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Pedagogical Case Study – The use of social media by Sport Lisboa and Benfica and its impact on the club's international prestige and engagement with the club members.

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Master in Business Administration

Supervisor:
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Department of Marketing, Operations and Management

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Acknowledgments

Thank you to my family and friends for always being there for me. Without you this wouldn't be possible.

Thank you to my supervisor: Daniela Langaro.

To all my colleagues and professors that I met on this road.

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Resumo

Este estudo de caso pedagógico pretende oferecer o contexto para o tema estratégia de redes sociais a ser aplicado. Ao mesmo tempo, o presente trabalho centra-se na estratégia de redes sociais implementada pelo Sport Lisboa e Benfica, um dos maiores clubes desportivos de Portugal. Numa era em que a presença digital é crucial para as organizações desportivas, este estudo pretende compreender como o Benfica aproveita as plataformas de redes sociais para interagir com os adeptos, promover a marca do clube e melhorar a sua estratégia global de comunicação. O estudo de caso pedagógico inclui um estudo de caso a partilhar com os alunos, com uma análise de desempenho das contas oficiais das redes sociais do Benfica, incluindo Twitter, Instagram e TikTok, examinando o conteúdo, a frequência e os padrões de interação. Adicionalmente, inclui também uma nota pedagógica para utilização pelo docente, sendo as respostas ao estudo de caso apoiadas em revisão de literatura nas redes sociais. Durante o desenvolvimento deste estudo de caso pedagógico, foram recolhidos dados nas plataformas de redes sociais do Benfica. O estudo de caso pedagógico pretende ser aplicado a estudantes de licenciatura e mestrado no âmbito do marketing em redes sociais e meios digitais. Este estudo de caso pedagógico contribui para a compreensão da gestão eficaz das redes sociais nas organizações desportivas, apoiando os alunos com conhecimentos críticos para oferecer recomendações práticas para melhorar as estratégias de comunicação digital.

Palavras-chave: Sport Lisboa e Benfica, gestão de redes sociais, comunicação, marketing, futebol.

Sistema de classificação JEL:
M31 Marketing.

Abstract

This pedagogical case study intends to offer the context for the topic of social media strategy to be lectured. While doing that the present work focuses on the social media strategy implemented by Sport Lisboa e Benfica, one of Portugal's most prominent sports clubs. In an era where digital presence is crucial for sports organizations, this study aims to understand how Benfica leverages social media platforms to engage with fans, promote the club's brand, and enhance its overall communication strategy. The pedagogical case study includes a case study to be shared with students, with a performance analysis of Benfica's official social media accounts, including Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok, examining the content, frequency, and interaction patterns. Additionally, it also includes a pedagogical note to be used by the lecturer, with answers to the case study being supported by literature review on social media. While developing this pedagogical case study, data was collected from Benfica's social media platforms. The pedagogical case study aims to be applied to bachelor and master's students in the scope of social media marketing and digital media. This Pedagogical case study contributes to the understanding of effective social media management in sports organizations, supporting students with critical knowledge for offering practical recommendations for enhancing digital communication strategies.

Keywords: Sport Lisboa e Benfica, social media management, communication, marketing, football.

JEL classification system:

M31 Marketing.

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1. CASE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

The social media strategy of Sport Lisboa e Benfica, one of Portugal's most well-known football teams, is the subject of this project's educational case study. It seeks to demonstrate the strategic issues and intricacies of digital communication for a major sports organization operating in a cutthroat market. The case is intended to serve as a teaching aid for Master of Business Administration (MBA) students, particularly those enrolled in courses pertaining to strategic communication, brand management, and digital marketing.

1.2 Educational objectives

This case's main goal is to give students a hands-on understanding of how a reputable sports organization like Benfica uses social media to interact with its fan base, build brand loyalty, and deal with the difficulties presented by the digital world. Students will be inspired to do the following by examining Benfica's strategy:

- Determine and evaluate different social media tactics in the context of sports;
- Gain the ability to design and modify communication strategies for various digital channels;
- Recognize how sports leagues establish and preserve their brand identities on social media.;

1.3 Why Benfica?

Because of its large and devoted fan base and well-established social media presence across various platforms, SL Benfica provides an engaging backdrop. Benfica faces difficulties in handling a variety of audiences because, in contrast to many smaller teams, it functions as both a national and worldwide brand. It is the perfect example to examine in the MBA program because it gives students the opportunity to experiment with tactics that strike a balance between local and global engagement.

1.4 Structure of the Case

Beginning with a summary of the club's goals and brand identity, the case study is designed to walk students through an analysis of Benfica's social media strategies. Next, it goes platform-by-platform through the club's digital communication practices. Students will have a thorough understanding of strategic social media use thanks to this methodical approach, and they will be able to apply the concepts they have learned to comparable situations in future professional settings.

1.5. Calendar

Regarding the calendar of the week, Benfica posts content every day on Instagram and Twitter, but not on TikTok. While the first two are social media used mostly for spreading information, so the content is very similar and most of the times even the same, TikTok is mostly used for entertaining and comedy content, what can explain the difference of frequency of posts. This can be seen through a quick search on the club's social media. Here's an example of information post that was equal on Instagram and twitter but that wasn't posted on TikTok:

Figure 1 Information post – Instagram (screenshot)

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Figure 2 Information post – Twitter (screenshot)

Platform-specific personalization is essential for user engagement, according to research published in the Journal of Marketing Management on "Social Media Content Strategies in Sports." To attract younger viewers, Benfica should prioritize amusing and entertaining material on TikTok while keeping information-focused content on Instagram and Twitter. This strategy is consistent with these findings. Furthermore, the Sport Management Review study on "The Impact of Social Media on Sports Consumption" demonstrates that platforms such as TikTok typically do better with entertaining material since users anticipate short, humorous videos. By continuously implementing these findings, Benfica's approach could be improved to satisfy the diverse demands of its

audience across all media.

1.6. Game day

When it comes to the game day content, one of the most important days of a club's social media, not only for information purposes about the team but also to generate engagement with the fans during the day to help them be closer to the team and the club.

On gamedays, as in most of the days, Instagram and Twitter have similar or equal content, given the fact that they are two apps that allow the same kind of posts (photos, videos, 'stories', reels/shorts), so they are explored as one to save work and to reach all type of viewers.

Finally, TikTok doesn't have influence or content on game day, which is only used to post short videos of something relevant and entertaining that happen during the game and that can generate engagement with the members and foreign fans (stadium atmosphere on a big game, player's skills, good goals, funny trending videos).

This is what is generally made by Benfica's social media team at game day on all platforms and can be confirmed by anyone that analyzes the club's social media on game day.
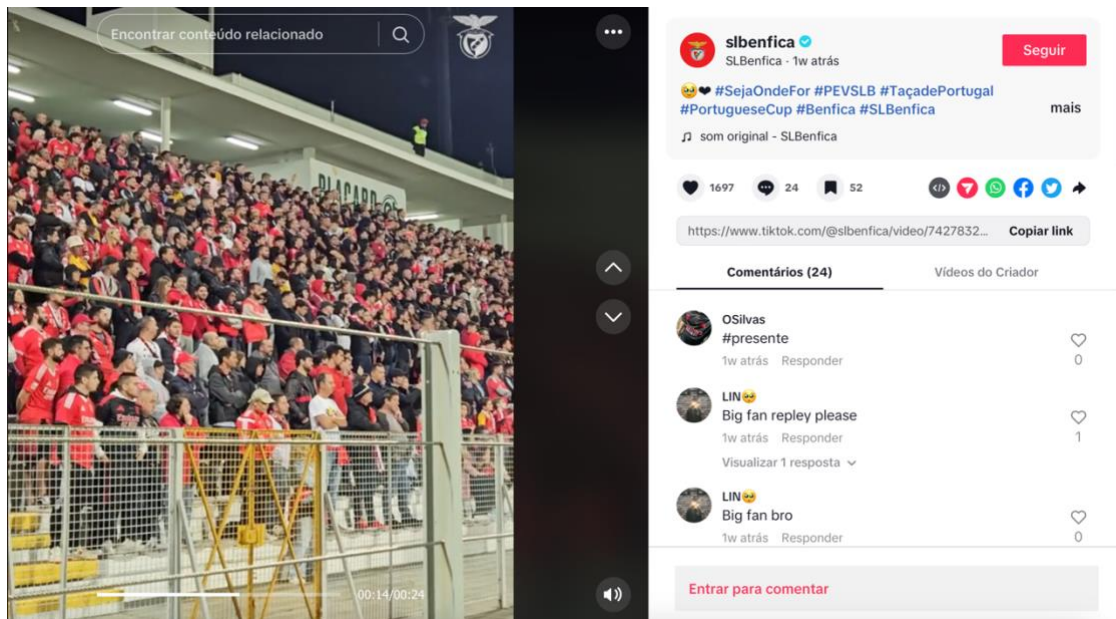
Here´s a normal game day post on Instagram, Twitter and TikTok:

