

Exploring K-League Club's YouTube Channel: Focusing on Seoul E-Land Football Club

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Abstract

Soccer is one of the popular sports globally, and South Korea is no exception; the professional domestic soccer tournament has been held in South Korea since 1983. The national soccer team in South Korea has shown outstanding performances, hosting the 2002 World Cup and achieving a bronze medal at the London 2012 Olympic Games and second place at the 2019 U-20 World Cup. In addition, one of the South Korean soccer players, Heung-min Son, has played a remarkable role in the English Premier League. Like other global soccer clubs, South Korean domestic soccer clubs create and manage their own YouTube channel to interact with fans and keep them updated. In this study, we explore how and why Seoul E-Land Football Club (SEFC) utilizes its YouTube channel. SEFC is distinctive in that they are playing at the second division, their home ground is based in Seoul, and they are sponsored by a company run on Christian values. We analyze one of the soccer club's YouTube channels multi-dimensionally and discover the roles of YouTube.

Keywords: *YouTube, Soccer, K-League, Seoul E-Land Football Club, New Media*

1. Introduction

Sports are a popular culture all around the world. Sports enthusiasts love and watch sports because they feel dominant, feel a rush of pleasure, and feel like they are one of the players in the field [1]. People nowadays have various digital devices to watch sports, such as television, laptop, and smartphone. Likewise, due to advances in information and communications technology and ubiquitous internet connectivity, people can now easily and conveniently watch sports games, even popular tournaments. South Korea is no exception. For instance, the broadcasting station, SPOTV, has broadcasted various global sports online (via PC, notebook, and smartphone) and offline (television). People in South Korea can watch English Premier League (EPL) at cafés via their smartphones with ease. Sports clubs also actively leverage new media channels, such as YouTube, an online video platform. They provide up-to-date and interesting information their fans are eager to know. This study also explores how and why Seoul E-Land Football Club (SEFC) uses its own YouTube

channel. We multi-dimensionally explore SEFC's YouTube channel and discover various roles and features of YouTube.

2. Seoul E-Land Football Club (SEFC)

This study focuses on SEFC, a soccer club in South Korea, placed in K League 2 (the second division) as writing this paper. SEFC was found in 2014 with a massive sponsorship from the E-Land Group, the 45th company in South Korea, when sorted by total business assets in 2021 [2].

SEFC has three main attributes. First, SEFC plays in the second division. South Korea has held the professional domestic soccer league since 1983, but its promotion and relegation first became official in 2012. And then K League 3 (the third division) and K League 4 (the fourth division) were organized as a semi-pro league in 2020, and they abide by the same promotion and relegation system. There being numerous divisions of soccer leagues, it may be possible that divisions other than the first one may not get enough attention from the public. Secondly, SEFC is based in Seoul. FC Seoul, a soccer club in the first division, was found in 1983, but their hometown has changed many times. SEFC was based in Seoul from the beginning, and it could later compete with FC Seoul to strengthen its connection with Seoul. Finally, SEFC follows Christian values. E-land, its sponsorship company, has been well-known to be run on Christianity values. However, the company got aggressive reports on the media that criticize its enforcement of Christian values to employees. E-Land took action by closing the worship room in the workplace and eliminating religious tinges. However, SEFC has remained an issue, and E-Land finally explained that they wanted employees who are and/or want to be open to Christianity values and cultures [3]. In this respect, SEFC is a unique soccer club.

3. Method

As abovementioned, this study is to explore how and why SEFC utilize their own YouTube channel. We aim to answer the following research questions:

RQ #1: What are the contents of videos uploaded on SEFC's YouTube channel?

RQ #2: What are the unique traits of videos on SEFC's YouTube channel?

We simply visited SEFC's YouTube channel [4] and watched uploaded videos to answer these questions. We visited the channel on June 23, 2021, and watched videos listed in the playlist section.

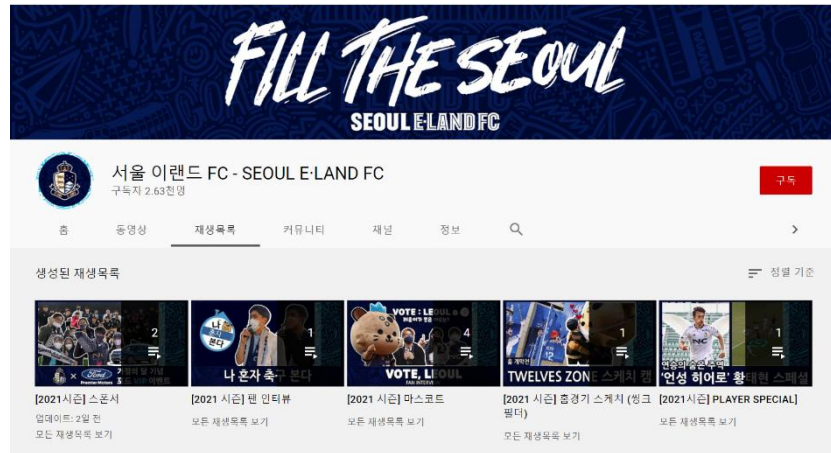


Figure 1. Scene of SEFC YouTube channel

4. Result

To answer RQ 1, we explored how SEFC categorized their videos on the *playlist* section and organized the name of categories and the number of videos in each category. The result is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Categorization of SEFC's YouTube channel on playlist section

