

POTENTIAL PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL CLUB: A BUSINESS-ORIENTED ORGANISATION

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Abstract:

This study aims to find out how professional football clubs purposefully operate as business-oriented organisations rather than sporting and recreational organisations. Over the decades, there have been increased football seasonal operations informed by business with huge marketing activities to achieve maximally in the business environment. In addition, it has been noted that some football clubs are striving to make profits using strategic marketing opportunities that support and connect with playing games or matches. The foundation of business is based on profit, which usually emanates through the type of players and coaches that are recruited, which determines several other openings, such as marketing strategy, etc. The number of marketing activities engaged by clubs' in recent years in their seasonal operations is unquantified, which poses a challenge in achieving club objectives (i.e., sporting, and recreational activities). This paper investigates the exorbitant use of marketing by the clubs to maximise profit rather than achieving professionalism in the sports and recreational services in their immediate sporting environment. A sample size of 150 professionals was taken from five potential professional football clubs located within the KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa. The findings of this study confirm that marketing is vital for football clubs to succeed and that marketing is relevant to clubs' seasonal successes. The study concludes that it is important for the football club marketing managers to consider corporate marketing activities for the development of appropriate marketing actions that will allow them to remain competitive both in business and in recreation.

Keywords: professional, football, marketing, competitive advantage, potential, strategy

1. Introduction

In the late 19th century, most football clubs converted into joint-stock companies. Local and national business people, companies, and sports investors have since been able to acquire shares in English football clubs (Rohde and Breuer, 2016). Stock exchanges experienced a boom of English football clubs going public in the 1990s (Leach and Szymanski, 2015). The largest shareholders of clubs with distributed ownership are estimated to have a net wealth of \$0.06 billion at their disposal. This compares to \$ 3.2 billion by domestic majority investors and \$ 5.1

billion by foreign majority owners. The relative wages of players in foreign majority-owned teams are estimated to be only 7 % of their owners' personal net wealth – one-fifth of that of domestic majority owners (35 %) and a small fraction of clubs with minority owners (102 %). These figures clearly show supreme resources in form of private net wealth by foreign owners which benefit clubs in the overinvestment environment of European professional football (Rohde and Breuer, 2016).

The labour migration of players from Brazil to other elite football nations around the world has had a significant impact on the business aspect of the game there, with sign-on fees, transfer fees, players' salaries, and bonuses leaving clubs in Brazil in huge debt with the government (Mezzadri et al. 2016). Owners of American teams are often categorised as profit-maximisers because they view professional football as a business for making money. Some clubs in Europe notably Barcelona and Real Madrid in Spain and most of the clubs in the Bundesliga operate more than a business organisation. In England, clubs operate as limited liability companies with shareholders (Szymanski, 2016). In Argentina commercialisation of football gave birth to professionalisation which started in 1931. Moreover, television stations began showing football matches in the 1950s although this affected the quality and quantity sales of football products which suffered a huge setback in the 1970s and 1980s (Frydenberg et al. 2016).

Professional football business invests in players, stadiums, customer service, and community and receives a return from ticket prices, merchandise, sponsorship, and broadcast rights. Clubs take a lot of risk in spending a great amount of money in hiring players with the expectation of success in competition – league, and cup – which can attract fans and supporters (Peeters and Szymanski, 2014). Modern-day professional football clubs in most countries are tagged as established business organisations and business newspapers have sports pages that confirm football practices as being business-oriented organisations (Dogan, 2015). Several professional football clubs have now become complex businesses (Morrow & Howieson, 2014) because they are involved in the act of performing, entertaining, and gaining financial profit (Relvas et al. 2010). Therefore, long-time expansive economic development in the football industry using marketing strategies always results in organisational excellence (Kranbberbos, 2013).

Interest from the public connected with the commercial environment within the game has propelled professional football clubs to operate as service-oriented organisations in areas of performance, entertainment, and financial profit within the business sector (Bourke, 2003; Vaeyens et al. 2005). The reason why clubs relate to business is because of the involvement of business-oriented people and an increase in marketing-minded staff that operates football in a business manner. Dealings with stakeholders and the mandate to satisfy consumers with the available products (players), football clubs are linked to other business organisations (Buhler, 2006). These made the financial features of football clubs essential towards achieving success in the field of play (Cooper and Joyce, 2013). The brand manager for Kaizers Chiefs FC confirmed that a strong marketing team, innovation, and right partners such as Vodacom, Nike, and Hollard delivered the present success of the team (Modise, 2015).

2. Literature Review

2.1. Transformation of professional football clubs as a business organisation through marketing

European football has become an important research topic in international business and administration (Hamil and Chadwick 2010). Despite these currently challenging economic times, there is a persistent revenue growth in European football, which illustrates the constant loyalty of supporters and the persistent appeal of football to sponsors and broadcasters (Deloitte Football Money League, 2010). Football has however experienced dramatic changes and turn-over in the last 18 years, with approximate indications that the global game is now worth \$ 12 billion per annum while commentators suggest the industry grew by up to 25 % during the same period (Chadwick and Arthur 2008). The uses of marketing in European Football have yielded tremendous benefits in football clubs that are truly run as business organisations.