Figure 3 Game day result – Instagram (screenshot)

Figure 4 Game day result – Twitter (screenshot)

Figure 5 Game day video – TikTok (screenshot)

Game day is a high-engagement occasion that clubs frequently take advantage of across a variety of channels, according to the International Journal of Sport Communication's article "Social Media in Sport Marketing." Their research indicates that Benfica's strategy of concentrating on delivering real-time information via its website and app while keeping visual updates on Instagram, and Twitter is a clever way to keep fans interested as the game progresses. Furthermore, real-time updates—particularly alerts for fans on the app—are essential for improving fan engagement because they closely match fans' experiences with live events, fortifying their bond with the game, according to the Journal of Sport and Social Media article on "Game Day Communication."

1.7. Engagement

In the football of today success does not only entail what you achieve between your four lines. One of those is establishing a strong relationship with your supporters and having an active, digital presence in social media has become increasingly more important. At a club like S.L. Benfica, social media is integral to creating that sense of community and keeping excitement levels amongst the supporters high throughout their digital journey

with the team.

Note: Engagement is a measure of how fans connect with the club, show their passion and build personal relationships with the team; it goes beyond simple metrics such as likes, shares or comments. When fans nowadays want real-time results, content from behind the scenes and fluid communication on a two-way street with their club – how they can engage their audience can have more than an impact fan loyalty but also brand perception and even revenue streams.

For Benfica, a club with a rich history and a global following, optimizing social media engagement is essential. It provides the opportunity to strengthen the emotional bond with existing fans while attracting new ones, both locally and internationally. Through consistent, engaging content, Benfica can enhance fan participation, deepen their involvement with the club's activities, and create a stronger sense of belonging.

This case study will explore the strategic role of social media engagement in Benfica's digital communication efforts, examining how the club can leverage various platforms to increase interaction, drive fan loyalty, and enhance its overall brand presence in the competitive world of sports.

The "Social Media Engagement in Sports" study from Computers in Human Behavior examines how supporters might develop a stronger sense of community and loyalty through meaningful digital engagement that goes beyond simple likes or shares. According to Benfica, this study bolsters the notion that fan participation is crucial to creating enduring bonds, enhancing brand perception, and cultivating a feeling of community. Additionally, social media participation, especially on platforms with a strong community aspect, can have a substantial impact on fan loyalty, according to the Journal of Brand Strategy study on "Digital Fan Engagement and Loyalty in Football Clubs." By giving priority to interactive and personalized content that connects with fans on a deeper, emotional level, Benfica may be able to improve their current engagement strategies.

1.8. Social Media Strategy

In recent years, social media has become a crucial platform for sports organizations to connect with their fans, promote their brand, and create a global presence. Benfica's approach to social media management can be dissected into several key areas: the predominance of informative content, a scarcity of trending content, medium engagement levels, and a lack of content that fosters a strong sense of unity between the fans and the club.

1.8.1. Predominance of Informative Content

One of the defining characteristics of Benfica's social media strategy is its emphasis on informative content. The club's social media pages are replete with updates regarding match schedules, player statistics, training sessions, and other logistical details. This type of content serves a crucial purpose by keeping fans well-informed about the club's operations and upcoming events.

However, while informative content is essential, its predominance can result in a rather dry and transactional interaction with the audience. Fans often seek more than just information; they crave emotional engagement and personal connection with their favorite club. The challenge for Benfica lies in balancing informative posts with more engaging and emotionally resonant content that can capture the hearts of its followers.

This section draws on insights from Sigurðsson's study, which highlights the critical role of emotional engagement in fostering strong fan-club relationships on social media. Sigurðsson's findings demonstrate that fans are not only seeking information but also a deeper emotional connection with their clubs, which enhances their sense of community and loyalty (Sigurðsson, 2012).

We have here a good example to prove this point. Regarding the UCL draw, Sporting CP has published five posts on Instagram, three photos and two videos. Benfica posted only two photos informing the fans about the pre-draw and draw result:
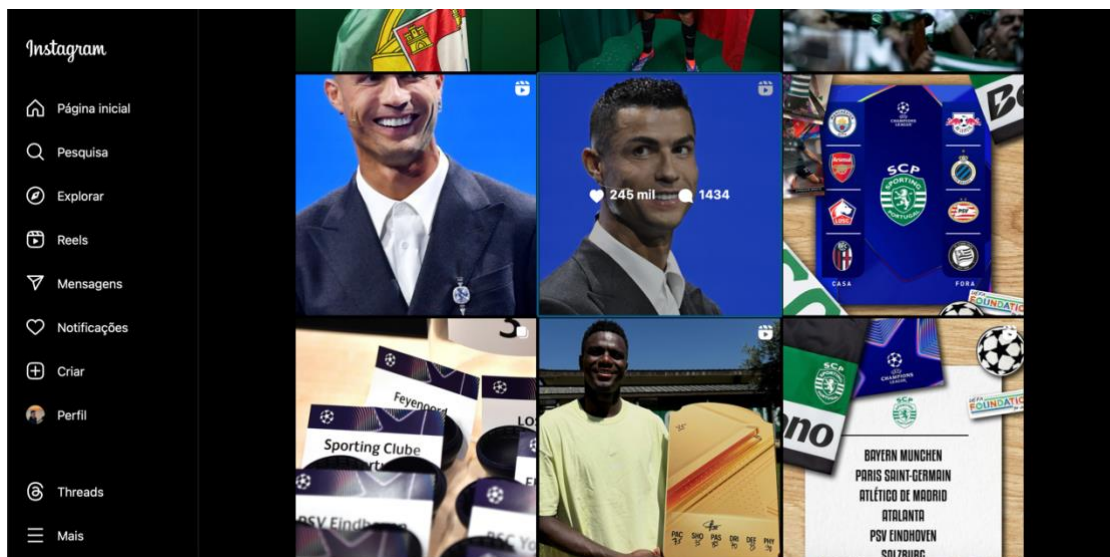
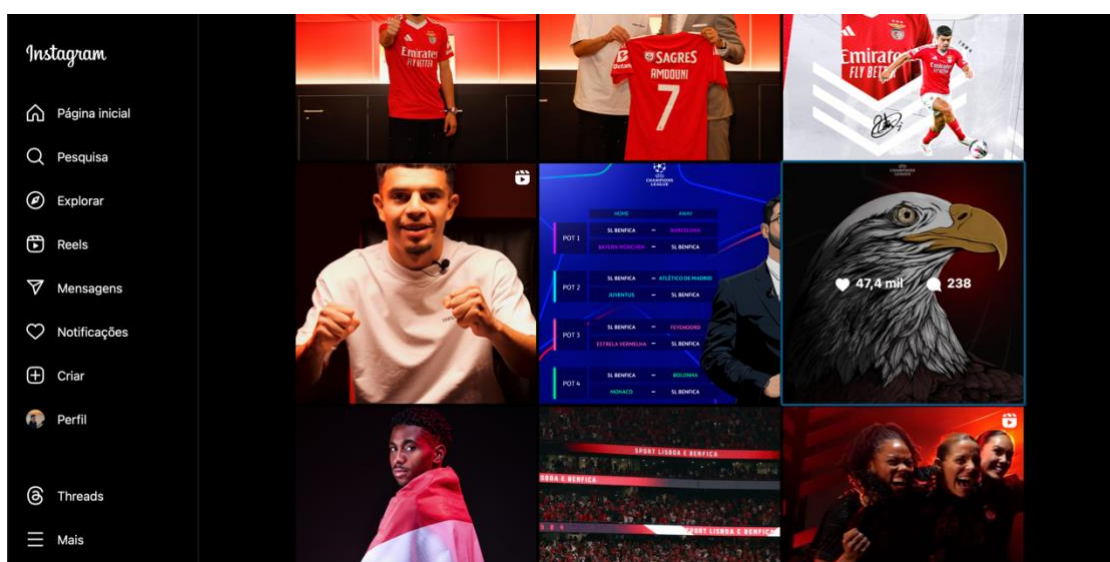*Figure 6 UCL Draw posts – Sporting (screenshot)*

Figure 7 UCL Draw posts – Benfica (screenshot)

An over-reliance on informative content might limit fan involvement by making the contact appear transactional rather than personal, according to the paper "Content and Emotion in Social Media: The Case of Sports Teams" in the European Journal of Marketing. When applied to Benfica's social media accounts, this study bolsters the notion that, although informational content is helpful, incorporating emotionally charged content would improve the club's relationship with supporters. This is further supported by Social Media + Society's "The Role of Emotional Engagement in Building Fan-Club Relationships," which highlights that sports fans want both emotional and informational connection. Fans may find Benfica's social media more interesting and emotionally satisfying if the team shares fan anecdotes or adds personal, behind-the-scenes pieces.

