

Analyzing How English Premier League Teams Utilize YouTube Channel

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Abstract

YouTube has been gaining popularity all around the world. A lot of companies have created their own YouTube channels to leverage them in diverse ways; they upload commercial videos, show people user reviews, and conduct promotions with their products. Sports clubs are no exception; they upload diverse videos to gain popularity and to interact with their fans. This study analyzes how the English Premier League (EPL) clubs leverage their YouTube channel as soccer (football in European nations) players. YouTube activities of 20 clubs during the 2019/2020 Season are investigated. After careful consideration, we decide to examine two factors of the respective channel of the YouTube: 1) Popularity (the number of views and subscribers) 2) Contents of videos (e.g. interviews and highlight scenes). The study followingly inspects the benefits of utilizing YouTube channels and of direct communication between sports clubs and fans in online settings.

Keywords: *English Premier League, YouTube, Soccer, Social media, Sports fan*

1. Introduction

Means of communications have expanded to a great extent in the 21st century. The development of technologies and the ubiquitous use of computers and smartphones have made our lives convenient but also increased and diversified our interactions with others. For instance, people can communicate with others without geometrical boundaries by simply installing applications on smartphones. Among these applications, YouTube has gained its popularity as an online video sharing platform. People can upload their videos or broadcast live streaming with ease on YouTube.

It should be noted that lots of companies are now actively creating their own YouTube channels to promote their services or products. They upload commercial videos, videos of going through user reviews, or promotional videos for their services or products. Companies have realized the influence of YouTube and set up elaborated tactics [1]. Sports clubs are one of them, utilizing YouTube channels to promote themselves and to communicate with their sports fans. In general, watching sports broadcasts online is outlawed and that includes the English Premier League. However, a lot of sports clubs have created their own YouTube

channels and demonstrated their diverse aspects and they are welcomed by their fans.

This study examines how 20 English Premier League clubs utilized their YouTube channels in 2019/2020 Season by visiting respective channels. English Premier League club is reported to be the most popular soccer league among all in 2014 [2], and many South Korean soccer fans also have enjoyed watching their games since South Korean players Ji-Sung Park and Heung-Min Son have shown notable performances in the league. This study, therefore, is to elucidate the positive effects of YouTube for promotional intents and of direct communication between sports clubs and fans on online settings.

2. Questions

This study investigates how 20 English Premier League clubs utilize their YouTube channels during the 2019/2020 Season. 2019/2020 Season started on August 9, 2019, and terminated on July 26, 2020, with some delays due to COVID-19. Table 1 demonstrates the result of the 2019/2020 Season.

Table 1. Result of English Premier League in 2019/2020 Season

Rank	Team Name	Win	Draw	Lose	Points	Etc.
1	Liverpool	32	3	3	99	Win the title
2	Manchester City	26	3	9	81	
3	Manchester United	18	12	8	66	
4	Chelsea	20	6	12	66	
5	Leicester City	18	8	12	62	
6	Tottenham Hotspur	16	11	11	59	
7	Wolverhampton Wanderers	15	14	9	59	
8	Arsenal	14	14	10	56	
9	Sheffield United	14	12	12	54	
10	Burnley	15	9	14	54	
11	Southampton	15	7	16	52	
12	Everton	13	10	15	49	
13	Newcastle United	11	11	16	44	
14	Crystal Palace	11	10	17	43	
15	Brighton & Hove Albion	9	14	15	41	
16	West Ham United	10	9	19	39	
17	Aston Villa	9	8	21	35	
18	Bournemouth	9	7	22	34	Relegated to Championship (Second Division)
19	Watford	8	10	20	34	Relegated to Championship (Second Division)
20	Norwich City	5	6	27	21	Relegated to Championship (Second Division)

The specific questions of the study are to research how each club utilizes YouTube as follow:

Question 1: What are the total number of views and the total number of subscribers on each channel?

Question 2: What are the video contents like in each channel?

3. Method

In order to answer two research questions, necessary data were collected from July 27 to July 29, 2020, once the season was terminated by visiting YouTube channels of each club. To answer Question 2, data were collected from the “playlist” section, instead of the whole videos, and unavailable videos were excluded. Each playlist has its label with the number of videos. Figure 1 represents “Playlist” section of Liverpool’s YouTube Channel. Videos are clearly categorized for the specific purpose, and it is very legible for the audience as well.

