



Master's degree thesis

IDR950 Sport Management

A study of the Usage of Social Media in Eliteserien

Veronica Nerland Madsen

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Preface

This master thesis is the final work during the authors six years as a student on Molde University College. The six years consists of three years as a sport management bachelor student, one year as a course student and two years as a sport management master student.

It has been a long and developing process, both theoretical and for me as a person as well. The topic of this thesis came in mind for me during my internship at Molde Fotballklubb, where one of my assignments were to update the club's social media accounts. This internship combined with a social media seminar with James Santomier lead to the topic of this thesis.

This thesis has been developed in cooperation with my supervisor James Santmier, who gave me good guidance, direction and critique, and he shall therefore have honor for his contribution. There are also many more to thank among friends, family and colleagues who have been interested in the thesis and topic, but also given me time and space to work with the thesis.

The people responsible for social media in the clubs interviewed also deserves my gratitude for participating and helping me shed light on the thesis from their perspective during a hectic period. I also hope the thesis and its reflection have contributed to giving them new perspectives.

Veronica Nerland Madsen,

Molde, 2017.

Summary

Over the last decade, social media has had a tremendous growth, including in football clubs. However, despite this tremendous growth, there are limited research on the area and the author therefore wish to contribute to this area of research. In Norway, this research area is practically unexplored, even if the interest for the topic is significant because social media is something all clubs playing in Eliteserien use. This triggered the author's interest in the topic, and the desire to find out how clubs use social media, and what can be done to potentially increase the efficiency of clubs' usage of social media. Based on this, the research question is:

How can elite football clubs in Norway engage their audience/fans in their main social media outlets in a best possible way?

Because of the limited literature on the usage of social media in both Norwegian and European football, this thesis is also based on literature about the usage of social media and social media strategies in businesses and organizations. The author chose to use a framework consisting of seven functional building blocks businesses and organizations can use to better understand, know and engage in social media. This framework was chosen to help answering the research question.

To gather information specific from the top Norwegian football league, Eliteserien, a content analysis of six of the clubs' social media sites Facebook, Twitter and Instagram were conducted. The clubs analyzed were Rosenborg Ballklub, Strømsgodset Idrettsforening, Fotballklubben Bodø/Glimt, Lillestrøm Sportsklubb, Sogndal Fotball and Sportsklubben Brann. Based on the data collected from the content analysis, five of the teams were interviewed to obtain a better understanding of the clubs' social media usage and strategies. The data collected through the content analysis and the interviews were analyzed and discussed in regard to the literature and the framework.

The findings show that even though all the clubs have social media strategies in place, the current engagement level of the clubs' followers are extremely low on both Facebook and Twitter. On Instagram, the engagement level is a great deal higher than on Facebook and Twitter, but fan engagement on all SNS examined have tremendous improvement potential. Therefore, it might be wise of the clubs to review their already existing social media strategies to find out what works effectively as it is, and what has potential for improvement.

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1.0 Introduction

Over the last decade, social media has had a tremendous growth. Due to this growth, businesses have acknowledged the importance of social media, and in today's society, social media usage and marketing are growing strategies for organizations and brands to reach their consumer target groups (Kuzma, Bell and Logue 2014). This applies not only to businesses but also to non-profit sports organizations worldwide. It has also become well known that businesses cannot afford to lose the marketing benefits that in all likelihood will be gained through the usage of social media (Kuzma, Bell and Logue, 2014).

To reach their target groups, sport organizations use a variety of social network sites (SNS). Examples of the SNS being used include Snap Chat, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, Flickr and YouTube. Sport organizations use their social media platforms in various ways, such as generating additional awareness and exposure, marketing, product sales and services such as tickets and licensed merchandise, public relations, customer service, information, fan engagement, driving website traffic and subscribers (Newman et al.2013). Further, from an integrated marketing communication perspective, many sport organizations post content across all of their SNS while others limit their content to a select few SNS.

Therefore, the aim of this study is to identify the variability in social media usage and strategies of a selection of football clubs playing in the Norwegian Eliteserien in order to determine which usage and strategy is most effective in reaching their target markets and to identify “best practices” in social media usage.

1.1 Background

The Norwegian professional football league, Eliteserien, was founded in 1937. It is the top of the Norwegian football league system where the sixteen best football teams in Norway compete. The season lasts from mid-March to mid-November, and all the sixteen football teams play each other twice during the season, both home and away. In total, Tippeligaen consist of 240 matches per season.

The Norwegian professional football league was originally named “Eliteserien”. However, in 1991 it changed its name to Tippeligaen when the Norwegian betting company “Norsk

Tipping” became its main sponsor. After 26 years with the name Tippeligaen, the league has now changed its name back to Eliteserien again from the season 2017.

Every type of media in Norway is currently covering Eliteserien: TV, radio, newspapers, online newspapers, streaming channels and social media. Looking at Norwegian football and the media, and especially the TV rights, NRK had monopoly on the TV rights for Norwegian football until 1994. From 1994 until 2005 NRK and TV2 shared the TV rights. However, since 2006, the TV rights to Eliteserien has been sold to the highest bidder for four-year periods. In the last four-year period, TV2/ Cmore bought the TV rights for 1.1 billion NOK. For the current period, starting in 2017, Discovery and VG paid 2.4 billion NOK for the TV rights for a six-year period (Rasmussen, Kvam and Baardsen, 2015).