1.8.2. Low trending content

In the fast-paced world of social media, staying relevant often means tapping into trending topics and viral phenomena. Unfortunately, Benfica's social media presence shows a noticeable lack of engagement with current trends and viral content. This omission can be attributed to a conservative approach that prioritizes traditional forms of communication over contemporary, trend-driven engagement.

While maintaining the club's dignity and brand image is important, engaging with trending content can offer significant advantages. It can increase the club's visibility, attract new followers, and create a buzz that transcends the existing fan base. Incorporating trending topics, memes, and viral challenges into the content strategy could revitalize Benfica's social media presence and align the club more closely with the dynamic interests of a younger, digitally savvy audience.

After quick research, we had these results regarding trending content on TikTok:

	Trending
Sporting CP	13
FC Porto	14
SL Benfica	4

Figure 8 TikTok - Last 50 videos (manual research)

1.8.3. Low engagement content

A critical metric for assessing the success of social media strategies is engagement—likes, comments, shares, and overall interaction from the audience. Currently, Benfica's content tends to generate relatively low levels of engagement. Several factors contribute to this issue, including the nature of the content, the frequency of posts, and the platforms' algorithms.

Low engagement can also be linked to the predominance of informative content, which, while necessary, may not always inspire active interaction from fans. To enhance engagement, Benfica could benefit from incorporating more interactive elements into their social media strategy. This might include polls, quizzes, live Q&A sessions with players, behind-the-scenes footage, and user-generated content campaigns that encourage fans to participate actively.

Because it encourages fans to actively participate, interactive content—like polls, live Q&A sessions, and quizzes—tends to create better engagement, according to the Journal of Strategic Marketing article "Evaluating the Success of Social Media Strategies in Sports." These tactics could be used by Benfica to improve the low interaction of its more static postings. Additionally, the ability of user-generated content to increase fan involvement is highlighted in the Sport Marketing Quarterly report on "User-Generated Content and Fan Engagement in Professional Sports." Benfica may foster a feeling of community and promote more meaningful involvement by asking supporters to submit their own images or narratives, which would boost engagement and loyalty.

1.8.4. Low content that unites fans with the team and club

A key aspect of successful sports social media strategies is the ability to create a strong sense of community and belonging among fans. Benfica's current approach shows a deficiency in content that fosters unity and strengthens the emotional bond between the fans and the club. Fans are not merely consumers of content; they are an integral part of the club's identity and legacy.

To address this, Benfica could focus on storytelling that highlights the rich history and cultural significance of the club. Sharing personal stories of players, celebrating fan contributions, and highlighting community events can all serve to deepen the connection between the club and its supporters. Additionally, creating content that celebrates collective moments of glory and resilience can evoke a sense of pride and belonging among the fan base.

1.8.5. Engagement analysis

{Twitter			
		Views	
	August	September	Variation
Sporting CP	18.800.000	16.400.000	-12.00%
FC Porto	35.900.000	27.200.000	-24.00%
SL Benfica	15.100.000	45.100.000	199%

Figure 9 Views on Twitter in August and September of the 3 main clubs in Portugal (manual research)

{Instagram			
		September	
	Likes	Comments	Engagement Rate
Sporting CP	13000	159	1,15
FC Porto	16000	82	0,96
SL Benfica	32000	221	1,70

Figure 10 Views on Instagram in September of the 3 main clubs in Portugal (manual research)

	TikTok	
	Views	Likes
Sporting CP	10.516.000	1.542.251
FC Porto	10.731.000	1.673.090
SL Benfica	3.796.000	419993.00

Figure 11 Views on TikTok in September of the 3 main clubs in Portugal (manual research)

Important information about each club's social media performance can be found in the TikTok, Instagram, and Twitter data for FC Porto, Sporting CP, and SL Benfica. With the largest fan base and the most extensive football history in Portugal, SL Benfica should normally be at the top of the list for interaction metrics on all platforms. Benfica, however, has inconsistent performance, outperforming on some platforms while falling short on others, despite its advantages.

Analysis of TikTok

Views and Likes: With over 10 million views apiece, Sporting CP and FC Porto are powerful on TikTok, while SL Benfica lags with just 3.8 million views and roughly 420,000 likes.

Given Benfica's sizable fan following, the lower TikTok figures point to underuse of the platform in comparison to its competitors.

Interpretation: Benfica's fan base and history should help them perform better on digital platforms, but their TikTok stats suggest that their approach may be lacking. Because TikTok prioritizes relatability and fun over conventional information sharing, Benfica's conservative content strategy could not be entirely well received by the platform's user base. According to studies, clubs should modify their content strategy to fit the needs of each platform, particularly those with younger audiences (Alonso Dos Santos et al., 2019).

Analysis of Instagram

September Engagement Rate: SL With a 1.7% engagement rate, Benfica dominates Instagram, outperforming FC Porto (0.96%) and Sporting CP (1.15%). Benfica also receives more likes and comments.

Benfica successfully uses its historical brand strength to cultivate an engaged following on visually oriented media, as evidenced by its higher Instagram engagement rate compared to its larger fan base.

Interpretation: By using excellent images and compelling narratives, Instagram enables Benfica to highlight its brand history, which appeals to its followers. Through emotionally charged content that honors the club's past and accomplishments, the platform is ideal for fostering a sense of pride and loyalty among supporters. According to research, emotionally charged content can strengthen a feeling of community and increase audience loyalty (Kerr & Emery, 2011). It's possible that Benfica's success on Instagram results from skillfully fusing its traditional appeal with contemporary digital tactics that appeal to both new and devoted fans.

Analysis of Twitter and Kerem Aktürkoğlu's Effect

Variation in Views (August to September): From 15.1 million in August to 45.1 million in September, SL Benfica's Twitter views increased by 199%. This stands in stark contrast to Sporting CP's (-12%) and FC Porto's (-24%) declines within the same time frame.

The increase in engagement in September coincides with the entrance of Turkish player Kerem Aktürkoğlu, whose sizable Turkish fan base probably helped fuel the spike.

Interpretation: The "Aktürkoğlu Effect" emphasizes how well-known athletes affect fan interaction, particularly when they attract a devoted fan base from their native nation. The notable rise in Benfica's Twitter interaction was probably caused by the fervent support for their national players and the high level of social media activity among Turkish fans. This pattern is consistent with studies on the "star power" effect, which holds that athletes who have sizable personal fan bases increase their clubs' social media participation (Kassing & Sanderson, 2010).

The potential of player-based fan interaction as a crucial tactic for extending reach and visibility outside of local markets is demonstrated by Benfica's success on Twitter during this time. The entrance of Aktürkoğlu demonstrates how Benfica can strategically engage international audiences by utilizing the global popularity of its players, even though the team already has the largest fan base in Portugal.

Strategic Aspects

Making the Most of Star Power and Heritage: Benfica has a natural edge in terms of fan devotion because of its extensive fan base and rich history. However, this advantage can be extended globally by leveraging player influence, such as Aktürkoğlu's Turkish fan base, to establish stronger ties with new audiences.