The Real Madrid Football Club has been leading the Deloitte money league club analysis for 11 years. The team generated € 577m in the 2014/15 season which has been sustained by growth through commercial revenue. Matchday income has been experiencing a massive increase, and the planned redevelopment of the team will continue to grow in the coming years due to the way marketing is being positioned for club success. Relatively, FC Barcelona's on-pitch achievements in the 2014/15 season have transformed into financial success, with revenue growth in all areas of the business. This has helped the club to be financially positioned above Manchester United into second place, with revenues of €560.8m. It is still not certain if the professional football clubs in KwaZulu-Natal province and South Africa in its entirety have been applying marketing in their club business to achieve this level (The Deloitte Football Money League, 2016).

The Annual Revenue of Football Finance (2015) expresses the cumulative revenues of the 'big five' European leagues (i.e., England, Germany, Italy, Spain, and France), which rose by 15 % to € 11.3 billion in 2013/14. All the five leagues reported revenues for the third successive year driving the total European football market to over € 20 billion. Premier League clubs' broadcast revenues were worth € 171m more than the total revenues of that of La Liga € 405m Serie A clubs and € 606m higher than Ligue 1. Bundesliga revenue increased by 13 % (€ 257m), consolidating second place among the 'big five' leagues. La Liga clubs collectively grew revenue by € 65m (3 %) in 2013/14. A marginal € 22m (1 %) increase in total revenue for Serie A clubs in 2013/14 masked significant movements in the financial performance of Italy's clubs. Total revenue for Ligue 1 grew by € 201m (15 %), which was led by PSG's revenue growth of € 75m. The total revenue from sponsorship and other commercial sources rose by € 223m (42 %) and this was driven by the commercial revenues of PSG and Monaco.

Several leagues have entered longer-term arrangements with broadcast partners to support the development of competitions and to provide more financial certainty for clubs with marketing. Football is a multi-billion-pound industry driven by the marketing of its products (e.g., players and clubs). Consumer retention targets have placed increasing importance on football organisations to develop their relationships with fans, spectators, and supporters. The emergence of digital platforms has provided football organisations with the tools to reach a range of

stakeholders (shareholders, sponsors, and patrons) on a local and global scale. The English Premier League has led the way in applying marketing to football matters through related products and promoting growth. Understanding how this growth has been achieved in an unsettled economic environment makes this an ideal context for the study of marketing (United College of Football Business, 2016).

2.2. Improvement of professional football as a business organisation through Marketing

Krabbenbos (2013) emphasises that nowadays football commercialisation is mandatory for clubs to remain competitive financially. Some scholars such as Maguire and Pearton (2000), Ernst and Young (2007), and Relvas et al. (2010) express that improved efforts regarding entertainment and business by European football clubs were influenced by several opportunities to earn revenues from media. Desbordes (2007) emphasises that the marketing of football is necessary, and generations of more revenue have become important for football clubs. Funding for sport and marketing contacts has also become the new ways of competition whereby organisation and large monetary prizes are available in Europe, e.g., UEFA Champions' League (Relvas et al., 2010). The European Union of Football Associations (UEFA) recently predicted that approximately 56 percent of Europe's 733 highly rated clubs generated 11.7 billion Euros from media rights, sponsorship deals, sales on tickets, and commercials (Kennedy 2012).

2.3. Strategic principles for marketing football products

Modern marketing satisfies the consumer's material needs and desires and stretches to address social and psychological needs. Also, it could be applied in the whole lifecycle of products, services, policies, sports, and tourism (Al-Khaldi, 2016). Strategic planning deals with the systematic process of collecting information based on the larger picture and then using it to establish a long-term direction. Such direction is translated into specific goals, objectives, and actions. It combines innovative thinking, with objective analysis and subjective evaluation of goals and priorities (Bresciani et al. 2011) to map out a future sequence of action. A good marketing strategy helps you define your vision, mission, and business goals and outlines the steps you need to take to achieve these goals (Queensland, 2019).

One of the functions of a marketing manager is to investigate and disclose the consumers' needs and the implicit and explicit desires of the different social classes involved, whether locally or internationally, for them to be appropriately and timely satisfied. The marketing mix must be employed as a business tool engaged by organisations to enable them to thrive in a globally competitive environment (Kwon, 2011). The precise plan must be a clear statement with goals and objectives and with a clear strategy for the set goals to be achieved. To perform this efficiently and effectively, the planning phase must consider both the company's complexity and its relevant environment. Strategic planning places emphasis on long-term business objectives and the development and execution of these plans designed to reach those stated objectives (Kartakoullis et al., 2013).

In the past six decades, the Manchester United (MU) football club undertook countless tours as a major part of their strategic plans. The club organizes international tours over the summer in markets such as Asia and South Africa to grow its fan base outside England. This has broadened the team's supporting base

and appeal for potential sponsors. International matchups are just one tactic from the MU marketing playbook (Gianatasio, 2015). The franchise has tried out numerous promotional techniques, offering lucrative lessons for other football clubs. More than a few pro teams and leagues have adopted its strategies. MU's marketing prowess has been a key factor in its great success, helping it become the first soccer club to achieve a value of \$1 billion. MU was an early adopter of affinity marketing approaches through branding its own credit card and mobile phone. From early on they devised a strategy to make continuous use of social media in an innovative manner (Gianatasio, 2015).