By reading through both local and national newspaper, one is quickly given the impression that Eliteserien fill up large parts of the sports pages. In addition to all the media coverage Eliteserien obtains through TV rights, radio broadcasts and newspaper articles, it also obtains a huge amount of attention through social media such as Twitter Facebook, Instagram and Snap Chat, and this has been the case over the last few years.

Over the last decade, social media usage has increased for both consumers and companies. Just over the last four years the number of likes on Facebook pages of several of the Norwegian top football clubs have increased by several hundred percent and the number of Twitter followers for some clubs have increased by approximately one hundred percent (Norsk Toppfotball, 2016). These are significant numbers, and the ability to reach all of these consumers is important, and demonstrates that football clubs are aware of what is needed in order to reach their fans.

Because of this, sport organizations and companies are shifting from using the old model of sport communication to a new model focusing on social media. Newman et al. (2013 p. 25) point out that while the media had a “monopoly and could dictate the what, when and how of distributing sport” in the old model of sport communication, new technologies such as the internet and other modes of digital transmissions created a new model of sport communication. The impacts of this new model are: (1) the traditional mass media have lost a great deal of the power they used to have because fans now can access their favorite team through other options such as live streaming and satellite radio, and (2) sport fans now have the opportunity to consume sporting events whenever (time-shifting) and where ever (Geo-

shifting) they want and not only when the mass media makes it available for them (Newman et al. 2013).

Sport media has expanded from monopoly and dictation of the mass media into sport coverage in real time around the clock. It can be said that sport coverage have shifted from a place where it was the marketers choice of what material to share based on what they wanted to discuss or what they thought the public wanted to hear, to a place where it is the fans that chose the direction of the conversations and further direct the focus of where the marketing efforts should be (Newman et al 2013).

1.2 Research Question

What is mentioned above leads to developing the main research question:

How can elite football clubs in Norway engage their audience/fans in their main social media outlets in a best possible way?

In order to answer the main research question, three sub questions were included. By answering the three sub questions, it will most likely contribute in answering the main research question and further illuminate the nature and dynamics of social media usage in Eliteserien.

Firstly, it is important to examine the football clubs' social media sites and identify how clubs use their SNS to reach their fan base. First sub-question:

What specific SNS do clubs playing in Eliteserien use and to what extent?

Further, it is important to examine the specific social media strategies being used in order to determine the best practice regarding SNS strategies. Therefore the second sub-question is:

What SNS strategies are clubs playing in Eliteserien currently using?

In addition, it is important to examine specific social media strategies football clubs can implement to improve their SNS. Third sub-question:

Which SNS strategies can clubs playing in Eliteserien implement to enhance the reach (engagement) with their consumers/target groups?

2.0 Literature Review

By reviewing the current literature on the subject of social media usage by football clubs, insight into which SNS are currently used and how football organizations can develop a best practice usage of social media will most likely be provided.

While conducting this literature review, the author found that there are a significant number of studies on social media usage and strategies in various industries, but studies on the usage of social media usage in European football, and especially Norwegian football is minimal. Therefore, this research is one of few to provide knowledge regarding how football clubs adapt to the ever-increasing use of social media to develop a best practice.

2.1.1 Social Media

Over the last few years the phenomenon of social media has had an exponentially growth, and there are over 2,206 billion active social media users worldwide (Regan 2015). Therefore, organizations have a huge opportunity to reach thousand and even millions of social media users and consumers by using social media. Sander (2016) defines social media as an online community and a service that allows users to communicate with each other, share information, develop their own and others ideas and gather information in new ways where the users takes turns to be receivers and transmitters. Further, Taprial and Kanwar (2012) agree with this, and in addition, they explain that these online services can take place through the following media: social networking sites, internet forums, blogs, online community sites, bookmarking sites, question and answer sites and so on. Further, Sander (2016) explains that social media differs from traditional media by being more informal and user driven and not controlled by the sender. Based on this, it can be said that social media is a term mostly used to describe online services allowing people and organizations to participate in social interaction by sharing information and content, such as news, videos, text, images and opinions, online. Because of these online services, Kuzma, Bell and Logue (2014) point out that both individuals and organizations have the possibility to communicate with thousands of people through channels that is free to use. Taprial and Kanwar (2012), explain that businesses are becoming more and more aware of the potential and power that lies in adopting social media, and that this opportunity is something businesses cannot afford to miss out on. Further, According to Kuzma, Bell and Logue (2014), sport organizations can use social media to interact with the consumers and fans, connect with, and build relationships with them. In addition, it can also be used for online branding, marketing,

word-of mouth, community building, lending a human face to the business and online reputation management (Taprial and Kanwar 2012).

Mangold and Faulds (2009) explain that organizations can utilize social media to create awareness around their organization, spread information, learn about the opinions and attitudes of their consumers, and gather information about purchase behavior and post-purchase communication and evaluation.

Because of the growing number of social network sites, football organizations have the opportunity to adopt several hundred SNS to communicate with their fans and consumers (Kuzma, Bell and Logue 2014). The most commonly used sites in the world includes Facebook, YouTube, Twitter Google+, LinkedIn and Instagram (Chaffey 2016). Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) define social network sites as applications that allows users of these sites to connect by creating profiles with personal information where they can share this information with friends and colleagues. This can be information such as messages, photos, videos, audio files and blogs. Users can also invite people to see their profiles. Sander (2016) explains that the major SNS sites in Norway are Facebook, Wikipedia, YouTube, blogs, Twitter and Instagram.

