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# **Content Brand Journalism Impact on Consumption and Consumer Behavior of ‘Big Five’ Football Clubs’ Digital Products**

Zeki YARKIN<sup>1</sup>, Erman DOĞAN<sup>2</sup>, Çağan KILIÇ<sup>3</sup>

## **Abstract**

This study has been built as a market research which aims to examine the usage of today’s new technological processes along with developing digital marketing tools in sports, to measure the resultant reactions of sport consumers and to provide a better understanding of consumer behaviours, which are examined as a result of the alternative contents produced by football as well as the contents produced by its natural assets. At the same time, the difference between the consumer reaction for both the main and alternative products is measured and the answer to the question whether or not the potential products that can be produced have consumption potential as much as the main products, is searched. This study aims to analyse two football clubs selected from each of the top 5 European football leagues regarding the popularity rates of chosen social platforms. In conclusion, the results state the importance of content creation and support the idea of using players as a product to produce contents, apart from their natural assets, as an effective digital sport marketing strategy. Additionally, it is aimed to incorporate new marketing methods and tools that are actively used by sports clubs with the academic literature.

*Keywords:* sport marketing; consumer behaviour; content creation; digital marketing tools.

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## Introduction

Within the emerging developments in technology, including sports marketing, marketing types and techniques are gaining new forms. Content marketing and content creation are tools that make up the future of digital marketing (Baltes, 2015). With the help of social channels, professional teams, elite athletes and federations can reach sports consumers more easily (Holland, 2015). Social media is a powerful new tool of marketing around the world. Today, companies are using more and more digital marketing tools. Effective social media usage provides increased brand recognition and customer satisfaction with better brand image. However, social media marketing is still a new topic that challenges every marketer and business owner. The purpose of this research is to examine a new trend that has emerged in the internet industry in recent years, called content marketing.

Content marketing is often confused with similar terms such as Viral Marketing 2.0, Buzz Marketing or word of mouth marketing. People familiar with the industry often cite examples of successful viral content. Those who are not experts in the industry or have not studied a content marketing campaign before cannot recognize the virality patterns in these contents. The terms digital content and digital product are among the tools mainly used in this field. In the academic literature, the term 'digital product' is used (Hall, 2001; Lessig, 2001). Content is commonly used in industry analysis with the term application (Durlacher, 2001). Additionally, terms such as electronic information products, information goods, and virtual goods are used in business communications. Digital contents and digital products are conceptualized as bit-based. Objects distributed through electronic channels represent a real digital asset, which is defined and acquired by the term electronic, while channels are considered as technological natural distribution tools, and both are essential for the distribution process (Strader and Shaw, 2000).

As it is known, sports industry is one of the main industries experiencing the most changes in this digital development process. Within this process, it is observed that sports clubs and sports companies have adapted to the age with digital sports marketing and are one of the active leaders of this age. Among the tools used in digital sports marketing today, social channels, content marketing and apps (APPs) are the most popular and widely used tools. For this reason, in order to create the research universe, the social channels of the determined football clubs and the content they produce in these channels were examined by choosing the top 5 leagues (England, France, Germany, Spain, Italy) within professional football leagues. In this way, the behavior of football consumers who have different cultures and traditions towards the produced content, will be observed.

Today, football has evolved to become an industry in the sports sector. Therefore, the main objectives of this study are to investigate the relationship between the consumption levels and consumer behaviors of digital marketing according to the content of the products offered through social channels, and to compare the

digital marketing tools used with respect to the selected leagues. In addition, the lack of sufficient studies and resources within the academic field signifying these changes in the sports and football sectors emphasize the importance of this study.

The problem this research aims to elaborate is whether or not the existing products in sports marketing can be used through digital marketing tools together with different techniques, has effects on consumer behavior. In addition, the study further targets to find more effective and new ways for the existing products to be used in the field of sports marketing by taking advantage of the new opportunities offered by current technological evolutions.