The U.S. Major League Soccer clubs copied this promotional strategy about a decade ago. David Beckham signing at Los Angeles Galaxy gave the team international credibility and established a global footprint through pre-season tours as MU. The goal to create new Galaxy supporters that will follow the team via television and interactive media and thus form a wide audience for sponsor messages was accomplished (Gianatasio, 2015). To succeed in sports marketing, a specific application of marketing principles and processes to sports products and services must be duly followed (Nufer, 2011). Market research is key in strategic planning in that it enables the organisation to identify the most appropriate marketing mix. The mix should consist of the right product, sold at the right price, in the right place, using the most suitable promotional techniques. Also, marketers must ensure the following: the product must look good and work well and the price must be right. The goods must be in the right place at the right time (Al-Khaldi, 2016).

Public awareness needs to be created for the product and the specific target group needs to be aware of the existence and availability of the product through promotion. Successful promotions help a firm to spread costs over a larger output. Certain techniques need to be applied to monitor the success of marketing activity. When carrying out advertising it is helpful to track consumer awareness of the adverts and their messages. Evaluation can also take the place of other aspects of the marketing mix, e.g. which distribution channels were most effective; was the chosen price the right one; are the consumers buying the product as expected (Business Queensland, 2019)? Positive interaction must make a distinction between people and the organisation because there is a need for exclusive creation and management of the relationship along with other traditional marketing-mix factors (Adebayo, 2015).

2.4. Conceptual Framework

The Digital Marketing concept generates keen insight into the applicability of marketing by the football clubs. It is the use of technologies to sustain marketing activities to advance customer knowledge by matching their needs (Chaffey, 2013). Football is a sport of passion and intuition. At the same time, football is also becoming more intelligent and rational. Using data to modify content and marketing messages effectively will make it possible to nurture long-term brand loyalty. However, insights into fans' preferences will also open doors for immediate revenue diversification by enabling cross-selling and up-selling (Dellea et al., 2014).

Businesses need a perfect idea of how to start doing digital marketing. In the present time, social media channels such as Facebook, Twitter, Google, and other social media firms have successfully transformed the approaches and views of consumers which have assisted in reforming many businesses. This was done

through gaining access to an enormous network of customers with trustworthy data associated with the feedback of customers' experiences in the digital marketing concept collected from the internet and search engines of websites (Smyth, 2007). Digital marketing has created a positive impact by increasing sales revenue, especially for products where customers can read reviews and write comments about personal experiences using blogs. For businesses, online reviews work well as a part of the overall strategic marketing policy (Zhang et al., 2013). Social media is a two-way communication and generates 'possibilities' for more positive interactions between buyers and sellers. It extends and encourages sales interactions, non-selling activities, prospecting, and after-sale follow-ups (Andzulis et al., 2012), structuring a model that shows the organisations' information communication strategy as being a link between two constructs (Agnihotri and Krush, 2015).

Full mediation

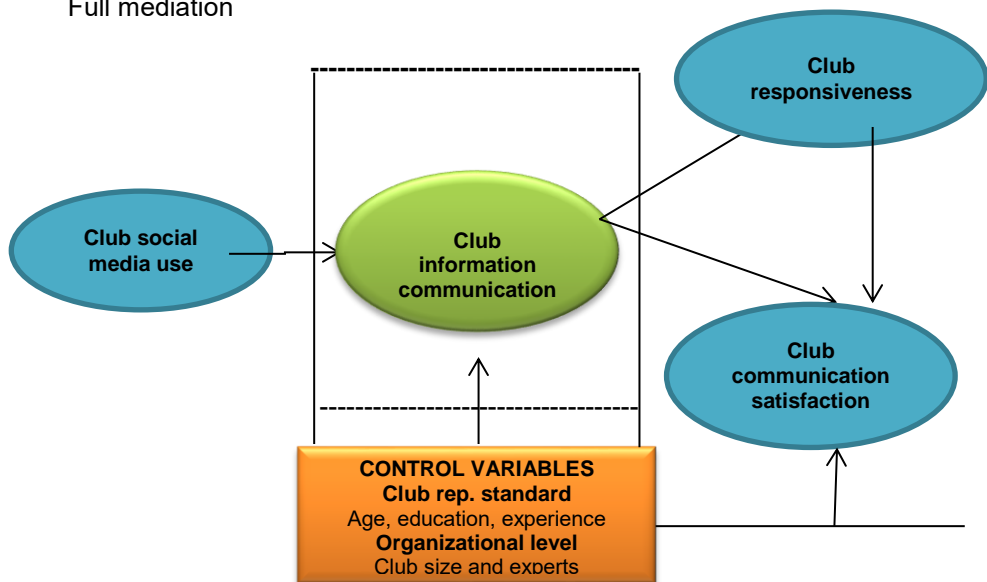


Figure 1. Digital Concept adapted from Agnihotri and Krush (2015)