2.1.2 Top Social Network Sites

As said earlier, there are several hundred SNS football organizations can choose to adopt. The most used sites in Norway however are Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Snap Chat (Ipsos 2016).

2.1.2.1 Facebook

In 2004, Facebook was founded by college students for college students as a way to stay in touch with each other when they were not on campus (BBC, 2012). The development of Facebook has been remarkable, and today it is seen as the largest and most popular online SNS available with its 37 different languages and over 1.59 billion active users in the world (The Statistics Portal 2015a). In Norway, Facebook is used by 79% of the population (Ipsos 2016).

Facebook can be defined as a free SNS that allows its users to create their own profiles that they can use to stay in touch with family, friends and colleagues, send messages and share photos and videos (What Is, N/Aa). Facebook itself states the following: “Facebook’s mission is to give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected.

People use Facebook to stay connected with friends and family, to discover what's going on in the world, and to share and express what matters to them" (Facebook, N/Aa).

Further, every Facebook profile contains a wall that can be described as a virtual bulletin board. On the wall, the profiles owner or friends/followers can leave messages in forms of text, photos or videos (What Is, N/Aa).

In addition to what is mentioned above, Facebook has several areas of use in conjunction with public features. It can be used as a marketplace, to create groups based on common interests, publicize and invite guests to events, create pages to promote a specific organization or topic, and so on (What Is, N/Aa). Newman et al. (2013) explains that Facebook pages are profiles created in a way that allows organizations to provide and manage an official presence on Facebook.

According to Newman et al. (2013), there are five key factors organizations should consider when they are going to create an effective Facebook page for its organization. Firstly, a Facebook page is a two-way communication tool, meaning that organizations need to interact in conversations with their followers and try to engage them. Further, the page should be used as a place to promote and sell the organizations products by for example giving Facebook fans a Facebook-only discount on tickets or merchandise. In addition, Newman et al. (2013) point out that it is important to participate in some kind of action. This can be actions like sharing a link or photo in a competition etc. Organizations need to get their fans to participate in actions to keep them entertained and to keep them on their Facebook page. Further, it is important to use not only text when interacting with fans and consumers. The usage of photos and videos is important to engage consumers. Lastly, Newman et al. (2013) state the importance of having a Facebook page that stands out visually.

2.1.2.2 Twitter

Twitter can be defined as a "free social networking microblogging service that allows registered members to broadcast short posts called tweets" (What Is N/Ab). According to Twitter (N/Aa) itself, their vision is to give everyone the opportunity to create and share ideas and information immediately, without obstacles. This can be done by tweeting messages that is maximum 140 characters long. The tweets can include photos, videos or a link to any web content. The users can use Twitter to follow other people or companies,

other people follows the user, and the user can read, reply, tweet and retweet others tweets (Kingston 2013). Twitter (N/Aa) claims that their services are useful because it gives their users the opportunity to discover the most recent news about subjects they cares about by following people or organizations related to these subjects. By following other users, their messages will turn up on the users' home page, making it an easy way to discover new information by only checking the Twitter timeline. The total number of active Twitter user are 305 million (The Statistics Portal 2015c) and in Norway Twitter is used by 26,6% of the population (Ipsos 2016).

In regard to businesses, Twitter (N/Ab) states that businesses have a great opportunity to reach and connect with their global audience due to the hundreds of millions of Twitter users and the fact that there are over 500 million tweets shared daily. Further, Kingston (2013) proposes twelve steps businesses may take to successfully implement Twitter in their social media marketing plan. Firstly (1), it is extremely important to present the business's brand through an account and profile with the same look and feel as the other online tools the business is using, including account name, profile photo, profile header and username. Next (2), Kingston (2013) explains the importance of building a strong foundation, and completely finish the Twitter account profile, including location, website and bio. Further (3), the business needs to start following other people and businesses. When doing so, it is important to be careful of whom the business follows because the Twitter experience is defined by who the business is following and not by who is following the business. In general, following people within these categories is a good starting point: costumers; competitors; business partners, contractors, suppliers and vendors; businesses located in the same area and businesses in the companies' professional network (Kingston 2013).

The next step (4) according to Kingston (2013), is to start talking. It can however be smart to listen to what other is saying first and then join the conversation when it feels comfortable to join. A conversation can be joined in five different ways; by tweeting, reply, mention, direct message or a retweet. Further (5), companies need to develop a communication plan for Twitter that consider what the company should be talking about on Twitter. In general, Kingston (2013) believe it should be a mix between what the business target audience wants to hear and subjects and elements that promote the business. It is also important to answer the followers question and share information that is useful. In addition (6), companies can use Twitter as a way to drive traffic to their own website by sharing links (Kingston 2013).

When a company has made good progress with using Twitter, the next step (7) is to connect the company's online presence. According to Kingston (2013), this can be done in three ways. First, by adding the Twitter account information among with the account information to other SNS on the company's website, by adding a timeline of the company's Twitter messages to the companies own website and by making it easily accessible for the company's followers to share their content from the website on Twitter. Further (8/9), the company should include photos and videos in the Tweets for the simple reason that in some situation a photo or video can say more than thousand words (Kingston 2013). Next, Kingston (2013) explains that it might be wise for businesses to organize the people they follow into conversation list in order to separate the Twitter accounts the business is following in to groups (10). The groups can be as follow: customers, potential customers, people inspiring the business, and so on. Further, Kingston (2013) points out that businesses might want to use hashtags to expand its audience (11). The usage of hashtags identifies a common theme or topic. Lastly (12), Kingston (2013) describe the pinpointing of potential local customers as important. Most companies are dependent on local customers to survive, and Twitter can be used as a tool to locate costumers and potential costumer in the business local area.