Platform-Specific Approaches: Benfica must implement more varied social media techniques, according to the research. The club might profit from a more entertainment-focused strategy on sites like TikTok, while Instagram's visual storytelling capabilities complement Benfica's historical narrative.

Balancing Informative and Entertaining Content: Benfica's social media presence presently places a strong emphasis on informative content, which could restrict interaction on sites that give more weight to entertainment and trends. Benfica might increase engagement across platforms, particularly on TikTok, by striking a balance between more interesting, trend-based material and educational updates.

Club Dimension and Comparative Social Media Presence

An analysis of Benfica, Sporting CP, and FC Porto's Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok follower counts offers important information on the social media reach and influence of each team. With about 3.4 million Instagram followers, SL Benfica is the most popular club in Portuguese football and has a rich history. Sporting CP and FC Porto have 2.3 million and 2.5 million followers, respectively. With over 2.1 million followers on Twitter, Benfica continues to have a commanding lead over Sporting CP (1.9 million) and FC Porto (1.8 million). Benfica has more than 2 million followers on TikTok, surpassing both FC Porto (1.6 million) and Sporting CP (1.4 million). Benfica's status as a historically significant club with widespread appeal and a devoted following is reflected in its greater follower count.

Notwithstanding these benefits in terms of raw follower counts, Benfica's engagement stats show that having more followers does not always equate to increased engagement, especially on sites like TikTok. Despite Benfica's numerical advantage, view counts and engagement rates imply that FC Porto and Sporting CP might be employing more successful tactics on some platforms. Benfica, for instance, has fewer TikTok views and likes than Sporting CP and FC Porto, according to the statistics supplied. This suggests that the club may be passing up chances to fully leverage its large following by creating interesting, platform-specific content.

Effective social media tactics are crucial for encouraging active fan interaction, since the scholarly research highlights that follower counts by themselves do not ensure engagement success. Social media engagement necessitates customized, platform-specific strategies that go beyond informational content to include components that emotionally connect with fans, according to studies by Alonso Dos Santos et al. (2019). To increase engagement, Kassing and Sanderson (2010) emphasize the value of interactive and behind-the-scenes content, which seems to be a crucial area where Benfica may improve its approach, especially on TikTok.

Benfica is in a great position to capitalize on its historical relevance and emotional bond with supporters because it is a leading Portuguese club with a sizable and devoted fan following. However, given that FC Porto and Sporting CP seem to be succeeding, these figures indicate that Benfica's social media staff needs to think of more creative approaches that fit the distinct audience expectations on each platform. On sites like TikTok, where Benfica's reach is currently underutilized in comparison to its rivals, utilizing real-time, fan-driven content and interactive postings could improve engagement and possibly close the gap in views and likes.

Social Media Conclusion

Benfica's digital engagement strengths and potential growth areas are highlighted in the report. Even though they have the biggest fan following and the most historical success of any Portuguese team, their digital approach may use some work, especially on TikTok. The September Twitter surge, which was sparked by the arrival of Kerem Aktürkoğlu, is a good example of how Benfica can use its best players to draw in global fans. In addition to engaging its devoted local fan base, Benfica may enhance its global footprint by implementing platform-specific strategies and balancing content kinds. This case study highlights how crucial it is to match social media tactics with platform requirements and use player influence to increase interaction.

1.9. New strategies scenario

Ana Costa, Sport Lisboa e Benfica's new social media manager, joins the team after years of using traditional social media tactics. She comes from a highly participatory, trend-focused sports media organization. Her objective is to update Benfica's social media presence to boost interaction, draw in new supporters, and eventually enhance the team's reputation both domestically and abroad. Upon arrival, Ana encounters several significant obstacles:

High Frequency, Low Engagement: Despite posting every day, the club's engagement numbers fall short of those of its competitors, like as FC Porto and Sporting CP;

Platform Strategy: Informational posts, which keep fans informed, are heavily prioritized, but they lack the interactive features and emotional appeal that may strengthen fan devotion;

Limited Trend Engagement: Benfica rarely uses viral challenges or trending subjects in their posts, which may restrict their audience, particularly among younger TikTok fans;

Game Day Content: Although the club's social media team often posts updates on game days, these frequently replicate one another on several platforms, which may limit fan involvement;

Ana suggests two approaches to deal with these issues. But each has a unique combination of benefits and possible disadvantages:

Strategy A: Put Engagement and Trend Integration First

Give priority to interactive content on all platforms by including user-generated content, surveys, and live Q&A;

To strengthen your emotional bond with followers, including additional behind-the-scenes footage, viral challenges, and trending subjects;

Reduce the number of repeating postings on Instagram, and Twitter by adjusting the frequency to concentrate on quality and interaction each post;

Strategy B: Increase Brand-Centric and Informational Content Production

Maintain a regular publishing schedule on conventional channels to keep all supporters informed about club news;

To preserve Benfica's established brand identity, stick to an educational approach and stay away from potentially dangerous trends;

To prevent weakening the club's already-established brand image, use TikTok for lighthearted or amusing material sparingly;

Questions for Students to Consider:

- Assessment of the Present Approach:
    - o What aspects of Benfica's present social media approach do you think are strong and weak?
    - o How does Benfica's strategy stack up against those of rivals Sporting CP and FC Porto? Can Benfica learn any best practices from these teams?
    - o Evaluation of Suggested Strategies: What are the advantages and disadvantages of Strategies A and B? Consider elements like market expansion, brand consistency, and fan loyalty.
    - o What potential effects might each tactic have on Benfica's fan involvement and engagement rates during game days?
- Content Particular to the Audience and Platform:
    - o What potential effects might each technique have on various audience segments (e.g., local vs. foreign fans, younger vs. older fans)?

- Which material would work best for either technique on Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok?
- Risk versus Gain:
  - How might interacting with trends and user-generated material impact Benfica's conventional brand image in Strategy A? What potential benefits or drawbacks might this have for the club?
  - Could Benfica's expansion with younger audiences be constrained by Strategy B's persistent emphasis on informational content? Why not?
- Suggestions:
  - Why should Ana choose the approach you suggest, either alone or in combination?
  - What content concepts might Benfica look at to boost interaction while adhering to the club's core values?

Evaluation of the Current Method

What do you consider to be the strong and weak points of Benfica's current social media strategy?

Advantages:

Consistency: Benfica maintains a consistent flow of content and informs followers through their daily posting schedule;

Informational Value: Fans looking for match schedules, player statistics, and club news can find a wealth of information in the club's posts;

Traditional Brand Image: Benfica upholds a polished, businesslike image consistent with its long-standing brand identity by concentrating on informative content;

Weaknesses:

Low Engagement: Despite posting frequently, the content may not emotionally connect with supporters as evidenced by the lower engagement rates compared to FC Porto and Sporting CP;

Limited Interaction: Beyond providing simple updates, the emphasis on informative material limits the chances for supporters to engage with the team or experience a sense of belonging;

Missed Trends: Benfica may be losing out on younger fans that demand dynamic and new material because of its hesitancy to follow trends, particularly on TikTok;

How does Benfica's approach compare to that of FC Porto and Sporting CP, their rivals? Are there any best practices these teams can teach Benfica?

Comparatively speaking, both FC Porto and Sporting CP have greater levels of engagement, suggesting that they may be making better use of trend-based, interactive, or user-generated material.

These clubs might be better able to adjust to the unique advantages of each platform, displaying a variety of content tactics on TikTok, Instagram, and Twitter.

Best Practices: To boost interaction with younger audiences, Benfica should follow FC Porto's and Sporting CP's apparent strategy of including trend-based and interactive content.

By taking a more adaptable approach to platform-specific content and utilizing Instagram for polished images, Twitter for real-time updates, and TikTok for engaging and fashionable posts, Benfica might take a cue from these teams.

Assessment of Proposed Approaches: What are Strategies A and B's benefits and drawbacks? Think about things like fan loyalty, brand consistency, and market expansion.

Benefits of Strategy A (Engagement and Trend Integration) could boost involvement by promoting enthusiastic fan involvement through trends and interactive content.

could draw in a younger audience, which would broaden Benfica's customer base.

enhances fan loyalty by creating a closer, more intimate bond.

Cons: There is a chance that Benfica's historic brand image will be weakened, particularly if current trends are too informal or inconsistent with the club's ethos;

Demands constant adjustment to emerging trends, which could call for the social media team to have more resources and flexibility.