The usage of football clubs' social media networks such as Facebook, Twitter, Google+, and Instagram relates to the club information communication environment where there is full mediation between the club and the fans/supporter. Club responsiveness to discussion through social media must be friendly and accept the relationship between the professional football clubs' approaches to business and the use of marketing strategies to improve clubs' seasonal position. The club should make sure there is satisfactory communication from both ends to keep their network intact. Finally, the club must make sure that the person behind the social network communication is qualified, mature, and careful in managing communication flow within the social media network. At every stage, customer satisfaction will depend on the confirmation of their expectations concerning the product (Saeidi et al., 2014). Since social media is continuously available to link buyers and sellers, the

interactions occurring through this technology are likely to influence a salesperson's communication with customers. It is, however, imperative that specific information is conveyed through the most appropriate mechanism. To accomplish this, salespeople must be able to communicate new information and to correctly evaluate information that will be most useful to the customer.

Online service tools are more persuasive than traditional methods of communication; users experience an increase in self-esteem and enjoyment through engagement with social media, which itself is a motivating factor for businesses and marketing professionals (Arnott, 2013). These days people are more attached to the web and have acquired experiences that positively affect the mental process of consumers and enhance their online buying decisions (Cetină et al., 2012). According to Yannopoulos (2011), the internet is the most powerful tool for a business's success. Marketing managers who fail to recognise the importance of the internet and utilise it in their business marketing strategy will be at a disadvantage because the internet changes the brand, pricing, distribution, and promotion strategy.

Observing the trending topics on Saturdays from the commencement of the premiership football league season (August to May), one realises that football is a big deal on social media. Premier League clubs have taken advantage of the use of digital and social channels which are now a major part of the marketing mix for most teams (Moth 2014). The Sunderland F.C uses social media to drive along with season tickets for the 2014/2015 season by generating a campaign that described fans as club legends for example by renaming the East stand after Brian Graham (in honour of a fan that had renewed his season tickets). The Manchester United club delightfully uses marketing; the club now has its own social media hub that pulls together all the columns from its official accounts on Facebook, Twitter, Google+, and Instagram. This is made accessible in seven different languages including Spanish, Malaysian, and Indonesian. The idea was to take the opportunity to watch a game at Old Trafford available for the club's international fans, though in reality, they were just watching via a Google Hangout (Moth, 2014).

However, social media should not just be an ordinary network for marketing or public relations or simply an effective customer service tool. Many business organisations started by using social media to acquire information about the various products available and offered in the market, the most successful ones have significantly expanded their frontier by engaging their customers at every step of their social media strategy (the 'customer corridor'), which touches base with potential customers', communicates information about their products, engages the customers, and facilitates repeat purchases of the products offered by the organisation (Priyanka and Srinivasan, 2015).

3. Methodology

3.1. Research design and sample

The study adopted a mixed-method approach (i.e., quantitative, and qualitative methods) used for a better understanding of the phenomenon of interest (Venkatesh et al., 2013) whereby data were collected concurrently (Santos et al., 2017). The research took place in the KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa where selected potential football clubs were situated. The research population comprises 500

potential professional football clubs (PPFC) which includes players, agents, club managers, sponsors, and supporters from the five selected football clubs. Potential professional football clubs (PPFCs) are clubs that are lower than professional football clubs yet aspiring to become professional clubs. The sample size of a survey most typically refers to the number of units to be chosen from the data collected. The population for this study was drawn from selected PPFCs in KwaZulu-Natal. The selection of participants was convenient with regards to coaches, club owners, managers, supporters, and players. The qualitative part of the study was achieved using interviews and focus groups used by the researcher to collect information from participants. The quantitative aspect of the research involved the distribution of questionnaires to these clubs which were completed and returned. Therefore, this study proposed that there is a need for the potential professional football clubs to redefine the use of marketing strategies to achieve their goals and objectives. Also, the hypothesis for this study expresses that if any PPFC uses a service marketing mix (7P's) then such will be more successful than another PPFC using a traditional marketing mix (4P's).

3.2. Data collection and analysis

A total of 250 questionnaires were distributed to the players, agents, club managers, sponsors, coaches, and supporters of the potential professional football clubs (PPFC) KwaZulu-Natal (KZN) region of the Republic of South Africa. The study received a positive response of 221 (88.4 %) questionnaires. Detailed interview and focus group discussions were undertaken to collect data from purposively identified respondents consisting of players, club officials, club owners, sponsors, etc., ten participants from Durban, New Germany, Kloof, Richards Bay, and Riverside football clubs were selected for detailed interviews to understand the marketing framework used by the football clubs. Two focus groups per club, consisting of six participants in each group, were conducted among the selected football club members in the five communities. Field notes and a detailed diary were kept of every interview and post-interview, which formed part of the raw data that was analysed. The responses were based on the business operation and marketing events currently going on with these clubs. The research used primary and secondary data to establish research validity and trustworthiness in analysing the researched variables. Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS version 26) was used for statistical analysis of quantitative material, while the software package NVivo 10 was used for the qualitative.

