

1. Introduction

The topic of the study is dubbed: “Understanding the impact of technological innovation on marketing strategy in the European football industry: the application of digital marketing theory inside the English Premier League”. The study basis on a qualitative research administered through content analysis on selected English Premier League professional football clubs; therefore, reviewing the club’s websites, annual reports, strategic reports and where possible conduct semi-structure interviews with the retail managers. In the actual methodology, it is evident that all qualitative data was transcribed and coded using themes via an inductive process.

1.1. Background of the Research

As held by Agrawal (2018), technology has continued to impact massively on every sphere of the society. The world is changing, and people can acquire information with much effectiveness, communicate or share it efficiently, and develop more ideas. Thus, technology has shown to have impact to the society at large and across industries such as healthcare, government, business, sports, education and now sports. In fact, inasmuch as it might not be instantly apparent, the role of technology in the sports industry is enormous. For instance, in the industry majority of the processes are speedy and easier, whereas the industry (sports) has continued to record increased attention and revenue due to technological advancement.

The increase in technological advancements or developments has enhanced creativity and innovativeness in the marketing strategies that are used in various sports industries such as the football industry. The concept of “innovative marketing” involves activities and processes that are used in marketing and communicating of new services and products to the targeted group of customers or consumers. Marketing is essential in the developments of the sports activities in the European football industry, and this involves proper communication of the information regarding the service or products to the potential customers or consumers so that they can create an attraction among them. With the increase in technological innovations, companies can conduct thorough research on customer needs, behaviours and market trends (Otero, & Rolan, 2016). Hence this enables them to develop the prototypes or conduct all the required changes according to the market dynamics within the design of the product, its launch in new

places and pricing concepts. The technological innovations in marketing play crucial roles in the exploration of the new markets that help to boost on the volumes of sales of the company's services or products and increase on its level of profitability (Gadiraju, 2016). Most of the marketers aware that the techniques that involve conversational marketing are no longer applicable in the business environment due to the continuous developments in the levels of technology. Emphasizing the concept of brand awareness is essential in the marketing activities since it helps in the creation of the “positive impact” in the minds of the consumers (Premier League, 2015). There are various modes of marketing that have arisen due to constant changes in the technologies used in the European football industry such as social media, websites, and billboards among others.

In the reflection by Agrawal (2018) a number of milestones have been proposed as achievements in the sports industry due to technological innovation. For instance, one of the aspects considered is digital and social media. Due to the enhancement in technology and related improvements, coverage of sports has become much extensive than it has been the case before. In the past times, viewers had to settle on a few channels to watch a game, but today there exists multiple options to pick from. Thus, coverage has widened across the globe.

On the other hand, Agrawal (2018) noted that coverage of sports is accessible, available and with option for full replay. Also, in the past fans who could not catch a live game meant they wait till next day to read highlights on the results in a newspaper; or hear the results from friends. Today, technological innovation has rendered it easy to record, save or replay any desired footage of a clip. In a similar context, media channels that broadcast sports news have the capability to rely on technology to pass information quick than before. Technology has led to quick spreading of news to social media; for instance, platforms such as Twitter, Facebook among others have created accessibility to a large base of fans on sports to share and connect.

In support of the views by Agrawal, a report by Deloitte (2017) asserted that technology has further supported the emergence of fantasy sports as a new digital implementation around the globe. Technology innovation has brought more efficiency towards buying tickets which in the past was considered a hassle. In general, the

problem was that buying of tickets in the past was rather costly and inefficient. As a result of technology, sports fans are capable to access them swiftly; for instance, there have emerged online platforms such as Eventbrite which have rendered ticket buying much easier and convenient throughout the entire ticketing process which attracts more individuals to attend sporting events.

Deloitte (2017) also re-affirm that the contribution of technology is experience and equipment. For instance, technology has enhanced the degree to which one is able to design equipment and apparel. Sports activity require shoes, helmets, gloves, uniforms, and sporting machinery. Due to technological innovation all these have enhanced by becoming more high-tech as well as high functioning. In the same respect, scoreboards have a high definitive functionality, fans can access wireless internet just to mention a few. Further, technology has made it possible for sportsmen to conveniently improve their skills, teams can learn by replaying videos of a past tournament, hence learn how to grow more skills and form.

The advancement of technology is very critical in helping many sport ventures because they are always limited by the inability to increase their revenues from the businesses. Therefore, the clubs are moving towards implementing the marketing strategies that can help them achieve the objective of increased revenues. One of the critical supports in achieving the objective is formulating and implementing a marketing strategy that maintains and enhances the market share of the football clubs. For example, Real Madrid has increased drastically in income over the few last years. The strategy has helped Real Madrid to gain a financial leadership position in the world soccer market throughout the 21st century (Otero, & Rolan, 2016). The marketing strategy can be achieved through the use of advanced technology in the marketing area.

Thus far the contributions of technology on sports have been cited and the findings are justifiable considering facts such as efficiency, speed, recording, and reality augmentation. In a general sense, just like in other sectors technology must have positive effects to the value chain itself which renders the end-user to benefit more due to product quality, experience and utility. However, the present research is specific on profiling the impact of technological innovation towards marketing strategy in the European Football Industry, with a special consideration on English Premier League.