The purpose of this research is to compare the types of content that sports clubs can produce with content marketing and the types of content they can produce through their existing assets in terms of consumer behavior. Furthermore, this research also aims to compare content marketing in terms of consumer interactions in active and passive periods of sports.

## **Literature review**

Marketing is the process of planning and implementing the pricing, development and allocation of ideas, products and services that create exchanges satisfying the notion of the individual (consumer) and organisational goals (Ringold & Weitz, 2007). As for sport marketing, it focuses more on complementing the demands of sport consumers involving active sport players, people following sport channels for news or events or people buying collectables or garments (Smith, 2008). Gau and Kim (2021) emphasized the notion regarding the importance of cultural differences on how teams, and naturally their supporters, are formed (Gau & Kim, 2021).

The purpose of Marketing is to form exchange opportunities with consumers where something has to be given up in return for a good and/or service, no matter what type of marketing is being implemented (Smith, 2008). Since the aim for an organisation is to attain success in its business while surviving today's emerging competitive environment, the analysis for the purchasing behaviour of consumers needs to be performed considering the perpetually changing market conditions. That being said, one of the key components of this analysis is the how cultural factors affect consumer behaviour (Akdogan *et al.*, 2021). Nevertheless, marketing has been deeply affected by the revolution of digital marketing (Wind, 2002).

In this sense, modern marketing and the exerted technologies have inclined towards a more digital electronic understanding (Aksoy, 2009). From a brief perspective, Digital marketing is being considered as enclosing everything containing the internet and electronic goods (Lincoln, 2020). Adoption of the internet and technological devices are positively correlated with digital purchase and consumption amounts (Andronie *et al.*, 2021). In order to acknowledge how digital marketing needs to be used efficiently by organisations, it is mandatory

to ascertain which strategies to be implemented (Li *et al.*, 2011). Significant information regarding the types of products that consumers love or what features of the products they prefer etc. can be procured when consumers visit the website through web mining, this information provides considerable advantages to the business (Akar, 2007). Adoption of digital applications and social channels are associated with consumer behavior (Watson, 2022). By tracking the consumers, important information such as their expectations, demands, ideas, tendencies or approaches about a specific product can be easily obtained and recorded through digital marketing. Therefore, businesses can be evaluated by analysing their consumer tendencies and accordingly, attain the opportunity of following the right pathway (Oncu, 2002).

Deloitte (2020) emphasized a 50% rise in the actual time spent in minutes per day for an average adult on digital platforms in the research namely 'Rise of on-demand content. The research further illustrated that for the period between 2010 and 2014 the time spent in Traditional media slightly decreased (Deloitte, 2020). Forrester (2019) emphasized the notion that when social channels are used, Content marketing is more effective than traditional marketing as a consequence of digital evolution. Digital content marketing is the management of complementing, predicting and process satisfying consumer needs that are offered through electronic channels using digital contents (Rowley, 2008). Content marketing can be described as content types that are generated in visual, written or auditory form aiming at businesses, marketing managers or brands to inform consumers regarding the business, product or service, to make them more functional, to arouse curiosity, to form a bonding with the brand-product through digital channels or traditional media in terms of the rate of followers. Moreover, for further steps, they are the content types that allow performing a buying behaviour through the contents they benefit from with their consumer identities, and ensure consumers engage with brand loyalty even after the buying process (Ergezer, 2019).

Content marketing, together with not being a new concept essentially, is being encountered as a solution to banner blindness which is considered more effective online. Instead of drowning consumers with advertisements, offering advertisements that they are interested in is a notion that is becoming preferable by more and more businesses due to the significant effects that it creates despite being difficult in terms of advertising context (Özçit, 2015). The four main purposes of content marketing are specified by Karkar (2016) as brand awareness, consumer loyalty, building trust with followers and attracting the attention of possible consumers. High-quality contents are directly correlated with a firms' reputation and awareness. Therefore, firms use the advantage of generating high-quality contents to become more known and reputable. Here, quality contents refer to publications informing people about the brand and their businesses such as various social media publications, announcements, videos etc. In this way, brand awareness is built (Yildirim, 2019). Some of the critical aspects which are deemed to be significant for marketing strategies have been argued by Baltes (2015) regarding

that the emphasis should be on quality rather than quantity and topics people are more interested in should be considered.