2.1.2.3 Instagram

Rouse and McLaughlin (2012) describes Instagram as a free SNS for photo sharing, while Instagram (N/A) it selves, describe their SNS as "a community built on the power of visual storytelling" and that users can tell their story through the usage of appealing photos, videos and captions. By having an Instagram account, users are able to upload, edit and share photos and short videos with other users. They can share their content through the Instagram website, or other SNS like Facebook, Twitter and several others, or through email (Rouse and McLaughlin 2012). Instagram have more than 300 million monthly active users (The Statistics Portal 2015b), and in Norway 37.5% of the population use Instagram actively (Ipsos 2016).

Instagram (N/A) claims that their SNS can be used by businesses "as a way to showcase their products and services in a rich visual context". Moreover, it is when businesses share content that are well designed, on-brand and driven by a clear objective they do the best on Instagram. Further, Instagram (N/A) explains some basic tips businesses can use on Instagram. These are tips like selecting an account name that easily is connected to the business; using the company logo as a profile picture; find out how long the caption text

should be by testing various length; usage of hashtags, but no more than three of them; engage people by asking question, commenting and liking; include the location when sharing a photo and use the image tools on Instagram. Hemley (2013) further suggests to follow the company's followers back, using Facebook to leveraging picture contest on Instagram, rewarding the followers with for example discount codes and show behind the scenes photos and videos.

In addition, Instagram (N/A) propose three tips for businesses who is getting started with Instagram. Firstly, Instagram (N/A) stresses the importance of starting with a goal that is clear and a concept that is creative. This is so because if the company want ads that is compelling, it have to have a clear concept connected to a clear aim. It is important to design ideas and concepts that are in line with the company's campaign goal, whether it is to drive the brands awareness or obtain website clicks. Further, Instagram (N/A) states that it is essential to celebrate the brands look and feel. This can be done by making the company's ads branded and keeping a strong "brand consistency across campaigns". In order to make the business recognizable a connective element can be established across the videos and photos shared on Instagram. This can be connective elements like a specific photographic style or an identifiable color palette or composition. Lastly, Instagram (N/A) explains that businesses should focus on how they craft their posts while being on Instagram. This is so because in all likelihood, well-crafted ads will improve the value of the business on Instagram. By creating well-crafted ads, they will most likely draw people in, keep them interesting and make them want more.

2.1.2.4 Snapchat

According to Rouse and McLaughlin (2012), Snapchat can be defined as mobile app where users can send and receive photos or videos that self-destructs after 10 seconds or less. In Norway, Snap Chat are used by 47.1% of the population (Ipsos 2016). Gantz (2015) explains that Snapchat is the fastest-growing social media network and that the network has over 100 million active daily users. However, only two percent of the users are businesses. Due to the lack of competition, there is therefore a great potential for businesses to stand out and shine on this platform. Further, Gantz (2015) points out that one of the positive futures with Snapchat is that the timing of when to post content is not of great importance. This is so because the posts does not drown in every other posts being shared, which can be experienced on other sites like Facebook etc. The posts stay unopened until the individual user itself wants to open it, within an accrual of 24 hours (Gantz 2015).

In the opinion of Gantz (2015), there are five steps to take to successfully integrate Snapchat into a business's social media strategy. Firstly, content need to be developed, and it should not be just any content, it need to offer the followers something if they are going to keep following the company. This can be content such as valuable tutorial about the company's area of expertise, behind the scene glimpse, showing the company's product in action, asking the users for pictures or videos of them in conjunction with the product and then send out snap that is featuring them, and so on. Further, Gantz (2015) highlights the importance of being social on social media, meaning that it should not be a one-way street of promotion. This does not mean that the company should answer every snap they receive, but it can be done occasionally to show the fans that they are important for the company. This will also let the followers know that it is a real person or team behind the brand. In addition, Gantz (2015) explains the importance of being creative when developing content. This can be done by for example drawing on the snaps, get people's attention by posting a series of photos and revealing something at the last photo, use several snaps to tell a story, and so on. Further, Gaintz (2015) points out several actions companies can take in order to get the users to take actions. This can be an exclusive Snapchat discount code, starting a story on Snapchat that continues on the company's website, and so on. Lastly, it is important to build an audience on Snapchat. Sharing the company's snap code on other SNS can be one way of going about this.

2.1.3 Social Media Marketing

The development of social media has resulted in changes regarding how organizations engage in marketing. According to Drury (2008), marketing through traditional media like television, news websites or newspapers, is a one-way communication where the organizations are delivering a message. Whereas marketing through social media is more about interacting in conversations with the consumers and building a relationship with them. In other words, the usage of social media in marketing have changed the communication from one-way communication to two-way communication. Taprial and Kanwar (2012, p. 40) describe social media marketing as "the way businesses and non-profit organizations use social media effectively to build relationships through trust, useful content, helpfulness and authority". Thompson et al. (2014) explain that these new online platforms used for marketing have provided organizations with the opportunity to connect with their consumers on an entirely different level than what was possible through traditional marketing. Taprial and Kanwar (2012) further say that because social media are so easily available to people,

it is an ideal platform for companies to use for marketing such as selling, advertising, sales promotion, public relation, direct marketing and so on, to reach their target audience. In addition, they (Taprial and Kanwar, 2012) believe that social media most likely is the most effective and inexpensive tool companies can use to reach the target audience, and the different social network platforms can be used to influence the costumers, expose the business products even wider, promote the businesses products and services and also give exclusive discounts on SNS in order to spread the word on new products.