Benefits of Strategy B (Brand-Centric and Informational Content):

Maintains Benfica's brand identity while giving supporters dependable and frequent updates;

Appeals to supporters who appreciate conventional, educational content; these supporters may be older or more regional. Reduces risk because it stays away from untested, maybe contentious trends.

Cons: Could reduce interaction, especially with younger consumers that prefer trend-based, interactive material;

Risks of being stale since fans may become less engaged and excited by informational content that is repeated.

What possible impacts might each strategy have on Benfica's game-day fan engagement and involvement rates?

Strategy A: By including interactive material like live Q&As, surveys, or real-time behind-the-scenes footage, game days may see an increase in engagement. Gamers are probably going to feel more engaged and a part of the game.

Strategy B: Fan interaction may not peak, but engagement may be constant. Although informational updates inform fans, they might not inspire further interaction beyond simple likes or comments.

Content Specific to the Platform and Audience

What possible impacts might each strategy have on different audience segments (e.g., younger versus older fans, local versus global fans)?

Strategy A: More likely to appeal to younger and international fans who value interactive, trend-driven material that mirrors social media trends around the world;

Additionally, by providing visually appealing content that is less reliant on language, it could draw in followers who do not know Portuguese.

Strategy B: Older, more conventional fans who appreciate in-depth, educational content might find it more interesting;

The continuity and brand consistency that uphold Benfica's reputation as a historic club may be valued by local supporters.

Which content on Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok would be most effective for either technique?

Instagram:

Strategy A: Reels, polls, and interactive stories that promote fan interaction. Player features or behind-the-scenes content would do well.

Strategy B: Highlights, game-day lineups, and well-executed graphics that represent Benfica's polished brand image.

Twitter:

Strategy A: Player interactions, match-day threads, and live Q&As would spark conversation and engagement.

Strategy B: Consistent updates that provide fans with real-time information, including scores and stats-focused content.

TikTok:

Strategy A: Using fan-focused content, trend-driven challenges, and viral sound bites to appeal to a younger audience.

Strategy B: Restricted use with an emphasis on amusing or lighthearted material that enhances the club's image without going too far in terms of trends.

What potential effects might engaging with user-generated content and trends have on Benfica's traditional brand image in Strategy A? What possible advantages or disadvantages could this have for the club?

Effect on the Image of the Brand:

By incorporating trends, Benfica's brand might feel more vibrant and in tune with modern society, which could revitalize the club's reputation among younger supporters.

Benefits: By following trends, the club can become more approachable, increasing its attractiveness and possibly its fan base;

Increases the possibility of material going viral, which can increase exposure and draw in new followers.

Cons: Trend participation could seem out of step with Benfica's established persona and turn off more conservative or elderly supporters;

Risk of backlash if trends are perceived as being inauthentic or not un line with the club's ideals.

Could Strategy B's continued focus on informational material limit Benfica's ability to reach younger audiences? Why not?

Yes, since younger fans typically favor dynamic, interactive content over posts that are solely educational, Strategy B's emphasis on informational content may limit its attractiveness to them. This might limit Benfica's ability to attract younger audiences who appreciate current subjects and real-time interaction. Younger fans may also think that the content isn't creative or personalized, which makes them less likely to interact frequently.

Ideas

Why should Ana use the strategy you recommend, either by itself or in conjunction?

The optimal course of action may involve combining Strategies A and B, which would enable Benfica to maintain its essential brand values while adding interactive features that improve fan interaction.

Benfica may reach younger audiences without completely sacrificing its established brand identity by implementing elements of Strategy A sparingly, such as interactive updates on game days and viral material on TikTok.

What ideas for content might Benfica consider increasing engagement while upholding the club's fundamental principles?

Highlights of player practices, travel videos, or scenes in the locker room are examples of behind-the-scenes content that gives supporters a better understanding of the club's daily operations;

User-Generated Campaigns: Request images or videos from supporters and select submissions will be displayed on official websites;

Interactive Match Day Stories: Ask followers for their thoughts on important moments or score predictions using Instagram stories;

Emphasize Fan Culture: To foster a sense of community and attract a global audience, highlight international Benfica fan festivities, watch parties, or memorable experiences.

2. METHODOLOGY

Sport Lisboa e Benfica's social media activity is examined in this case study using a mixed-methods technique, which combines quantitative data gathering with qualitative content analysis to provide a thorough grasp of the team's online performance.

Data Collection: A custom scraper from the Apify platform, which allows the extraction of social media metrics including likes, shares, comments, and post reach, was used to gather engagement data. To provide a detailed understanding of the engagement trends and patterns in Benfica's social media presence, the scraper was set up to collect data from the major social media platforms (Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok) during a predetermined time period. By using this approach, the data was guaranteed to be up-to-date, thorough, and representative of recent audience interactions.

Quantitative Analysis: Following collection, the engagement data was analyzed to spot trends, patterns, and variations in fan interaction on various platforms. Monthly comparisons of key parameters were made between Benfica's accounts and those of rivals FC Porto and Sporting CP. In addition to emphasizing times of higher or lower interaction and the efficacy of content kinds, this study offered a quantifiable basis for evaluating Benfica's relative digital performance.

Qualitative Content Analysis: Concurrently, a qualitative analysis of Benfica's social media posts was carried out to decipher the content's thematic and stylistic components. Aspects including tone, style, frequency, and pertinence to contemporary social media trends were evaluated. This method made it possible to thoroughly assess the effects of the club's communication style and content kinds (informative as opposed to entertaining or interactive) on engagement levels. Additionally, the alignment of Benfica's content strategy with best practices in sports digital marketing was examined using theoretical frameworks from the literature on fan loyalty and social media engagement.

The approach aims to provide a comprehensive study of Benfica's social media interaction by combining quantitative measurements with qualitative content assessment, highlighting the club's existing digital strategy's strong points and potential areas for development.

3. PEDAGOGICAL NOTES

3.1. Case's Target Audience

A wide range of people, including both domestic and foreign supporters from various age groups and demographics, are reached by Sport Lisboa e Benfica's social media presence. Three primary segments can be used to roughly classify the club's target audience:

Portuguese local supporters span a broad spectrum of demographics, from younger supporters who interact with the team on more recent sites like TikTok to older, more conventional followers who mostly follow Benfica on Facebook and Instagram. These local supporters frequently look for match details, highlights, and timely updates that promote a feeling of belonging and kinship with the team. Since they depend on these updates to keep up with the club's most recent happenings, the emphasis placed on useful information across most channels is particularly pertinent to this demographic.

International Fan Base: Because of Benfica's legendary past and current level of success, the team has a sizable fan base outside of Portugal, with supporters spread throughout Europe, South America, and Asia. Game highlights and visually appealing content, together with sporadic posts in English that make the content accessible, particularly engage international fans. However, the club's emphasis on Portuguese-centric material and language difficulties can occasionally restrict this group's engagement. Additionally, this audience fits in nicely with platforms like Instagram and TikTok, where visual storytelling is more powerful than words. By interacting with trending, visually stimulating material, Benfica can expand its worldwide reach.

Younger, Digitally Native Audience: A younger audience that is looking for engaging, viral, and interactive content has been drawn in by the growth of short-form video platforms such as TikTok. Given that younger fans will likely follow the club in the future, this market is particularly crucial for long-term brand loyalty. But even though Benfica uses TikTok infrequently, the content mostly consists of humorous and amusing messages rather than in-depth or real-time interaction on game days. Young fans, who anticipate comedy and active participation in live sports content, may not be as engaged by this strategy.

3.2. Educational Objectives

The primary educational objectives of this case study are:

1. **Understand the relevant concepts regarding digital communication strategy.**

   o Analyze the tactics used for fan engagement on social media and their effectiveness;

2. **Develop strategic recommendations to improve digital communication.**

   o Compare with other clubs' practices and propose improvements based on industry best practices;

3.3. Literature Review

Social media has revolutionized communication strategies for sports organizations by providing new avenues for fan engagement, brand promotion, and interactive content. Sports teams, including SL Benfica, leverage platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to engage with fans in a way that is immediate, personal, and highly interactive (Abeza, O'Reilly, & Seguin, 2019). This review will examine various aspects of social

media strategies in sports, including fan engagement, fostering fan proximity, entertaining content, and crisis management, using examples from SL Benfica and similar sports organizations.