3.3. Variable's and Operationalization

Questionnaires were designed using a six-point Likert scale for supporters and players (qualitative) and a five-point Likert scale for club officials (quantitative). Both have section A designed for demographics while section B was based on the objectives of the study. Questions were asked on marketing principles, marketing concepts, and football club approach to business and use of marketing. We also ask questions about the appropriate use of the marketing mix. Responses were formulated based on the Likert Scale choosing one of the options: strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree, N/A and satisfied (S); dissatisfied (DS); somewhat satisfied (SS); somewhat dissatisfied (SD); neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (NS or DS).

4. Results and Analysis

Five football clubs were represented namely Ekaya FC, Shooting Stars FC, Kloof FC, Riverside FC, and KZN FC participated. Demographics show that Ekaya FC players (New Germany) were most represented (31 %). Shooting Stars FC and Riverside FC (collaboration-26 %), Kloof FC 22%, and KZN FC 21 %. Age and gender of players show 72 (60 %) were 16-21years of age, 18 (40 %) were 22-24 males. The age of club officials reveals two (30%) were 30-45 years of age and three (70%) were 25-30. Nine officials were interviewed: two from Kloof FC, three from Ekaya FC, two (30 %) from KZN FC, and two from Shooting Stars FC and Riverside FC. The date of club establishment data indicates two clubs (50 %) were established in 2010, one in 2008 (25%) and one (25 %) in 2011. All the clubs represented play in Premier Durban Central and Premier Durban South.

4.1. Presentation of quantitative results based on research objectives.

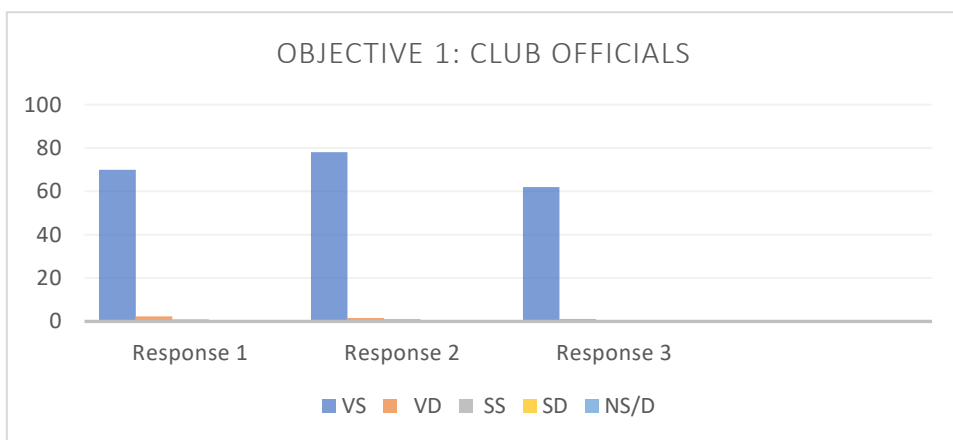


Figure 2. Analysis of results from respondents-club officials'

Note: VS-very satisfied, VD-very dissatisfied, SS-somewhat satisfied, SD-somewhat dissatisfied, NS/D-neither satisfied nor dissatisfied

When club officials were asked the following questions, how satisfied or dissatisfied are they with the club and how satisfied they on club meets players needs and supporters matters. Results in figure 1 demonstrate that most officials indicated satisfaction with their football clubs' players and supporters' needs are met. According to the answers of respondents, few indications demonstrated neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the way players' needs were met, and four officials indicated somewhat satisfied.

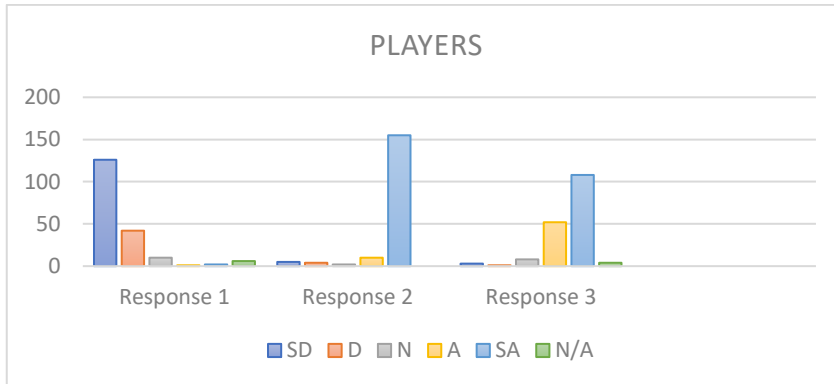


Figure 3. Analysis of responses from players

Note: SD-strongly disagree, D-disagree, N-Neutral, A-Agree, SA-Strongly disagree, N/A- Not available

When statements such as football clubs will be more competitive and be more successful if marketing principles are not put in place. If football clubs use marketing professionals, it will benefit their business practices and if football clubs' competitive advantage program is practiced, they will be more profitable. The result from figure 2 shows that most of the players strongly disagreed that football clubs will be competitive and be more successful without marketing because previously in the qualitative analysis they appreciated the power and influence of marketing players and club success while very few indicated they support the same comment (i.e., from strongly disagree) by indicating disagree. Thus, almost all players from the clubs strongly agreed that marketing professionals should handle marketing matters in clubs if clubs want to have success. It was also strongly agreed that introducing and practicing football club programmes that will support competitive advantage will make football clubs more profitable and give them an edge over competitors.