Due to the rapidly increasing usage of social media and social network sites, Drury (2008) claims that several industries were unprepared for how to apply the usage of social media to their organizations strategy, and therefore they have not been able to take advantage of the benefits associated with using social media. Further, Thompson et al. (2014) say that even though social media has grown tremendously and received increasingly attention, numerous of marketers are unsure of how they can integrate social media into their marketing efforts and what benefits it can give their organizations. In addition, Meadows-Klue (2008) points out that even though marketers insists that it is necessary with new ways of approaching social media, traditional tactics are being used by several marketers when they approach the new medium social media.

Despite the issues related to the growth of social media in marketing, there are several benefits related to social media marketing. Michaelidou, Siamagka and Christodoulides (2011 p. 9) believe that the usage of social media for marketing will most likely result in building a direct relationship with the business customers, “increase the traffic to the their webpage, identify new business opportunities, create communities, distribute content, collect feedback from costumer”, and generally more support to the business brand. In addition, DeMers (2014) highlights the following benefits with social media marketing if it is done right: increased brand recognition, improved brand loyalty, additional opportunities to convert, a higher conversation rate, higher brand authority, increased incoming traffic, reduced marketing costs, higher rankings on search engines, richer customer experience and improved customer insights.

2.1.4 Previous Research

Craig (2015) studied the importance of social media as a means of communication for football clubs and found that it is extremely importance as a means of communication. This is so due to the global reach football clubs have by using social media platforms as a way of

communication, compared with other ways of communication they could have used. Further, Craig (2015) claims that there are several clubs that focus mainly on their own home page and are not giving much focus to social media. In addition, clubs might still be using social media just as a publishing tool for their own homepage, and are therefore not using social media in an effectively way.

According to Kuzma, Bell and Logue (2014), an increasingly number of clubs are becoming fully aware of the fact that social media can be used as a way to enhance and expand their business, whether it is for marketing or a way of communicating directly with their fans. Their study (Kuzma, Bell and Logue 2014) found that even though almost every football club in the major football league in Europe have some kind of social media presence, how effectively the usage of social media is, differs between the leagues. Further, Kuzma, Bell and Logue (2014) findings show that world-known clubs do not always know how to use the potential they have to communicate effectively through social media, and at times smaller clubs are more effectively in their social media usage to market effectively to their fan base.

Araujo, de Carlos and Fraiz (2014, p. 250) looked at top European football clubs Facebook pages to find out if “football clubs succeeded in managing the potential for interactivity”. They (Araujo, de Carlos and Fraiz 2014) found that there are a mild connection between the UEFA ranking of a club and the amount of fans a club have and the effectiveness of the clubs interaction on their Facebook page.

McCarthy et al. (2014) researched the benefits and issues associated to social media regarding how to manage relationships and brand presence. According to them (McCarthy et al. 2014, p .181), several clubs agreed that: “further development of social media strategies had potential to deliver interaction and engagement, community growth and belonging, traffic flow to official web sites and commercial gain”. There were however two main concerns among the clubs when developing their social media strategies. McCarthy et al. (2014) explains that firstly clubs were concerned about how to control both the brand presence and image in social media and how to respond to occurring opportunities in social media regarding the access fans have to affect the brand. The second concern related to the difficulty with appropriate balancing between strategies that at one hand can give a short-term revenue, and at the other hand can contribute to build a long-term brand loyalty.

Thompson et al. (2014) analyzed how a minority national sport organization in New Zealand developed and maintained their social media strategy. They (Thompson et al. 2014) found that sport organizations need to apply, monitor and evaluate creative online strategies on various SNS in order to make certain that the needs and expectations of the organizations stakeholders are met. The strategies Thompson et al. (2014) refer to, involves activities such as constant conversation and engagement with followers and fans, material gathered from “behind-the-scenes” and the usage of promotions. Further, Thompson et al. (2014) state that to develop a social media strategy that is successful, the involved stakeholders need to be aware of several factors. These are as follows; the position social media have in relation to the organization, who in the organization is responsible for their social media strategy and how it will be managed and how the organization’s social media strategy will be measured. In addition, the stakeholders involved need to understand what their fans are expecting of the organization’s presence on social media.