Social Media as a Brand-Building Tool in Sports Marketing

In today's digital landscape, social media has become a cornerstone for building and sustaining brand identity, especially for sports organizations with large and diverse fan bases. Social media enables brands to engage with audiences in more personal and dynamic ways, leading to stronger brand loyalty. In the context of sports, where fans often identify with a club as part of their personal identity, social media serves as a vital channel to deepen fan loyalty and enhance the emotional connection with the brand.

For Benfica, an established brand with a significant international following, social media presents an opportunity to maintain relevance and reinforce its identity across both local and global markets. By creating a consistent brand voice and image across platforms, Benfica can build a cohesive digital identity that resonates with its target audience. However, while informative content plays a key role in strengthening brand credibility, engagement-driven and emotionally appealing content is equally important in building a sense of community among fans. This mix of content supports brand equity, where social media users perceive the brand as more valuable and engaging.

Engagement Metrics and Their Role in Digital Strategy

Engagement is a crucial metric in evaluating the effectiveness of social media strategies, particularly in the sports industry, where fan interaction can directly impact revenue and brand perception. In digital marketing, engagement is typically measured through likes, shares, comments, and other forms of interaction. However, for sports brands like Benfica, engagement often encompasses more complex forms of fan involvement, such as emotional investment and a sense of community among supporters. This emotional component differentiates sports brands from other commercial brands, as fan loyalty is deeply connected to a sense of belonging and passion for the team.

Academic literature also emphasizes the importance of interactive content in enhancing engagement. For instance, interactive elements like live Q&As, polls, and user-generated content have proven effective in fostering greater involvement among fans. These strategies offer fans a sense of agency and involvement, reinforcing their loyalty to the club. For Benfica, implementing a diverse engagement strategy that

incorporates these elements could yield higher interaction rates and, ultimately, increase the club's visibility and appeal across digital platforms.

The Importance of Targeted Content and Audience Segmentation

Audience segmentation is essential for optimizing social media strategies in sports marketing, allowing teams to tailor their content for specific demographics and achieve greater relevance and engagement. Targeted content strategies have been shown to significantly improve engagement rates, particularly when aligned with the unique preferences and consumption patterns of each segment. For Benfica, audience segmentation can help refine content for different fan demographics, such as younger fans on TikTok seeking entertainment-oriented content or international fans engaging more frequently with visually compelling and globally relevant material.

It is also essential to understand the social media platform itself, as each platform has distinct characteristics and audience expectations. For example, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter are traditionally more informative, while TikTok and YouTube appeal to audiences looking for engaging and viral content. By recognizing these platform-specific nuances, Benfica can tailor its posts to match fan expectations, ultimately enhancing user satisfaction and fostering a stronger community.

Leveraging Real-Time Content and Trend Responsiveness

Sports brands that engage effectively with real-time events and trending topics can enhance their visibility and appeal among digital audiences. Real-time engagement is particularly impactful in the sports sector, where fans look to social media for up-to-the-minute updates, especially on game days. This strategy has proven successful for brands that prioritize flexibility and responsiveness, enabling them to adapt to ongoing events and fan interests as they unfold.

For Benfica, the emphasis on informative content could be balanced by more responsive, trend-driven posts that increase audience interaction and relevance. Embracing trending content does not diminish brand integrity but can, in fact, strengthen the brand's appeal to younger, more digitally native fans who value timely and dynamic interactions. Integrating real-time elements into Benfica's social media strategy can help the club appear more relatable and modern, ultimately driving engagement.

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Fan Engagement on Social Media

Fan engagement is one of the most critical goals of sports organizations on social media. Social media allows clubs to create two-way communication channels with their audience, moving beyond traditional forms of passive communication (Parganas, Anagnostopoulos, & Chadwick, 2017). According to Gibbs, O'Reilly, and Brunette (2014), engagement on social media increases fans' emotional investment in the team, creating stronger ties between the club and its supporters.

SL Benfica's strategy on social media exemplifies a high level of fan interaction. The club uses platforms like Twitter and Instagram to share real-time match updates, engage in Q&A sessions with players, and conduct polls where fans can influence decisions, such as choosing the "Man of the Match" or the next jersey design. These activities give fans a sense of ownership and involvement in the club's affairs (Vale & Fernandes, 2018).

In addition to interactive posts, social media algorithms prioritize content that garners engagement, such as likes, shares, and comments, which further extends the reach of the club's content. High engagement also signals to sponsors and advertisers that the club's social media presence is strong, thus adding commercial value (Parganas et al., 2017).

Bringing Supporters Nearer to the Club

Social media's capacity to create a feeling of closeness between a team and its supporters is one of its main advantages for sports organizations. In the past, fans rarely interacted with their favorite teams outside of official media or stadium visits. Nonetheless, sports organizations can establish more close and individualized relationships with their fans thanks to social media (Abeza et al., 2019).

By sharing behind-the-scenes videos, SL Benfica takes advantage of this and helps supporters feel more connected to the squad. For example, the team frequently posts videos of players working out, locker room celebrations following wins, or unscripted moments while traveling. According to Vale and Fernandes (2018), this kind of information humanizes the players and strengthens the bond between supporters and the squad. Additionally, this type of information is frequently emotionally charged, which strengthens the fan base's allegiance and gives them a sense of involvement in the club's journey.

In this way, fans who might never be able to see the players in person or go to the stadium can connect with one another through social media. According to studies, this feeling of closeness and inclusion enhances supporters' psychological ties to the team and

raises the possibility that they will interact with the club's brand (Thompson, Martin, Gee, & Eagleman, 2014).

Funny and Thrilling Content

Funny and engaging content is another important component of a successful social media strategy for sports groups. In addition to increasing reach and engagement, this kind of material may strengthen the club's brand identity. Clubs can set themselves apart from rivals and project a more laid-back, approachable image by employing comedy (Abeza et al., 2019).

Particularly during off-game times when there could be fewer official updates, SL Benfica frequently uploads hilarious and lighthearted content on their social media channels. For example, the club has posted jokes that relate to current pop culture trends, memes, and lighthearted player banter. In addition to providing entertainment, this kind of content appeals to younger, tech-savvy consumers and strengthens the club's identity (Vale & Fernandes, 2018). Sanderson (2016) asserts that entertainment and comedy are essential for sustaining levels of engagement, particularly during off-seasons or times when on-field performance is subpar.

Additionally, especially during trying times, sports organizations can use amusing content to defuse stress and refocus negative emotions. To maintain positive emotions and lessen negative attitude, this tactic is particularly helpful for handling fan disappointment following defeats (Mahan, 2015).

Building Brands via Social Media

For sports organizations to establish and preserve their brand, social media is also a vital instrument. A steady and genuine social media presence for European football teams, such as SL Benfica, resonates well with supporters by reinforcing the team's identity, history, and ideals (Parganas et al., 2017). For example, SL Benfica regularly reminds followers of its illustrious past and accomplishments in postings, referencing its longstanding tradition, which deepens the emotional connection with its fan base.

Additionally, clubs can use social media to customize their brand messaging for various audiences. To serve its global fan base and keep a global presence, SL Benfica uses a variety of languages on all its platforms (Parganas et al., 2015). These kinds of tactics are essential for preserving a cohesive yet regionally flexible brand as sports organizations grow increasingly international.

Crowdsourcing and Content Created by Fans

Fan-generated material is another important component of SL Benfica's social media strategy. In addition to boosting engagement, encouraging supporters to provide original content fosters a feeling of communal ownership over the club's image (Parganas et al., 2015). On its platforms, SL Benfica regularly posts fan images, films, and artwork, which fosters fan loyalty and raises the possibility of future user-generated material.

SL Benfica also uses crowdsourcing to include supporters in decision-making. For example, the club has set up voting campaigns where supporters may choose things like player of the month or the uniform design for the upcoming season. Thompson et al. (2014) found that by allowing supporters to participate in the team's decision-making, crowdsourcing increases fan engagement and strengthens the bond between the team and its supporters.

Social Media Crisis Communication

Social media can be an effective engagement tool, but it also has drawbacks, especially when it comes to crisis management. Like all teams, SL Benfica is subject to media and fan scrutiny, particularly when there is controversy or subpar play. Social media becomes an essential crisis communication tool in these situations, enabling the club to promptly and openly address issues (Sanderson, 2016).