Järvinen and Taminen (2016) identify social media as a content delivery channel. Hence, social media can be described as a digital channel in which the creation, publication and re-examination of contents by the recipient are ensured. Through social media, the audience is assured of the interaction with the distributed content since they have the capability and attainability to either like, comment, or share, and as a result digital word-of-mouth and discussions are created. For this reason, it is crucial for firms to stay active and engaged with their audience and maintain their engagement by returning to or complying with the comments or any other interactions from their audience regardless of them being positive or negative (Baltes, 2015; Kaplan & Hainlein, 2010). In order to describe the difference between traditional media contents and new contents created on social platforms, a different point of view uses the types of advertisements as a content type to indicate the growth rate of digital revenue (Shah, 2020). While traditional media contents target mass communication of consumers, social media contains a two-way communication inferring that the messages can be conveyed to the targeted audience as a whole or individually, and social media incorporates a lot of freedom by means of information sharing and content creation (Khillar, 2020).

## **Methodology**

### *Study Design*

This study formed as a digital marketing research to investigate the correlation between content types and consumption levels of contents created and/or shared by football clubs on YouTube channels. The usage of social media provide enormous amount of different types of data that will help marketers to gain knowledge about digitals products feedback and consumer behaviour. This study has been carried out by analysing primary data through out a 10-month period from January 2020 to October 2021. The research based on observation and digital data which was gathered by new digital marketing tools in sport marketing field. Structured observation is chosen method which used to collect data systematically with the pre-defined schedule (Bhasin, 2020). This will allow the collection of the most demanded data which also provides a suitable environment to perform the research.

As represented in the name of the study, this study contains experimental analysis to provide a new persfectice to understanding sport consumers behaviour and consumption levels of product (digital contents) that created by football clubs in social platforms. Moreover exemining the interactions of sport consumers as data will helpful to produce and develop marketing strategies for football clubs.

### *Participants*

The main product chosen to be examined in this research is football and the top five European leagues were chosen to be observed to carry out this study. Our research groups have been formed to collect two clubs that had the highest popularity, that is, the highest number of followers, on social media from the five selected leagues. The purpose of establishing these research groups was to allow us to observe the consumption behaviour of sports consumers who had different demographic and cultural characteristics.

### *Measures*

*Views:* According to YouTube view policies, there are two certain criteria that requires to be applied in order for the views to be counted. First criteria suggests that a video needs to be physically started by clicking the play button. As for the second criteria, there is a 30-second minimum time limit for a video to be played for a view to be realized (Sampy, 2020). In this context, it can be derived that the consumption amount of the videos published by football clubs, in other words the consumption of their products, equals the amount of views to be reached.

*Product, By-Products and New Alternative Products:* In marketing, a product is anything that is offered to a market for consumer use in order to complement the need or wish of a customer (Kotler, 2006). On the contrary, when a product is in the production process, it can be described as a leftover product, in other words, a by-product. A leftover product still has an economic value within a market, even though it's value is lower than the primary product. Therefore, this allows for the leftover products, the by-products to be traded and/or sold off in the market separately (Bhasin, 2020).

In this study, the product that was chosen to be analysed, digital contents that are shared by football clubs through YouTube channels. During the research period, the chosen contents have been divided into four distinct groups for the purpose of the analysis. The detailed criteria regarding the characteristics of each group are described down below.

- Main Product: The main product that is being examined in this research is the football sport and the content type that represents the main product is highlights. Highlights is a content type that includes both football activities and competition.
- By-Product 1: On the other hand, by-product 1 which is formed by the news, press conferences and announcements published by football clubs is another group being analysed in this study. These are the content types that contain information and developments about football, and conversely they are consist of Traditional contents which do not directly include either football activities or competition.