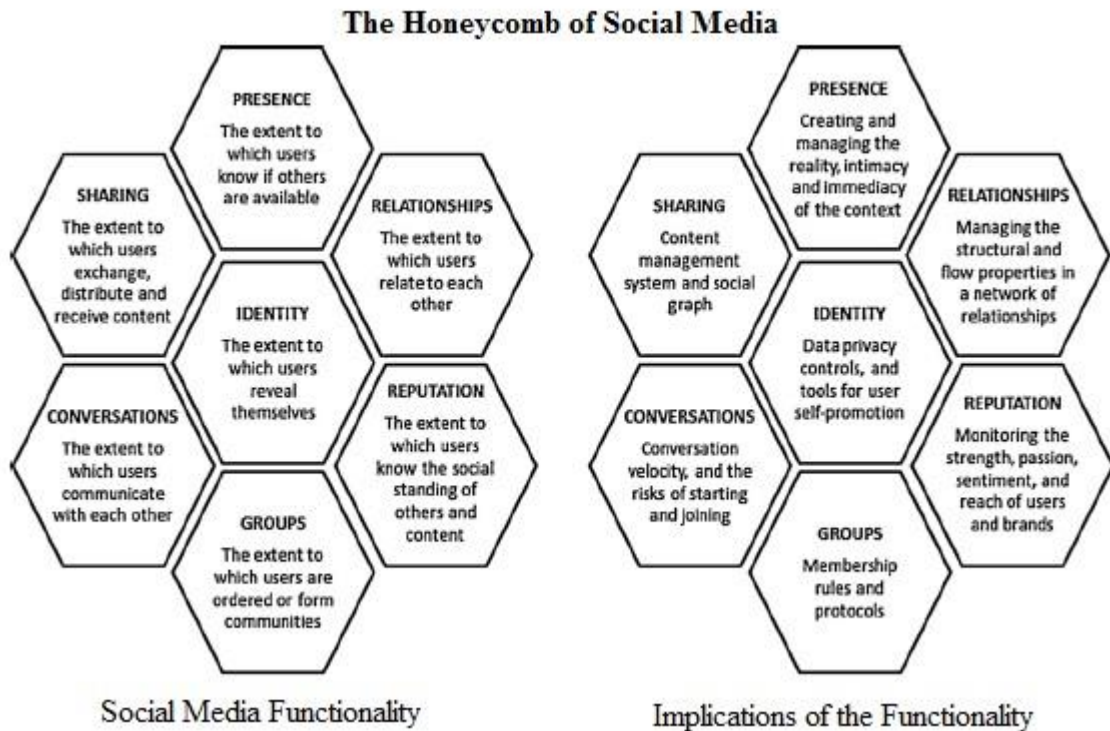
3.0 Developing the Research Framework

In this section, relevant theories and frameworks related to the research topic will be presented.

3.1 The Seven Functional Blocks of Social Media

Kietzmann et al. (2011) developed a framework consisting of seven functional blocks businesses and organizations can use to understand, know and engage in social media in a better way. These building blocks are identity, conversations, sharing, presence, relationships, reputation and groups. Kietzmann et al. (2011) framework explain that how firms should use and engage with social media depends on to which extent the different social media activities focus on all the blocks, or just some of them. In addition, Taprial and Kanwar (2012), point out that in order to get the maximum benefit out of the different social media platforms, this framework can be used by studying the focus of each social media platform in order to better be able to understand, use and engage properly on the different platforms. This framework gives several recommendations on how firms should develop social media strategies for understanding, responding and monitoring various social media activities (Kietzmann et al., 2011).

Figure 3.1: The Honeycomb of Social Media



Source: Kietzmann et al. 2011.

Figure 3.1 shows the seven functional building blocks in the framework, both a specific side of social media user experience and the implication it might give firms (Kietzmann et al 2011). Further Kietzmann et al. (2011, p. 243) points out that “these building blocks are neither mutually exclusive, nor do they all have to be present in a social media activity. They are constructs that allow us to make sense of how different levels of social media functionality can be configured”.

3.1.1 Identity

In the opinion of Kietzmann et al. (2011), the identity block represent peoples willingness to share and reveal their personal information online. This can be personal information such as name, age, gender, location, profession and so on. On several SNS, identity is seen as the core of the sites. This presents several implications that is fundamental for firms looking to establish their own SNS or strategies in order to be able to engage with their consumers and other sites. One of these fundamental implications is privacy. Kietzmann et al. (2011) believe that even though people willingly share their private information on SNS such as Facebook and Twitter, that does not mean that they do not have serious concerns about how firms use this information for things such as surveillance and a source for data mining. In

some cases, people have no problem with sharing their personal information while in other cases people want to remain completely anonymous. Liuski (2012), agrees with this, and further states that users often are concerned about that the private information they share on social media are going to end up in the wrong hands. Therefore, it is important for firms to understand the balance people wishes to maintain between protecting their privacy and revealing their identities while selecting social media tools. By not obtaining this balance, Kietzmann et al. (2011) claim that this might lead people to cyber-bullying, lack of accountability by the users and opening for comments that is off topic and offensive.

3.1.2 Conversations

The second block is conversations. As stated by Kietzmann et al. (2011, p. 244), the conversation block in the honeycomb of social media “represent the extent to which users communicate with other users in a social media setting”. Liuski (2012) points out that this block represent various ways communication can take place on social media. Several SNS are developed mainly for communication and conversations between users, either between individuals or in groups, but it can also be one-way conversations like for example blogging. Kietzmann et al. (2011) believe that these conversations occur for several types of reasons. People engage in conversations through tweets, blogs, etc. in order to meet people with similar tastes or opinions, to find love, to build up their confidence, or to be at the most advanced stage of development of new ideas or topics that is trending. Others use social media as a mean to market their own message, to be heard and to try to positively influence the cases they believe in.