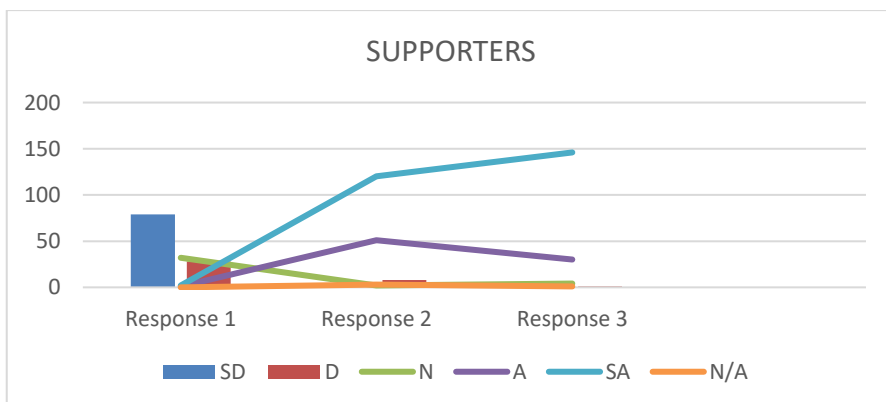


Figure 4. Analysis of responses from clubs' supporters

Note: SD-strongly disagree, D-disagree, N-Neutral, A-Agree, SA-Strongly disagree, N/A- Not available

When the same statements in figure 2 were presented to supporters if lack of marketing usage will make teams to be more competitive and successful. The result from figure 3 shows most of the supporters strongly disagreed that lack of usage of marketing will make the teams be competitive and be more successful because they have the notion that using marketing in business will be an added advantage. Some numbers of spectators disagreed on the influence of marketing on players and club success while some were neutral. Thus, almost all supporters from the clubs strongly agreed that marketing professionals should handle marketing matters if clubs want to have success.

4.2. Relationship between the approaches to business by the Potential Professional FCs and the use of marketing tactics to improve the clubs' seasonal position.

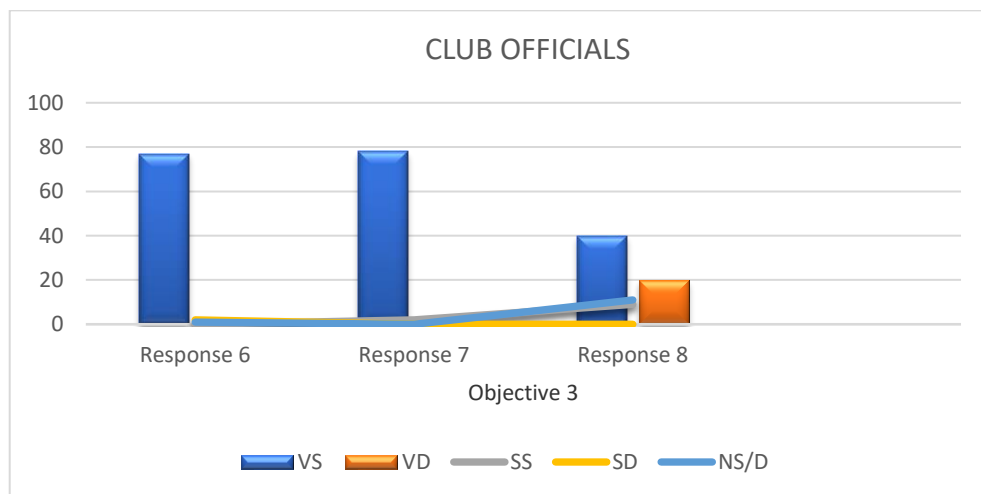


Figure 5. Responses from selected club officials

Note: VS-very satisfied, VD-Very dissatisfied, SS-somewhat satisfied, SD-somewhat dissatisfied, NS/D-neither satisfied nor dissatisfied

When club officials were asked if they were satisfied with the way club's business administration style and if satisfied with the ways club handles club's matters. The results in figure 4, indicate that club officials were very satisfied with the business administration style of their clubs. Only two indicated they were not satisfied, while one indicated neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. On satisfaction with the manner and approaches their football club used when handling matters, all the officials indicated they were very satisfied with the use of marketing strategies by their club to achieve a competitive advantage over other clubs. On satisfaction with the use of marketing tactics by football clubs, 50% were very satisfied, a few were very dissatisfied, some somewhat satisfied and a few were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