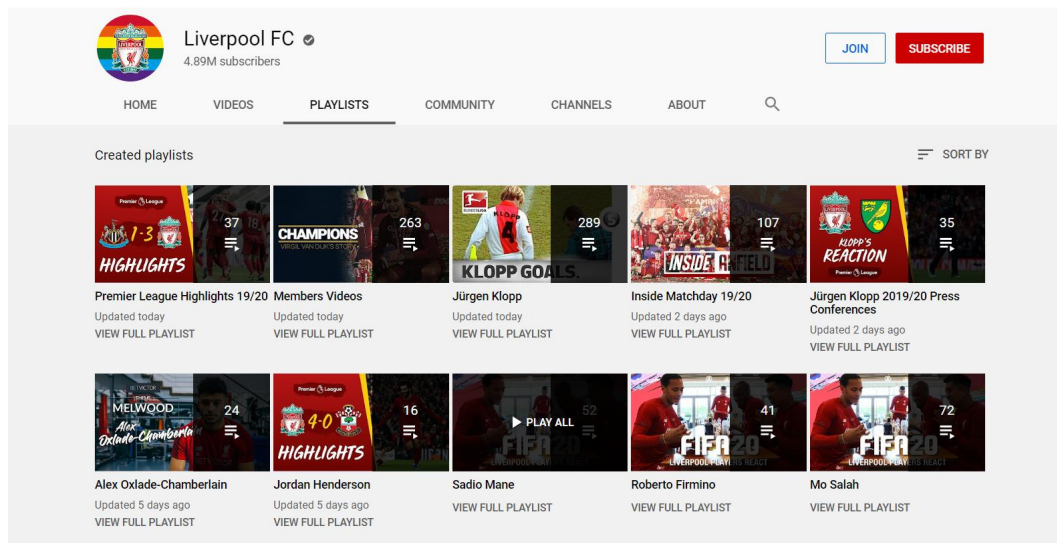


Figure 1. Playlist from Liverpool’s YouTube channel

4. Results and Discussion

As for Question 1, the result is as follows:

Table 2. Popularity of YouTube channels

Team Name	Total Views	Team Name	Total Subscribers
Liverpool	841,921,342	Liverpool	4,890,000
Manchester City	670,243,846	Manchester United	3,130,000
Manchester United	482,478,196	Manchester City	2,640,000
Arsenal	398,722,478	Chelsea	1,990,000
Chelsea	347,181,451	Arsenal	1,890,000
Tottenham Hotspur	254,732,870	Tottenham Hotspur	1,200,000
Wolverhampton	83,351,014	Watford	947,000
Wanderers			

Everton	68,249,724	Newcastle United	943,000
Leicester City	42,110,805	Crystal Palace	872,000
West Ham United	33,427,053	Norwich City	872,000
Southampton	33,174,187	Sheffield United	842,000
Sheffield United	32,106,327	Wolverhampton	386,000
Aston Villa	30,196,712	Wanderers	324,000
Crystal Palace	28,367,782	Burnley	243,000
Norwich City	28,036,999	Everton	206,000
Watford	19,551,349	Leicester City	150,000
Bournemouth	14,938,499	West Ham United	140,000
Newcastle United	12,107,272	Aston Villa	106,000
Burnley	9,416,577	Southampton	Private
Brighton & Hove Albion	8,055,488	Bournemouth	Private
		Brighton & Hove Albion	Private

Table 2 organizes the total number of views and the number of subscribers for each club, and popular teams are the ones that have higher total views and a higher number of subscribers. So-called Big Six teams (Arsenal, Chelsea, Liverpool, Manchester City, Manchester United, and Tottenham Hotspur) are ranked within the top 6 both on total views and total subscribers, which represents their popularity online. In order to further explore popularities, correlations between total views, subscribers, and market value are measured. The total market value of each club is drawn from transfermarkt.com [3].

Table 3. Correlation of factors of popularity

Team Name	Total Views	Total Subscribers	Total Market Value (€)
Arsenal	398,722,478	1,890,000	601,850,000
Aston Villa	30,196,712	140,000	214,250,000
Bournemouth	14,938,499	Private	246,630,000
Brighton & Hove Albion	8,055,488	Private	195,950,000
Burnley	9,416,577	324,000	145,030,000
Chelsea	347,181,451	1,990,000	830,450,000
Crystal Palace	28,367,782	872,000	176,700,000
Everton	68,249,724	243,000	415,300,000
Leicester City	42,110,805	206,000	420,100,000
Liverpool	841,921,342	4,890,000	985,950,000
Manchester City	670,243,846	2,640,000	992,950,000
Manchester United	482,478,196	3,130,000	659,680,000
Newcastle United	12,107,272	943,000	242,700,000
Norwich City	28,036,999	872,000	126,780,000
Sheffield United	32,106,327	842,000	120,700,000
Southampton	33,174,187	106,000	195,500,000
Tottenham Hotspur	254,732,870	1,200,000	683,700,000
Watford	19,551,349	947,000	203,230,000
West Ham United	33,427,053	150,000	286,050,000
Wolverhampton	83,351,014	386,000	296,000,000
Wanderers			

Table 3 indicates that the correlation between total views and total subscribers (excluding Bournemouth and Brighton & Hove Albion) is 0.937; the correlation between total views and total market value is 0.928; the correlation between total subscribers and market value (excluding Bournemouth and Brighton & Hove Albion) is 0.802, which demonstrate that three factors are highly correlated with one another.