There are several implications related to format and protocols for firms who are looking to track or host these conversations. According to Kietzmann et al. (2011), this is so because of the huge amount of conversations that takes place and the diversity of these conversations. Twitter for example is about short messages in a real-time perspective in order to create awareness around a case that matters, making the conversation important and not the identity. In contrast, blogs are mostly about staying connected and not so much about the conversations (Kietzmann et al. 2011).

Liuski (2012) further argues that there may be significant implications for firms related to both the content and the differences in frequency of the conversations because of the number of new conversations and the direction of the conversations can change without any further

explanation. An example of this can be to which extent a conversation about the firms products are favorable or not.

Further, Kietzmann et al. (2011) explain that in order for companies to make sense of the puzzle of Twitter conversations, they are dependent on the right tools and capabilities in order to connect all the dots. On the other hand, these tools might not be necessary when making sense of the content in blogs, which often are more detailed, with richer content and a fair amount of fewer posts.

Lastly, Kietzmann et al. (2011) highlight the issues regarding companies themselves starting or manipulating conversations. There are bot risks and benefits connected to companies getting involve and engaged in conversations. Kietzmann et al. (2011) state the importance for companies to not interfere and run over conversations that is not theirs in the first place. However, if companies knows when to interfere and when not to in order to show their consumers that they care, there can be benefits by joining the conversation.

3.1.3 Sharing

According to Kietzmann et al. (2011) the sharing block in this framework represent to which extent users of social media distribute, exchange and receive content. This can be content such as videos, photos, links, deals, slide presentations, locations, tweets and so on. In the opinion of Kietzmann et al. (2011), sharing is looked at as a way of interacting on social media, but whether or not sharing of content leads to users wanting to converse or build relationships with other users is connected to the functional objective of the different SNS. An example of this is that the objective of sociality for Instagram are pictures while it for LinkedIn are careers (Liuski, 2012).

Kietzmann et al. (2011) claim that an example of a firms sharing can be seen in Groupon's distribution of discount coupons via Twitter, mobile apps, email and their own homepage. However, for the coupon to be valid numerous of people needs to agree to purchase the product the coupon is valid for. With an offer like this, it will in all likelihood lead to people sharing the news across their SNS and email in order to ensure the product the coupon is valid for. As a consequence, SNS are full of users who are connected to each other by sharing content.

Kietzmann et al. (2011) argue that there are two implications for firms that engages in social media that is fundamental related to the sharing block in the framework. Firstly, it is

important for the firm to know the common interests of their users, or to find new objectives that indirectly will connect their shared interests. The second implication Kietzmann et al. (2011) explain is to which extent the content can or should be shared. It is important that the content does not offend anyone or violate the privacy of the users or copyright laws.

3.1.4 Presence

The building block presence in the framework “represents the extent to which users can know if other users are accessible”, according to Kietzmann et al. (2011, p. 245). The building block includes knowing if other users are available and knowing where they are. If people are available can be seen by status lines like “available” or “hidden”. Further, it is possible to know where other users are by them checking in on the location they are through SNS such as Facebook, Foursquare, Twitter and so on. Facebook also lets you know which friends that are close by (Liuski,2012). Further, Kietzmann et al. (2011) explain that not all SNS find the building block presence important. LinkedIn for instance, does not find it important to know who else is online or knowing where the other users physical location is.

Kietzmann et al. (2011) argue that the implications related to the building block presence is the need for firms to be aware of the importance of knowing about their users’ availability and their location. This is so because in some cases it is important for the users to interact with each other all at once in real-time. If this is what the users desire, Kietzmann et al. (2011), suggest SNS should offer a status line indicator and some kind of a mechanism where these users can come in contact with and interact with each other. Further, Kietzmann et al. (2011) point out that firms should examine if its users want to have a selective presence on some of their SNS, where they have the possibility to stay visible for some people and hidden for others.

Further, Kietzmann et al. (2011) explain another implication for the presence building block, which is that it is connected with characteristics of other building blocks in the framework. The building blocks presence is connected with the other blocks relationships and conversations. An example is that firms need to be aware that users’ presence on social media can be influenced by the closeness and the instant involvement of the relationship. In addition, Kietzmann et al. (2011) argue that the conversation will in all likelihood be more fluent the higher the level of social presence is.

3.1.5 Relationships

In the framework, Kietzmann et al. (2011) describe the relationship block as to which degree the users are able to relate to other users. Further, Liuski (2012) says that this building block explains what kind of relationship users share through social media. This can be relationships like friends, family, fans or followers. In this framework, to relate means that two users or more are able to have some kind of connection leading them to either converse, sharing content, meet up or list each other as friends or as fans. The type of site the SNS is, often determinate how its users are connected, how information is exchanged and what type of information that is exchanged. On one hand, the relationships can be really formal, regulated and structured, like what is seen at LinkedIn. On the other hand, relationships can be informal and contain little or no structure as seen in a numerous of blogs (Kietzmann et al. 2011). Further, for some SNS, such as Twitter and YouTube, relationship have an extremely small or no role at all. According to Kietzmann et al. (2011), there is a general rule saying that for SNS that do not value identity also do not value relationships greatly either.