- By-Product 2: Moreover, group By Product 2 is comprise of contents such as training, training matches and pre-match broadcast. The distinctive feature of this group is that, even though it includes football activities, it does not contain traditional contents which excludes competition.
- New Alternative Product: The last group represents contents that do not include either football activities or competition, but only combines new and alternative contents that are generated for digital platforms using only the football players. This is the only type of group that is formed with football players without their main assets, the football.

### *Data screening (Gathering) and analysis tools*

*Popsters:* Popster is an analytic tool that allows the comparison of engagement and statistics of social networking sites. This analytic tool is easy to use due to its nature. It is especially useful for gathering important statistics about social media posts and activities, as well as providing instant reports for a particular social media platform (Hsu, 2021).

*IBM SPSS:* IBM SPSS Statistics is a software that allows rapid extraction of insights gathered from the inserted data. It is a comprehensive analytic tool that offers multiple aspects of statistical activities such as preparation and management of data and associated analysis and reports. This tool includes a user-friendly interface and powerful features. SPSS Statistics will be useful for this research as it offers statistical analysis that provides highly accurate and quality data that will allow for detailed decision making (Rahman, 2021).

### *Procedures*

In accordance with the criteria determined for the research, a 10-month (29.01.2020-29.10.2020) time frame was determined in order to observe the consumer interactions of the contents produced and shared by the top five European football league clubs on YouTube. Within the specified period, starting at 5 pm on the 29th of each month, Popsters, a paid and official application, one of the digital market data research tools, was used to collect the data of the amount of views on the official YouTube accounts of 10 football clubs.

Since there is no limit to the number of videos uploaded monthly by football clubs, three videos from each club with the most views in the specified month were collected to form the primary data of the research. The research was carried out with the data obtained from 300 videos in total. The data collected in the research is divided into four main groups according to the content types namely 'main product, By-product 1, By-product 2 and new alternative product', and Statistical analysis of consumption amounts was performed with Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 22.0 software.



Inter-class correlation (ICC) values between consumption scores of main products and by-products produced within the scope of digital sport marketing evaluated in the research, are given. The distribution of the contents according to some descriptive features was determined by frequency analysis, and descriptive statistics such as mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum values for consumption amounts and interaction scores were shown. In the final stage, by using SPSS, Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) will be applied to the gathered primary data.

Results

Figure 1 demonstrates the total view numbers gathered during the ten-month period of the research process, and the representation of the pre-analysis raw data.

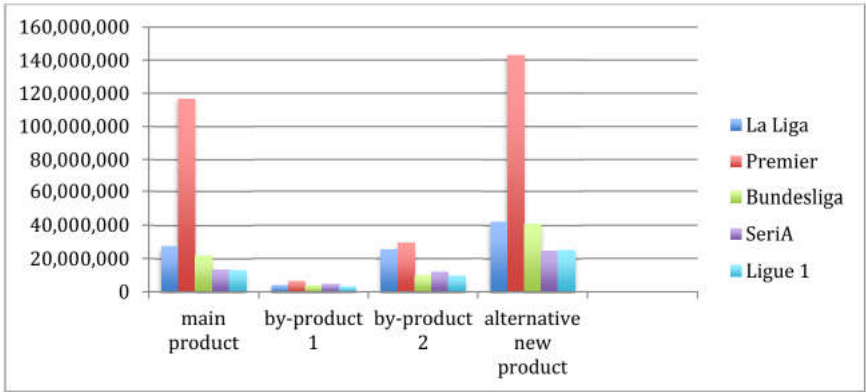


Figure 1. Illustrates the total view count according to the football leagues and the produced product types.

To examine whether consumption ratio of digital products regarding the chosen football clubs, four product groups had significant differentiation (Pillai’s Trace=.036) according to MANOVA analysis.