To answer Question 2, video contents in their YouTube channels are explored. This study sorts various contents (based on “playlist” and videos within a “playlist”) by seven categorizations including others.

Table 4. Categorization of components of videos

Team	Archive/ History	Highlights	Interview	News/ Press	Person ¹	Pre-Season/ Tour	Training	Others.
Arsenal (N=124)	4	16	9	4	33	16	5	37
Aston Villa (N=14)	0	4	5	1	0	1	0	3
Bournemouth (N=58)	0	15	6	4	0	5	1	27
Brighton & Hove Albion (N=6)	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	3
Burnley (N=44)	0	19	3	1	0	2	1	18
Chelsea (N=34)	1	7	2	1	1	0	3	19
Crystal Palace (N=42)	2	5	8	1	1	4	6	15
Everton (N=57)	1	8	9	2	2	8	3	24
Leicester City (N=32)	1	11	4	1	0	0	1	14
Liverpool (N=43)	0	10	1	2	12	3	2	13
Manchester City (N=11)	0	3	2	0	0	0	0	6
Manchester United (N=129)	1	80	4	1	13	7	2	21

¹ It centers on showing person (player or manager)’s life and activity in various ways.

Newcastle								
United (N=19)	0	8	5	0	0	0	1	5
Norwich								
City (N=21)	0	9	1	0	0	3	1	7
Sheffield								
United (N=91)	0	77	2	0	0	1	1	10
Southampton								
(N=63)	1	8	8	3	0	7	5	31
Tottenham								
Hotspur (N=56)	1	19	1	0	19	4	2	10
Watford (N=29)	1	10	2	0	0	0	1	15
West Ham								
United (N=37)	0	10	6	0	0	2	1	18
Wolverhampton								
Wanderers (N=32)	2	13	1	1	0	2	2	11

Table 4 shows that respective clubs are focused on different content within their YouTube channels. In terms of the number of videos, some clubs have high volumes of videos (e.g. Arsenal), whereas others do not upload many (e.g. Brighton & Hove Albion) compared to others. These differences are due to gaps in popularities of each club, but also due to distinct viewpoints towards the use of YouTube channels.

5. Discussion

Liverpool was in the first place in the English Premier League 2019/2020 Season. It was the first time for them to be in the first place in thirty years and was also the first time after the Premier League was reorganized in 1992/1993 Season. The league has up to 38 rounds, however, Liverpool was confirmed to be in the first place only when it was in the 31st round, and this is a historical record. Their victory also encouraged and empowered people when they had to fight against COVID-19. Due to COVID-19, the Premier League had to be ceased and was delayed for three months. However, Liverpool successfully led the rounds and reached first place. Their victory was a welcome diversion and a visceral, communal celebration of something genuinely inspiring at a moment when something uplifting was needed. After all those months without any sports games, the league was a positive diversion [4]. It should also be noted that YouTube plays a significant role in the sports industry as in other industries. Like any other genre, sports are also popular and welcomed in online settings. YouTube sports video views are growing by 60% a year, and the consumption is up to 80% [5]. It is because many sports broadcasting stations and clubs upload intriguing videos on YouTube, ranging from highlight to a player's personal life. This study demonstrates that sports

clubs leverage their YouTube channels well with different styles and contents of videos.

The factor behind its popularity is that the majority of contents uploaded on YouTube are to entertain users in general, topics including game, music, dance, talk show, and etc. [6]. And, these EPL channels are pretty popular for South Korean citizens; Currently, the most popular sports star in South Korea is Heung-min Son, who plays soccer in Tottenham Hotspur of English Primer League (EPL). After successes and achievements by Ji-Sung Park of Manchester United in the past, now Heung-min Son has shown his ability in the team and therefore the interests of South Korean soccer fans in EPL have augmented [7]. Additionally, EPL officially opens and manages their YouTube channel. They show a lot of legendary players and match highlights on their channel, and it was popular and well received [8]. It is safe to say that YouTube will continue to grow in many ways; it is reported that millennials watch sports via application and YouTube more than ever before in the United States [9] and YouTube becomes much popular and influential due to the aftermath of COVID-19 [10].

6. Conclusion

We have studied how and why YouTube plays a significant role in the field of soccer. As mentioned, like any other industry, sports industry handsomely utilizes YouTube channels and provides useful information for the audience. The thrust is that soccer is a popular sport and those EPL's YouTube channels satisfy soccer fans all around the globe, and it seems that this realm will continue to grow.

However, this study has a few limitations. First of all, this study is a cross-sectional study that was researched in a few days. Thus, it does not elucidate how YouTube sports channels have changed and evolved chronologically. Secondly, although the study investigates video contents, it only collected data from the playlists and did not overview the entire videos. Therefore, there may be some inaccurate results in the video content categorization. Last but not least, the playlists were categorized under the author's subjective decision. Due to some unclarities in several playlists, it would have been better if the professional advice was input in the categorization process.

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