Name	Number of Videos	Name	Number of Videos
[2015 Season] Martin Rennie	10	Fan Communications	30
Matchday Diary (1-6th)	20	[2018 Season] Highlight and Goal	180
[2020 Season] Coach Jungyong Chung	6	[2020 Season] Training	6
[2020 Season] Player Interview	25	[2020 Season] 2020 NEW KITS	3
[2020 Season] Preview for Home Game	13	[2020 Season] Sponsor	13
[2020 Season] Collaboration	9	[2020 Season] Goal	21
[2020 Season] Matchday Diary Season 6	10	Club's Cheering Song	5
[2020 Season] Social Activity	4	[2020 Season] Scene of Winning	7
[2020 Season] Player Special	2	[2020 Season] Training Scene	1
[2021 Season] Player Interview	9	[2021 Season] Pre-Season	7
[2021 Season] Goal	11	[2021 Season E-Land Mall MOM] Player Interview	6
[2021 Season] Matchday Diary 7	8	[Spot Video]	5
[2021 Interview After Match]	2	[2021 Season] Player Special	1
[2021 Season] Home Game Sketch (Think Fielder)	1	[2021 Season] Mascot	4
[2021 Season] Fan Interview	1	[2021 Season] Sponsor	2

For RQ 2, we examined the intriguing traits of the SEFC YouTube channel and discovered some of its weaknesses. After careful consideration, we found the following results:

- Unprofessional video shooting: Some videos on the channel had amateurish aspects. For instance, video named “Martin Rennie first press conference as Seoul E-Land FC Manager” of “[2015 Season] Martin Rennie” section had several scenes that were shaking and had unpleasurable background noises.
- Unclear categorization: Owners of YouTube channels can make different playlists to categorize their videos. However, the SEFC channel has some ambiguous categories. For instance, the “Fan Communication” section had several videos irrelevant to communication with SEFC fans (See Figure 2).
- Incorrect Titles: Some playlists were named incorrectly. For instance, “Matchday Diary (1-6th)” indicates that it contains 6 episodes of videos. However, the playlist had 16 episodes.
- Unclear Title: Titles of some playlists were ambiguous, which makes it confusing for the viewers to assume what types of videos are included in them. For example, “Think Fielder” and “Spot Video” do not clearly imply what types of videos they contain.



Figure 2. Scene of Fan communication on playlist of SEFC YouTube channel

5. Discussion

Sports clubs are like other business companies that aim to make profits, satisfy customers (fans), seek reinvestment, and strive to attract attention from the public. Sports clubs are recently beginning to actively leverage their YouTube channels by creating, uploading, and managing them. It led to increasing communications with fans, and sports clubs now reveal more real lives and routines that occur within them. For example, Tottenham Hotspur, an English soccer club, played in the first division and is also well-known for Heung-Min Son, manages their own YouTube channel, and broadcasts diverse scenes and contents through the channel. Similarly, domestic soccer clubs in South Korea have recently created and ran their own YouTube channel. This study investigates how and why SEFC manages its YouTube channel. They have various videos, which are entertaining, informative, and meaningful. However, this study also discovered that SEFC has some poor channel management skills, such as unprofessional video shooting, unclear categorization, and incorrect and vague playlist titles, but listed problems can be easily resolved.

Unlike how we expected, SEFC does not reflect Christianity values or show religious messages on their YouTube channel. As mentioned, SEFC is sponsored by E-Land, a Christian company, and even soccer players in SEFC are known to be Christians [5]. However, on the SEFC channel, we did not see a religious piece that could raise controversies. Whether it is intentional or not, that is appropriate for both the club and its fans.

6. Conclusion

The scientific development and proliferation of ICT and the internet have greatly affected the media industry. It is easier for people to watch the media via various digital devices like smartphones and laptops. They can easily consume not only domestic media content but also media products from foreign countries. As mentioned, people in South Korea can watch English Premier Leagues either live or watch past video recorded games. From the content producer's perspective, they can produce contents that more resemble real life and upload it on popular media platforms like YouTube. We found that there did exist diverse forms and contents of videos even before YouTube became widely used, but YouTube broadened contents, and anyone can freely share their videos. Ordinary people, now referred to as YouTube creators, can create their accounts and produce their own videos with any content they are interested in. This phenomenon is ongoing and has positively affected our lives; YouTube, have become popular and influential all around the globe [6].

However, this study has some limitations. First, it is limited to a case study which lacks contrasts and comparisons with other cases. Case studies can be rich and detailed as it focuses on one specific area, but this study does not compare SEFC YouTube channel with other soccer club channels. The study can be improved if it explores other YouTube channels managed by K-League Club for further understanding. Secondly, this study does not engage the viewers of the SEFC YouTube channel. Public opinion has been important in the media industry, and the YouTube platform is no exception. YouTube has a "comment" section under each video, and insightful results can come out by exploring the comments of the viewers. Lastly, this study does not provide specific suggestions to improve YouTube channels. As mentioned, the SEFC YouTube channel has some weaknesses and few points that can be improved. However, the study does not explicitly provide recommendations on how to manage the YouTube channel better. As the YouTube industry is hyper-competitive nowadays, strategic tactics to make the channel more appealing can help SEFC achieve more in the future.

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