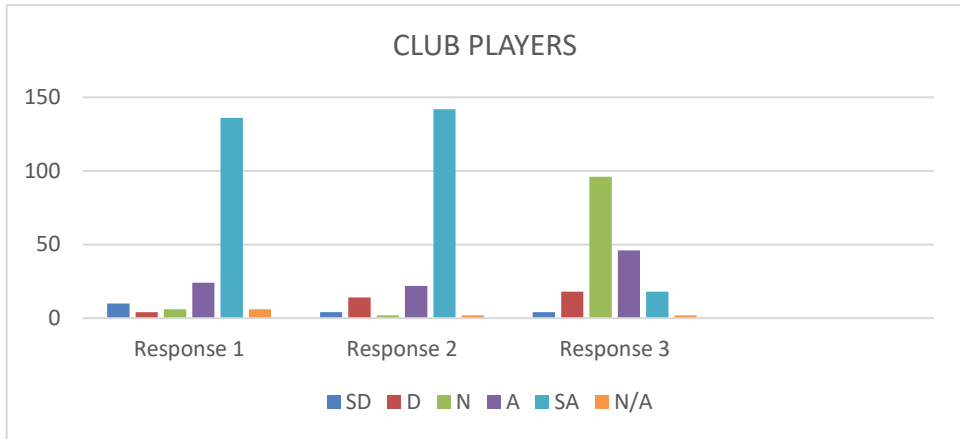


Figure 6. Responses from selected clubs’ players

Note: SD-strongly disagree, D-disagree, N-Neutral, A-Agree, SA-Strongly disagree, N/A- Not available

When statements such football is a profitable business if marketing tactics are in place and your football club renders promotional services perfectly, we asked. Results in figure 5 show that 98 % of players indicated they strongly agreed that football is a profitable business and marketing will improve the clubs’ profit margins. It was strongly agreed that when club products were distributed to supporters and stakeholders there is a connection between the football club and the society. Very few players choose ‘agreed’ and many players indicated neutral on the statement regarding their football club rendering promotional services perfectly, which seems to be a signal of doubt and confusion regarding their clubs’ services in that area.

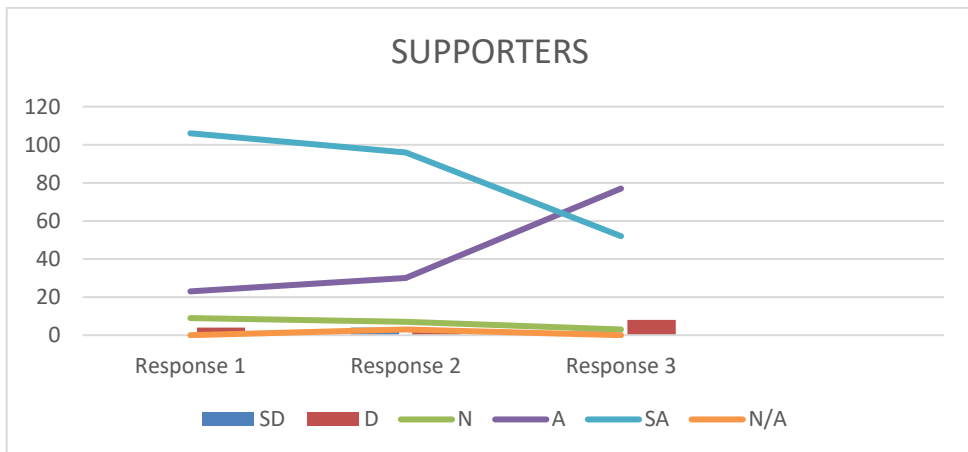


Figure 7. Responses from selected clubs’ supporters.

Note: SD-strongly disagree, D-disagree, N-neutral, A-agree, SA-strongly disagree, N/A- not available

When supporters' responses were requested on if marketing will improve the club's profit margin like other European and South African clubs. Results in figure 6 indicated that supporters strongly agreed that marketing will greatly improve the club's profit margins as it has assisted with other European and South African professional football clubs.

4.3. Presentation of interview and focus group results.

All the clubs stated that recruitment is very important to them whereby players and goalkeepers are recruited early and trained based on the club's recruiting structure, allowing them to plan for what is needed. Three clubs emphasize that marketing is used to package their players for selling to the United Kingdom and Europe, which gives them a competitive advantage ahead of other teams. Two clubs indicated that they have formed alliances with Ekaya and Shooting Stars to have a stronger recruiting base for their team and generally for the whole affiliates' teams because of lack of funds for branding.

All the clubs confessed they experienced a challenge to find a relationship between marketing strategies and generating an income. Even though they practice both, it is evident they find it difficult in combining both practices. One club responded they have some consistent quality sponsors from different areas, and they find ways of making some marketing connection through other sports within their sports club. There are annual and monthly donations, and they sell players abroad and into higher clubs in South Africa. Two clubs saw gate fees for matches as an issue because they have no stadium. They try other avenues to make money and the little money that is made goes for stadium rent. Coaches from four clubs expressed they have clubhouses that serve as an image that portrays who they stand for and attracts people, fans, and supporters. Two stated the facility encourages their players in associating more with their club even though the facility itself is not attractive.

On avenues of income, only two clubs responded, they both depend on sponsors, participatory fees from clubs during our tournaments, and some of the souvenirs they sell. Also, part of the money from soccer academy service fees is channelled towards the development and growth of the football clubs. A coach from the other club added that their club also receives support from the city through grants and philanthropic efforts. All the clubs confirmed they make money from players they sell to teams in Greece and Portugal. Meanwhile, a coach revealed the club sells sports products and makes money from those sales.

5. Discussion

Findings show that PPFC needs modern marketing principles for direction towards professionalism and the business of football. Besides, football club administrators should gradually get involved in developing new marketing strategies to connect with communities, for community works. In this way, marketing principles become a dynamic and strategic tool to reach the public, spectators, and supporters and to advance club success. This means that the clubs must become familiar with marketing principles.