*Table 1. Comparison of the four product types (content types) with respect to the five football leagues*

Contents	Leagues	Mean	SD	P
Main Product	La Liga	15120793	2034035.082	.005*
	Premier L.	58287087	11407452.47	
	Bundesliga	10994929	532028.556	
	Serie A	6698471.5	5960906.63	
	Ligue 1	6405445	566413.745	
By-products 1	La Liga	3900684	2758200.108	0.579
	Premier L.	3113041.5	2276857.672	
	Bundesliga	1979503	647008.362	
	Serie A	2482387	86218.944	
	Ligue 1	1489580	954117.565	
By-products 2	La Liga	7477826	7410607.76	0.076
	Premier L.	14841847	2061620.732	
	Bundesliga	5036419.5	3407347.467	
	Serie A	5918029.5	2744615.879	
	Ligue 1	4717573	2267247.384	
Alternative New Product	La Liga	17247816	5239941.97	.022*
	Premier L.	71557090	2203189.167	
	Bundesliga	20286986.5	16898695.95	
	Serie A	12258894	13131838.43	
	Ligue 1	12562268.5	3967883.741	

Among the four produced product types, Main Product ( $p=.005$ ) and Alternative New Product ( $p=.022$ ) significantly differ from the By-products 1, By-products 2, and each other. Furthermore, no considerable differentiation was observed between by-products 1 ( $p=.579$ ) and by-products 2 ( $p=.076$ ).

Figure 2 illustrates the degree of differentiation regarding the consumption rates of the main product among the five football leagues.

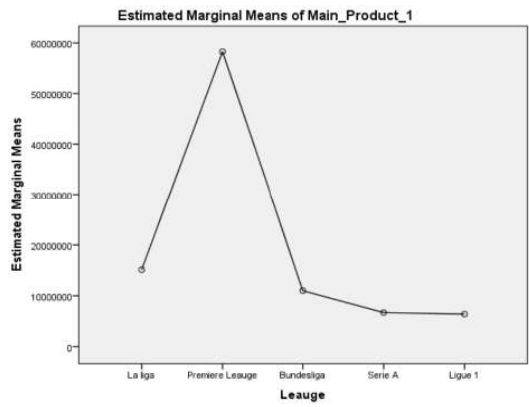


Figure 2. Differentiation between the five leagues according to the main product

Figure 3 demonstrates the differentiation amount of the new alternative product’s consumption rates between five football leagues.

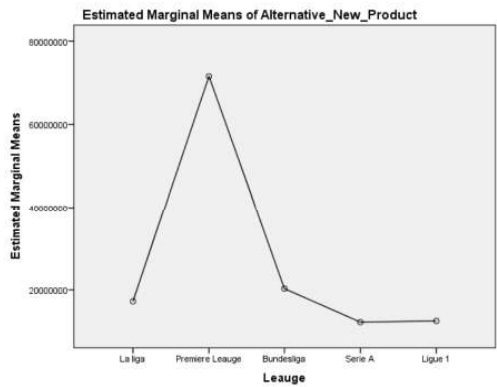


Figure 3. Differentiation between the five leagues according to the alternative new product

Figure 4 illustrates the differentiation amount of the by-product 1’s consumption rates between five football leagues.

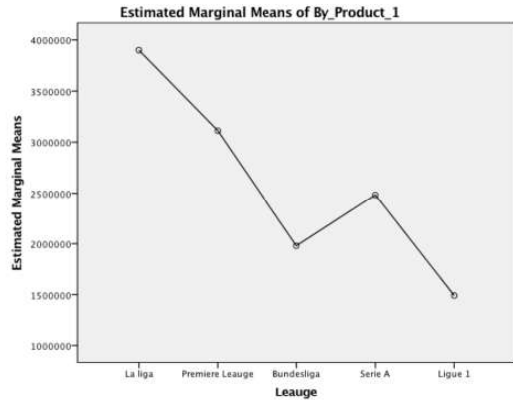


Figure 4. Differentiation between the five leagues according to the by-product 1

Figure 5 demonstrates the differentiation amount of the by-product 2’s consumption rates between five football leagues.