Thus, two variables are evident: technological innovation as the independent variable and marketing strategy as the dependent variable. The two must be addressed in a distinct manner since they do not mean one and the same thing. In addressing the problem statement next, the major issues would be to identify the barriers sports firms face when realigning their technological innovation to cost-effective marketing strategies; the reason is because technological innovation is not a guarantee of sound marketing strategies if the handlers fail to direct it in an appropriate manner. Therefore, the thesis statement for the study is as follows: technological innovation requires proper authorship and manipulation to enable enterprises such as the English premier League to implement a successful marketing strategy. Therefore, a poor harmony between technological innovation and market strategy may result to poor results, high costs, and invaluable outcomes to the target market.

1.2. Problem Statement

The problem review finds on the challenges that are faced by the European Football Industry, especially the English Premier League in their marketing strategies. Persuaded by (Adam et al, 2016) it can be asserted that whereas a number of football clubs in the English Premier League serve as popular brands, there is still little known regarding the manner in which they leverage their brand throughout marketing process. Hence, in the quest to address this gap, the study evaluates retail branding and marketing strategies of existing professional football clubs by gazing into their respective brand equity and value chain. An assessment of the marketing strategy used to present merchandised products and the gaps therein are critical to the study.

1.3. Purpose of the Study

The study seeks to comprehend the significant effects of technological innovation on marketing strategy in the European football industry: the application of digital marketing theory inside the English Premier League.

1.4. Aims & Objectives

In order to have a valuable research with original contribution to both technological innovation on the sports industry, the research aims to demonstrate whether there has been value creation to the English Premier League in the most prominent marketing strategies used by the enterprise.

In line with this, the research objectives of the study include the following:

1. To examine the technological innovation evident in English Premier League
2. To assess the main marketing strategies currently practiced by English Premier League
3. To evaluate the integrated role of technological innovation to marketing strategies adopted by the English Premier League
4. To critically examine the significance of technological innovation towards marketing strategies at the English Premier League

1.5. Research Questions

The main research questions include the following:

- a) How will technology change the marketing strategy of the European Football Industry in future, especially the English Premier League?
- b) What influences changes in marketing strategy through the technological innovation of the European Football Industry, especially the English Premier League?
- c) What happened before technological innovation impacted the marketing strategy of the football industry across Europe, and how does it differ from today?

1.6. Contributions of the Research

The study is an assessment of the relationship between technology innovation and marketing strategy based on a qualitative research process. Thus, it provides a critical review of the issues around the study's variables with subjective understanding of the trends and observations evident in the European Football Industry. Today, the soccer activity is a major entertain process for many across the globe which requires proper marketing strategy to ensure there is value creation. The enterprise such as English Premier League has its fans and investors who seek value from every activity. Therefore, this thesis is more about justifying that technological innovation directly or indirectly builds value creation to the marketing strategy frequently implemented by the English Premier League. Recommendations have also been provided on how technological innovation can be integrated to marketing strategy to drive efficiency, interactions, retention, loyalty and delight to the target market i.e. supporters, investors

and fans of English Premier League. The study is an original contribution to marketers in the entire European Football Industry on how they can customise technology to achieve most effective marketing strategies especially in the digital platform.

1.7. Thesis Structure

The thesis has been developed in five chapters. Introduction, problem statement, purpose of the study, research questions, research objectives, value of the research and contributions of the research are presented in chapter one. A theoretical framework covering digital marketing theory and Decomposed Theory of Planned Behaviour are going has been presented in chapter two. Further, empirical studies on technological innovation and marketing strategies in the European Football Clubs have been featured, gaps in knowledge identified and a summary of key findings. The study relied on a qualitative secondary data process as manifested in chapter three of the research namely, the methodology. The same has been accompanied by the choice of research philosophy, research design, data analysis and process of data validity and reliability. The execution of thematic and content analysis has been featured in chapter four of the research with graphical illustration of key trends in the findings. Recommendations, limitations of the study, implications and areas of future research have been detailed out at length in chapter five of the study. The structure is as shown below:

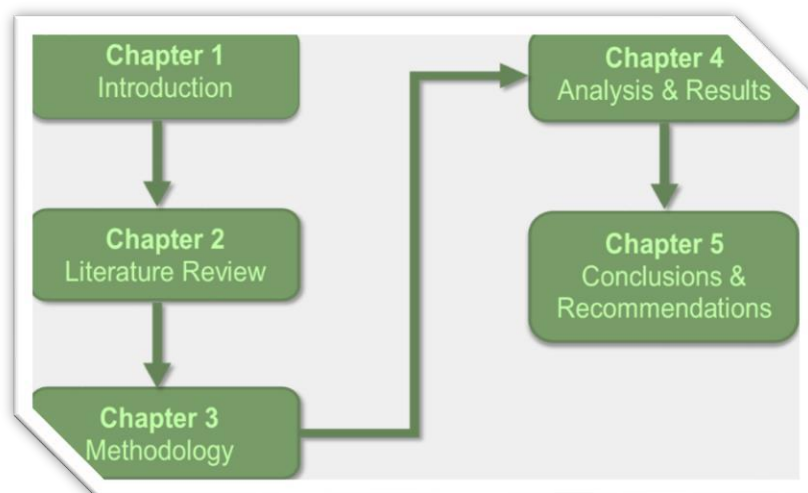


Figure 1. Structure of the thesis Source:
Own Illustration.