For instance, SL Benfica's communications team uses social media to soothe supporters, make official remarks, and explain the club's stance amid player injuries or transfer disputes. This proactive approach helps prevent the spread of misinformation and reduces the potential damage to the club's reputation (Mahan, 2015). Additionally, maintaining a consistent and calm tone during crises can help mitigate fan frustration and maintain trust between the club and its supporters.

Using Social Media for Brand Expansion

Brand expansion is a critical strategy for sports organizations, particularly those with global ambitions like SL Benfica. Social media provides a cost-effective and impactful way to expand a club's brand beyond local and national borders, allowing for real-time interaction with international fanbases (Parganas, Anagnostopoulos, & Chadwick, 2017). The ability to broadcast matches, share player highlights, and create engaging narratives across social media platforms helps clubs grow their reach, attract new fans, and deepen

loyalty among existing supporters.

According to Abeza, O'Reilly, and Seguin (2019), sports clubs increasingly utilize social media to target international markets. SL Benfica, for example, operates several social media accounts in multiple languages, including English, Portuguese, and Spanish, to cater to its diverse fanbase. This multi-language approach ensures that the club can communicate directly with different regions, thus expanding its brand's global appeal. Similarly, by tailoring content to the interests of specific demographics, clubs can increase engagement and attract new followers worldwide (Vale & Fernandes, 2018).

Additionally, SL Benfica leverages international competitions such as the UEFA Champions League to boost its social media presence. These high-profile tournaments provide a platform for the club to showcase its brand to millions of fans globally, further contributing to brand expansion (Parganas et al., 2017). By highlighting key players, sharing compelling match footage, and actively engaging with global fans through hashtags and interactive campaigns, SL Benfica increases its visibility and appeal across borders.

Social media also plays a significant role in partnerships and sponsorships, which are essential components of brand expansion. By promoting its sponsors and partnerships through posts, videos, and other interactive content, SL Benfica can align itself with major global brands, further enhancing its marketability. According to Gibbs, O'Reilly, and Brunette (2014), such digital campaigns create new revenue streams while reinforcing the club's presence in various international markets.

Social Media and Brand Consistency

Maintaining brand consistency across social media platforms is essential for clubs seeking to grow their presence. For SL Benfica, brand consistency involves highlighting the club's historical legacy, identity, and core values across various platforms, ensuring that every post, tweet, and video aligns with its image (Parganas et al., 2017). This strategy helps solidify the club's unique value proposition and ensures that international audiences perceive the brand in line with the club's established reputation.

For instance, SL Benfica frequently references its century-old history, its domestic and international triumphs, and its contributions to Portuguese football. These elements of the brand are consistently reflected in social media content, ensuring that the club remains relevant and authentic to its long-standing fanbase while appealing to newer,

younger audiences globally (Vale & Fernandes, 2018).

Using Social Media to Develop the Club's Reputation

Reputation management is another critical aspect of social media strategy, especially for high-profile sports organizations. Social media allows clubs to have more control over their public image by crafting and disseminating messages directly to their followers, thereby bypassing traditional media filters (Sanderson, 2016). For SL Benfica, social media platforms offer an opportunity to manage its reputation proactively by highlighting positive stories, addressing controversies, and engaging with its audience.

Social media is a vital tool for reputation-building because it offers transparency and immediacy, which are important to modern audiences. When fans see SL Benfica engaging with them in real-time, providing updates on games, injuries, or player transfers, they perceive the club as open and communicative. This sense of transparency builds trust between the club and its followers, which is crucial for reputation management (Thompson, Martin, Gee, & Eagleman, 2014).

Storytelling and Narrative Control

Sports clubs often use storytelling to shape their public image. By controlling the narrative on social media, SL Benfica can create a positive image around its players, management, and overall club philosophy (Gibbs et al., 2014). Storytelling helps to humanize the players and management, presenting them as relatable and approachable, which resonates well with fans and enhances the club's reputation.

For example, SL Benfica's social media often highlights the charitable work of its players, the club's community involvement, and behind-the-scenes stories that showcase the personalities of players off the field. These stories help to create a positive public image and build emotional connections with fans, which is crucial for long-term reputation management (Vale & Fernandes, 2018). Research by Thompson et al. (2014) suggests that storytelling through social media significantly contributes to developing a strong emotional bond between fans and clubs, which, in turn, fortifies the club's reputation.

Managing Crises and Protecting the Brand

One of the challenges sports organizations face on social media is the potential for crises, such as poor performance, scandals, or player controversies. These situations can

severely impact a club's reputation if not managed carefully. Sanderson (2016) highlights the importance of timely and transparent communication during such crises to mitigate damage and maintain fan trust.

SL Benfica has been strategic in using social media to address potential crises. When issues arise, such as disappointing performances or controversies involving players, the club's communications team responds promptly with clear, reassuring messages. This proactive approach helps to control the narrative and maintain the club's reputation even in challenging times (Mahan, 2015). For example, SL Benfica might use Twitter to issue statements directly to fans, explaining the situation and providing context to prevent misinformation from spreading.

Additionally, clubs like SL Benfica often use social media to shift focus away from negative events by promoting positive aspects of the team, such as community service initiatives or upcoming matches. By carefully crafting a balance between addressing controversies and showcasing the club's strengths, SL Benfica protects its brand and preserves its long-term reputation (Sanderson, 2016).

Social Media as a Reputation-Building Tool for Global Audiences

In today's interconnected world, a club's reputation extends far beyond its domestic fanbase. Social media allows clubs like SL Benfica to build and manage their reputation on a global scale. By tailoring content for international audiences, addressing global concerns, and ensuring that brand values are reflected across different cultures and languages, SL Benfica maintains a strong and consistent reputation globally (Parganas et al., 2017).

International competitions such as the UEFA Champions League are key opportunities for reputation building. SL Benfica uses social media to promote its participation in these prestigious tournaments, associating the club with excellence and high performance on the global stage (Parganas et al., 2017). Through these platforms, Benfica can craft a reputation that appeals to international fans, sponsors, and media outlets, reinforcing its status as a top-tier football club.

Sports Organizations' Social Media Management

Maintaining an engaging online presence is a crucial responsibility for sports organizations like Sport Lisboa e Benfica in the digital age. According to research, social media managers in sports companies face difficulties, such as achieving fan involvement

expectations and staying true to corporate identity (Pegoraro, 2010; Abeza, 2022). According to studies, social media administrators need to strike a balance between postings that elicit emotional responses and interactions and regular, educational information (Thompson, Martin, & Gee, 2014). For recently hired managers, who frequently must implement new tactics while upholding the current brand image and fan expectations, this balancing act is especially crucial.

Fostering real-time interaction, producing content specifically for different platforms, and utilizing trends without weakening brand identity are some of the major problems in sports (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). The requirement for platforms to cater to both domestic and foreign audiences with diverse interests and content preferences adds even more complexity to these issues. As a result, successful tactics frequently include fan-generated, interactive, and multimedia content, which has been demonstrated to strengthen emotional ties with supporters (Frederick, 2015).

Research indicates that new managers can overcome these obstacles by taking a two-pronged strategy, combining modern, trend-driven engagement strategies with the club's long-standing communication style (Abeza, 2022). By doing this, management not only manage supporter expectations but also increase the club's attractiveness to younger, online audiences. Thus, this corpus of work offers students theoretical insights into successful social media management in a sports environment and serves as a basis for evaluating the advantages and disadvantages of the strategic options offered in the case study scenario.

Social Media's Function in Sports Marketing

By establishing new avenues for fan interaction, brand promotion, and interactive content, social media has drastically changed sports companies' communication strategy (Abeza, O'Reilly, & Seguin, 2019). Platforms like Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok allow teams like SL Benfica to communicate with their supporters instantly and in a highly engaging way, creating a sense of community that is impossible to achieve through traditional media. This review of the literature looks at how sports leagues, like SL Benfica, use social media to build their brand, interact with fans, and reach a wider audience. To find possible areas for inspiration and growth, it also looks at the comparative plans of rival teams Sporting CP and FC Porto.