Kappel (2017) points to three major areas to concentrate on to increase sales in a company or organisation. That is to build customer relationships, it is important

to situate the internet to reach a larger customer base and communicate in unique ways and think of the website as a sales channel and offer more benefits through the website to keep customers coming back. Findings also showed that the PFFCs were constant with the avenues they used in marketing even though they did not seem to improve these. Da Silva and Las Casas (2017) advise that it is important for sports clubs to design an appropriate marketing mix to influence and encourage customers (i.e., fans, supporters, and spectators) to obtain benefits using attendance or participation.

It is suggested that a club mission statement must be clear and concise to address the purpose of the club and to guide decision-making and resource allocation in the future (Da Silva and Las Casas, 2017). This will guide the recruitment exercise and marketing principles. Findings also disclosed that clubs use a mixture of modern and traditional ways of recruiting players and coaches into their clubs. Therefore, traces of marketing principles seem limited. Parkinson (2015) found that more than half of all sports fans desire to follow or track their teams digitally, and regularly make use of their laptops or smartphones to explore for sports-related content, mostly during game time. The findings, however, indicated that these PFFCs like the PFCs use different marketing principles to drive their publicity to a wider range, because of less financial strength most of them are tied to a common cheaper marketing medium (i.e., WhatsApp, flyers, and WOM).

Chang *et al.* (2017) state that Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is a significant matter in managing a business because consumers expect business participation in charitable activities. Therefore, CSR could be regarded as a business exercise (Pomeroy and Johnson, 2009). CSR serves as a basic method for paving the way into the hearts of people. Findings also demonstrated through interviews that clubs give out affordable souvenirs and gifts to spectators and supporters including raffles. When a team is deprived of talented, highly skilled athletes, the sports club (e.g., a football club) has little chance to attract and entice audiences and make potential investors, sponsors, and advertisers interested and involved in a partnership with that club (Kulikova and Goshunova, 2014). Based on this statement, findings show that clubs' preparation for the season is still not as expected for a PFFC that aspires to be professionals. Customers basically desire low prices, high-quality products, specific products, and good service (Aaker, 2014), which must manifest from the beginning of the season until the end. It was not evident from the results of this study that these requirements are operational or consistent within these clubs. Findings indicated less commercial revenue, with the main income coming from sponsorship, sales of club products, and sourcing for philanthropic donations for club sustenance because very few spectators watch games except when playing against a very popular team. Players', coaches', and administrative officers' salaries were paid through players' sales, registration fees, and sponsors. Meanwhile, club field success is supposed to be complemented by positive financial sheets which should serve as the ultimate objective for club directors and presidents (Sabrie, 2017). Findings also revealed that the PFFCS' are battling with stabilizing field success with finances while trying to navigate fully into the total use of marketing to solidify their standing.

Findings revealed that gate fees for matches were fixed based on two rates or fees and sometimes a high gate fee was due to the type of matches to be played and most of the time games are played on open grounds. Gate fees in every football

club game are essential to financial growth and a good income source when there are large numbers of spectators and fans. Vamplew (2016) indicates that profit-maximisation coupled with specified costs necessitates maximisation of entertainment worth to attract as many spectators as possible. Bashiru (2015) found that the presence of star players, attendance cost, team affiliation, media promotion, and good officiating serves as a promoter to fan attendance at stadiums. Findings indicated that clubs based their gate fees on the perceived number of spectators that would come to watch a game and the type of game to be played. In most cases, clubs needed to find a way of subsidising spectators and supporters who wanted to come and watch their games as a strategy to make the rented stadium full, especially when other major teams are playing at the same time.

6. Conclusion

The research was undertaken to observe how the PFFCs' in the KwaZulu-Natal province of South Africa operate as a business organization using marketing concepts to accomplish goals. The study sought to understand the strategies and the ways they were being utilized to accomplish the stated goals and objectives of the clubs, looking at the way football clubs generate income to care for players, coaches, administrative expenses, and salaries. The big five football clubs in Europe enjoy television rights deals with media groups, commercial revenues improved by corporate sponsorship, and attracted over four billion viewers per season (Kennedy and Kennedy, 2012).

A clubhouse attracts new players and supporters because it is a marketing field that tells a lot about a club. Findings show that two clubs have good clubhouses and understood the importance of an attractive clubhouse, while two see it as a neutral place where players just meet. Commercials in football generally promote the brand and image of clubs by way of partnering with sponsors through shirt logos and banners. Thus, revenue connected to this feature is derived from the sale of merchandise and the sale of sponsorship rights to sponsors (Sabrie, 2017; Mukhtar, 2015). Findings show that clubs located other sources of revenue to generate funds for club spending by selling souvenirs, organising major tournaments, connecting with sponsors, and inviting football agents that are interested in quality players. Each club or partnered clubs have their contacts with bigger professional clubs in Europe that buys players from them. Further research should be looking at the effects of marketing on clubs' seasonal profit margin. Also, the research could as well delve into the effects of customer relationship marketing and football club seasonal success.

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