreed on the statement. This implies most football fans were pleased with the aim of football club of increasing number of clubs' fans.

Statement 2, 158 (85.4%) of respondents agreed that football clubs use advertising as a marketing communication strategy to increase number of clubs' fans, 19 (9.3%) disagreed and 8 (4.3%) were neutral. This implies that advertising strategy is used by football clubs influence fans. The results are supported by Tabie (2021) studied on "The Impact of Advertising on Consumer's buying behavior: a case of McDonald's found that advertising has an impact on consumers' buying behavior. Since this study also found the same findings, now the findings can be replicated in football industry in Tanzania without any doubt.

Football clubs use social media as a marketing communication strategy to increase number of clubs' fans, 130 (70.3%) of respondents agreed with the statement, 33 (17.8%) respondents were neutral and 22 (11.9%) of the respondents disagreed with the statement. This implies that most respondents were satisfied with the use of social media by football club as a marketing communication strategy to increase number of clubs' fans. This findings is in line with the study conducted by Parganas and Anagnostopoulos, (2015) on "Social Media Strategy in Professional Football: a case of Liverpool F.C" where it was revealed that the use of Liverpool's social media for increasing the engagement with fans for growth of fan bases builds and promotes the clubs.

Football clubs use corporate social responsibility as a marketing communication strategy to increase number of clubs' fans, 92 (49.7%) of respondents agreed, 62 (33.5%) of respondents disagreed and 31 (16.8%) of respondents were neutral with the statement. This implies that most of the football fans were satisfied with the use of corporate social responsibility by football clubs as a marketing communication strategy to increase number of clubs' fans. This is contrary to the findings of study conducted by Didi, (2018) on "The effect of Corporate Social Responsibility on

Generally, the researcher observed that the use of marketing communication strategies as a means of influencing clubs' fandom development by increase number of football clubs' fans is very important.

## 4.2 Linear Regression Results and Discussion

The linear regression analysis was also conducted to examine how independent variables (level of advertising, social media and corporate social responsibility) are related to a dependent variable (clubs' fandom development). Table 2 shows the findings.

**Table 2: Regression Coefficients**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	.778	.609		2.897	.032
Level of advertising	.673	.079	.572	5.949	.002
Social media	.607	.068	.716	6.630	.000
Corporate social responsibility	.405	.059	.050	5.934	.001

**Source:** Research findings, (2022)

Based on the regression coefficient analysis in Table 2, the results indicate that a unit change (1%) in level of advertising leads to a change of 0.673 (67.3%) in clubs' fandom development and has significance contribution and positively related to the clubs' fandom development since the p-value is less than 0.05. A unit change in social media leads to a positive change of 0.607 (60.7%) change in clubs' fandom development and has a significant contribution and is positively related to the clubs' fandom development since the p-value is less than 0.05. A unit change in corporate social responsibility leads to a positive change of 0.405 (40.5%) change in clubs' fandom development and has a significant contribution but is positively related to the clubs' fandom development since the p-value is less than 0.05.

The estimator model is

$$CFD = 0.778 + 0.673 LA + 0.607 SM + 0.405 CSR$$

(2.897) (5.949) (6.630) (5.934)

$$\bar{R}^2 = 0.667$$

t-values in parentheses

This test was used to explain the total variations in the dependent variable i.e. clubs' fandom development caused by variations in the independent variables i.e. level of advertising, social media and corporate social responsibility. In the case of the regression output the adjusted  $R^2 = 0.667$  implying that the model explains about 66.7% variations in the clubs' fandom

development hence the model does more than half to explain variations in clubs' fandom development.

Therefore, the findings of this study indicate that the independent variables influence clubs' fandom development in premier league football clubs which means that the independent variables (level of advertising, social media and corporate social responsibility) are significant predictors of a dependent variable (clubs' fandom development) in premier league football clubs.

## **5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

### **5.1 Conclusion**

The study acknowledge the importance of marketing communication strategies in influencing football clubs fandom development in Tanzania. Marketing communication strategies has a high and positive significant relationship on fandom development. For a club to expand its fandom, its marketing communication strategy should be set in such a way that it can easily be accessed by the majority of the public. Its contents and mode of delivering should be touching the majority of the public. Clubs need to innovate and intensify the use of effective and efficient marketing communication strategies in promoting clubs' brand to the public. It is of no doubt that through the use of effective and efficient marketing communication strategies, club will influence a number of people who in-turn will become club's fans.

### **5.2 Recommendations**

The findings indicate that marketing communication strategies influence fandom development in Tanzania; therefore football clubs in Tanzania should innovate proper strategies and intensify their use so that to be in a position to expand their fandom. Clubs should make sure that only relevant and ethical contents are posted at both their social media accounts as well as running as ads. Moreover clubs should involve in CSR projects/donations that only touch the majority of the public over.

In addition and since objectives were only able to explain 66.7% of the total variation of clubs' fandom development in premier league football clubs which means that they might have missed out some important marketing communication strategies in influencing clubs' fandom development, to get a more explanation about the influence of marketing communication strategies on fandom development other variables and marketing communication strategies indices should be identified and included in future research.

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