Evaluating The Present Social Media Approach of Benfica

Benfica's social media presence has a strong emphasis on educational content with

the goal of providing quick updates on player information, team news, and match results. Credibility has been increased and a strong brand identity has been maintained thanks to this information-focused approach (Vale & Fernandes, 2018). But according to research, sports businesses that offer a wider variety of content—like user-generated material, live chats, and funny posts—frequently have higher engagement rates, particularly from younger audiences (Gibbs, O'Reilly, & Brunette, 2014). Sports fans need both amusement and a personal connection with their team; therefore, an over-reliance on this technique may limit their emotional engagement, even while informed information builds brand trust (Parganas, Anagnostopoulos, & Chadwick, 2017).

In contrast, FC Porto and Sporting CP use a varied content strategy that strikes a balance between fun and fan-focused pieces and educational updates. Benfica might use this strategy as an example of best practices since it might draw a more engaged fan base and inspire them to become more active in the club's community. According to a comparative analysis, Benfica's emphasis on information might be strengthened by adding more interactive content, which would increase fan engagement and loyalty.

Content Tailored to Specific Audiences and Platforms

Effective social media marketing for sports requires audience segmentation and platform-specific content strategies (Parganas et al., 2015). From domestic to foreign followers, sports clubs draw a wide range of demographics, each with their own expectations and preferred types of material. For instance, younger TikTok viewers might react better to trendier or funnier content, whereas older Facebook fans might favor more conventional, educational updates. Organizations like Benfica may customize their communications with targeted content, increasing fan satisfaction and engagement rates.

Benfica's present strategy might be improved by a more platform-specific content strategy that takes these variations into account. According to research by Abeza et al. (2019), sports businesses can increase engagement while preserving brand consistency by customizing content to fit the distinct features of each platform and target category. Therefore, Benfica may be able to reach a wider audience without sacrificing brand identity by striking a balance between serious, educational messages on Twitter and **Facebook and enjoyable content on TikTok and Instagram**

Risk vs. Reward: Juggling Trend Responsiveness with Brand Image

Social media management becomes riskier when trends and user-generated material are included, especially for well-known brands like SL Benfica. Although it might increase interaction rates, Strategy A, which suggests boosting engagement with trends and fan-generated content, has the potential to upend the club's established brand image. According to studies, incorporating fashionable material can help a company come off as more approachable and contemporary, but if done carelessly, it can also result in inconsistency (Mahan, 2015). Attracting a younger, digitally native audience that would prioritize relatability and immediacy over consistency could be the possible benefit (Sanderson, 2016).

Conversely, Strategy B's focus on upholding an educational approach is consistent with the club's traditional image; however, it might restrict interaction with younger audiences, who are more likely to choose dynamic and interactive content (Thompson, Martin, & Gee, 2014). Maintaining a strict informational focus could jeopardize future fan bases as social media landscapes change, which would hinder the club's long-term success.

Comparative Evaluation: Insights from Competing Teams

It is clear from analyzing competitors Sporting CP and FC Porto's social media strategy that both teams use a wider variety of content kinds, appealing to different fan demographics and embracing interactive components. To create a feeling of excitement and involvement, Sporting CP, for instance, often interacts with supporters through surveys, Q&As, and game-day countdowns (Vale & Fernandes, 2018). In a similar vein, FC Porto's usage of player interactions and behind-the-scenes video appeals to supporters and motivates them to actively engage in online forums. Like these teams, Benfica might increase fan engagement by implementing a more varied content strategy without sacrificing the educational component that makes it the club's identity.

Conclusion of Literature Review

SL Benfica's communication strategy on social media illustrates the multifaceted role these platforms play in modern sports organizations. From fostering fan engagement to creating entertaining content, social media serves as an essential tool for building a loyal and engaged fan base. By making fans feel closer to the club, using humor, crowdsourcing

content, and managing crises effectively, SL Benfica has managed to leverage social media to reinforce its brand and deepen its connection with supporters. Future research could explore how these strategies evolve as new platforms emerge and fan expectations continue to shift.

4. CASE STUDY CONCLUSION

A thorough framework for analyzing the advantages and disadvantages of digital interaction in the context of sports marketing is offered by the case study on Sport Lisboa e Benfica's social media strategy. Students can actively engage with the theoretical foundations of digital marketing, audience segmentation, engagement metrics, and brand loyalty in addition to analyzing the actual practices of a major sports organization through this study. This analysis demonstrates how social media can be both a benefit and a problem for teams with sizable, international fan bases in a time when online interactions are crucial to brand identity and fan engagement. This instructional case encourages students to take a critical, solution-focused approach to evaluating and improving Benfica's social media strategies by utilizing pertinent literature and theories. This will ultimately prepare them for comparable positions in digital marketing and management within the sports industry.

Students gain practical experience in social media analysis through this case study's methodology, which uses Apify data to quantify engagement across platforms. This enables them to analyze real-world engagement data and relate it to scholarly insights into the preferences and behavior of digital audiences. The significance of both quantitative measurements and qualitative analysis is also emphasized by this method, which challenges students to think about not just how frequently followers engage with content but also what kinds of content create the strongest bonds. For Benfica, this exercise highlights the vital necessity of striking a balance between posts that are emotionally compelling and educational to connect with supporters on a deeper level. As they create tactics suited to the distinct advantages of each platform, the case study forces students to consider the features of the platforms in use, such as Instagram's visually oriented engagement and TikTok's entertainment-centric audience.

The investigation of audience segmentation and targeted content is another important component of this study. Because Benfica has a large fan base that includes both domestic and foreign supporters, efficient segmentation enables a more individualized approach, which is becoming more and more important in digital marketing. Students get an appreciation for audience diversity and the importance of customizing information to fit

the distinct tastes and consumption habits of various segments by examining the possibilities for customized content strategies. This is consistent with research on sports marketing that emphasizes how audience-specific content can increase brand affinity and loyalty. Students are also urged to acknowledge the shortcomings of Benfica's present social media strategies, such as its mostly instructional style, which, although necessary, might not completely engage younger or more tech-savvy fans.

The case study also highlights how crucial it is to respond to trends and engage in real-time while boosting one's social media presence. The conservative emphasis on historic material that characterizes Benfica's present strategy gives students a starting point for thinking about how to include contemporary, trend-responsive tactics without sacrificing the club's brand identity. The case pushes students to strike a balance between tradition and innovation, showing that being relevant in the digital age frequently calls for adaptability, flexibility, and an openness to interacting with emerging trends. Students are urged to investigate how Benfica might maintain a connection with a younger audience through this lens, since they are more aware of quickly evolving trends and viral content.

This scenario encourages students to think about social media from a strategic perspective, where many platforms collaborate to promote brand objectives. Students can assess the benefits and drawbacks of cross-platform consistency against platform-specific personalization by looking at Benfica's consistent content strategy on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. They are entrusted with determining how the club's strategy may be modified to optimize interaction on every platform, accounting for elements like audience preferences, timeliness, and content kind. This exercise reaffirms that a successful digital strategy is a nuanced approach that strategically matches with the platform's features and the audience's expectations rather than a one-size-fits-all approach.

Lastly, the knowledge gained from this study advances our comprehension of the connection between brand equity and social media involvement. Having a strong social media presence is important for a club like Benfica, whose brand identity is rooted in tradition and past success. It's not only about informing fans; it's also about creating a community where supporters feel emotionally invested in the team's path. Because a highly engaged digital audience can result in better ticket sales, item sales, and sponsor

interest, this facet of engagement is strongly related to fan loyalty, brand perception, and even prospective revenue streams. Students who study this case learn to see social media as a crucial component of customer relationship management and brand building, not just a marketing tool. This is especially true in the high-stakes, high-profile world of professional sports.

In summary, by fusing theoretical investigation with real-world analysis, this pedagogical case study on Benfica's social media strategy offers students studying business administration and sports marketing a priceless educational opportunity. It highlights how crucial a digital presence is to contemporary sports management, how engagement metrics shape content development, and how flexible, audience-focused methods to digital communication are essential. To prepare them for making wise, calculated decisions in their future employment, students are urged to analyze the advantages and disadvantages of Benfica's current procedures and come up with innovative, fact-based solutions that may be implemented by other sports organizations. Thus, this scenario not only deepens their comprehension of sports marketing but also gives them the strategic and analytical abilities required for successful digital involvement in a constantly changing social media environment.

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