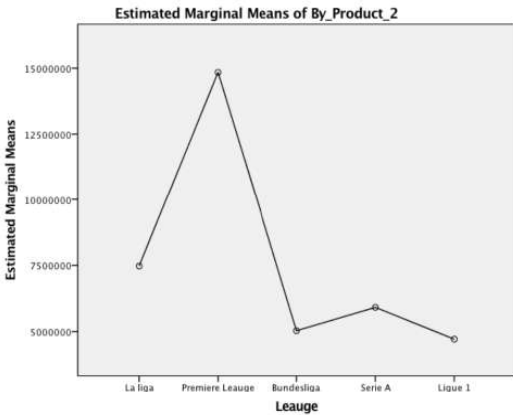


Figure 5. Differentiation between the five leagues according to the by-product 2

Discussion

According to our MANOVA results, main products and alternative new products are significantly different from by-products, and each other. It was an expected and predicted result that the main products differed significantly when compare to by-products and alternative new products, that is, the consumer demand was mostly for main product, football. On the other hand, the main purpose of the research was to measure whether these new alternative contents produced for digital platforms are as demanded and consumed as our main product. In this context, the considerable differentiation of alternative new products compared

to other products supports the hypothesis of the research. In the light of these results, it reveals that these new content types produced for digital platforms are in consumed and demanded as much as the main product and it shows the importance of content creation as a new tool for sport marketing method in today's digital era.

On the other hand, as can be observed in this study results, it can be said that the content created for digital media, and produced without using our main product, is consumed more and potentially more demanded on a current and popular social media platform such as YouTube than our main product. While this shows the importance of content creation, it also reveals the benefits of the effective use of sports marketing in the digital environment.

In addition, the consumption amounts according to the types of content produced by football clubs are shown in figure 2, figure 3, figure 4 and figure 5. Among the five leagues, Premier League has a significant differentiation rate considering the four content types when compared to other four football leagues. In the light of these results, it can be said that the contents produced by Premier League football clubs are the types of content that are consumed more than other leagues, and the contents to be produced by Premier League clubs will potentially have more demand and consumption.

Furthermore, it is also observed that the demand and consumption amount of the Premier League, which is in the first rank in the list of the most watched and followed football leagues according to the ranking of the leagues (Nadar, 2021), is at a superior level compared to other leagues on digital platforms. In the light of this result, it can be said that the Premier League is the most demanded league on digital platforms and the most consumed in terms of digital products. According to a research performed by Sky Sports (2021) that is based on distinct sport fans from various cultures across Europe, a conclusion was derived supporting the tendency of sport fans in the UK where 'die-hard supporter' type of fans was observed when compared to the fan culture across the rest of Europe (Sky, 2021). As a result, the conclusion attained from the research of Sky Sport highly supports the outcome of this study.

## **Conclusion**

### *Theoretical implications*

The effects that digital marketing approach together with the marketing tools being used in sport marketing have on consumer behaviour forms the foundation of this study. That being said, it has been tried to develop different variables and perspectives that can affect content consumption amounts and interaction rates. As for the answer to the main research question in which the effectiveness of the marketing methods and tools, which are considered within the framework of the empirical-based analysis approach based on the gathered data, are tested;

It has been concluded that alternative digital market products based on content production have a significant effect on consumption amounts.

### *Managerial contributions*

The research illustrates valuable information such as sport consumer behaviour in terms of consumption levels of football's digital products and by-products, with the development of new marketing tools and provides better understanding of consumer insight. In addition, the study highlights the importance of using content creation as a digital marketing tool in sports, and providing a better understanding of the difference between traditional media contents and the new alternative contents created by football clubs benefiting their players on top of their natural assets in social channels. Furthermore, it represents the usage of new digital marketing tools in the football sector at the professional level, and providing further information to build alternative strategies under the terms of sport marketing on digital platforms.

### *Limitation*

This study also includes several limitations. First of all, since this study is unique and follows an experimental method considering the information transfer rate of the digital age we live in, the speed of transferring the information that we can easily access in our daily life and the new techniques developed to the literature is very slow. In this context, the lack of reliable and valid resources at the academic level in order to obtain data and support this study is one of the biggest limitations of the research. There is no similar scientific study to compare within this research. Moreover, due to the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic during the research process, also prolonged the writing process of this article.

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