Kietzmann et al. (2011) explain that there are numerous implications related to the relationship block in the framework. Due to this, the structure and flow properties found in the social network theory is used in order to describe and explain how important different relationship characteristics are. The structure property represent the number of connections and the position the users have in their online relationships. Kietzmann et al. (2011) argue that a user will be a more influential member in a network the larger the network of the user is, and the more central the user is in the network. In the user relationship block, the flow property represents which types of resources that are connected in individual relationship and the way these resources are used, exchanged or transformed. The strength of a relationship are described by the flow property. Kietzmann et al. (2011, p. 246) point out that “strong relationships are long-lasting, and effect-laden, while weak ones are infrequent and distant”. Further, the flow property says if more than one relationship are connecting the users, they have a multiplex relationship.

As a consequent, Kietzmann et al. (2011) claim that both the flow and the structural properties are important if the relationship block are valued by a SNS. It is important for firms to understand how to build and maintain relationships if they want to engage with users on various SNS. For instance, like at the SNS Linked in, authenticity should be

validated for the users because the relationships on the site needs to be formal. However, if the objective of people engaging on a SNS is to increase the amount of relationships in their network, it might be necessary to show more information in order to create meaningful relationships. Nevertheless, it is really important that if more information is shown, that does not neglect the responsibility the firms and SNS have regarding identity and privacy (Kietzmann et al. 2011).

3.1.6 Reputation

The building block reputation, is explained by Kietzmann et al. (2011) as to which extent users can identify both their own and others standing on various SNS. Mostly, reputation revolve around trust, but depending on which SNS that are used, the reputation block can have different meanings. On Twitter for example, the reputation of people can be explained as result of how many followers a user has. A higher amount of followers means a higher reputation. Yet, the reputation of an individual user on LinkedIn is determined by the endorsements from other users, while the reputation on YouTube is determined by the number of views (Liuski, 2012). Further, Kietzmann et al. (2011) point out that content as well as the person determine the reputation of users. The reputation of content on Facebook can be determined by the amount of likes while it on YouTube can be determined by the amount of views or ratings. Liuski (2012) also points out that a good reputation often leads to trustworthiness.

In the opinion of Kietzmann et al. (2011), the reputation block has several implications for firms wanting to engage in social media in an effectively way. For instance, by only looking at the number of followers a firm has, they only get an indicator of how popular the firm are, and not how many of their followers that actually reads their posts. Therefore, firms that values their reputation need to choose a system for measuring their reputation on their SNS. Based on this, Kietzmann et al. (2011) explain that firms should look at the needs of the community and choose their measurement system based on that. For example, if it is the quality of the post that is important for the community, it would be appropriate with a rating system. However, if it is time and activity that are important for the community, it would be appropriate with a system that measure the number of post over time.

After the appropriate measurement system for reputation is identified, it is important to find an evaluation tool that is appropriate. Kietzmann et al. (2011) believe that evaluation tools should be based on either intelligence of the crowd, like a rating system or objective data,

like number of followers or views. One way of doing this is to use social media services that can measure content from over 80 SNS that is generated by users. By doing so firms can monitor how many times they are mentioned on various SNS, how much of the content are positive or negative mentions, the passion of the users and the reach of the posts (Kietzmann et al. 2011).

3.1.7 Groups

Kietzmann et al. (2011) describe the building block groups in the framework as the possibility users have to create communities and sub-communities. The more follower, friends and contact there are in a social network, the more social it becomes. Liuski (2012) agrees with Kietzmann et al. (2011) findings. Further, Kietzmann et al (2011) state that there exist two different kind of groups. The first one is groups where individuals can place friends, followers and fan into groups they have created themselves, for example by using hashtags. The second one is groups related to football clubs and any other organization or company. These groups can either be open for everyone, closed, where approval is required or secret, where an invitation is needed. Facebook groups are an example of this, where an administrator who manage the group, approve request to join the group and invite others to join.

According to Kietzmann et al. (2011 p. 248), it is valuable for firms to examine which groups their community supports, “and how these should affect their engagement with other honeycomb pieces.

3.1.8 The four C’s

Based on the honeycomb framework to understand social media, Kietzmann et al. (2011, p. 249) introduce a guideline on “how firms should develop strategies for monitoring, understanding, and responding to different social media activity”. The guideline is called the four C’s and consist of cognize, congruity, curate, and chase.

3.1.8.1 Cognize

When using the honeycomb framework, Kietzmann et al. (2011) explain that the first thing a firm should do is to identify and understand its social media landscape. By doing so, the firm has the opportunity to unveil the implications related to social media functionality and engagement for understanding its customers. Further, it is important for the firm to

determine if there are any conversations about them on SNS, and if so, on which SNS these conversations are, and which building blocks from the honeycomb framework these conversations are enabled. Further, Kietzmann et al. (2011) state that it is important for firms to be aware of the main influencers, those making statements on key expert topics. Kietzmann et al. (2011) also point out the importance of researching its rivals to see if they are active, and to discover how rivals will respond to their social media strategy.

3.1.8.2 Congruity

Continuing, in the opinion of Kietzmann et al. (2011), a firm is depended on developing strategies that is suitable for different SNS and that are aligned with the overall objective of the firm. To do so, a firm needs to focus on the core honeycomb block for each individual SNS. The plans should include ways to increase costumer happiness and costumer input, integration between the social media strategy and other marketing strategies, and key activities and conversations to help firms obtain trust from the community and key influencers.

3.1.8.3 Curate

Further, Kietzmann et al. (2011) explain that businesses need to select, organize and look after the social media actions and content, including develop their knowledge to understand how often and when businesses should join conversations and SNS and who should represent the firm online. In addition, businesses should develop policies explaining how its employees should look after and act when engaging on different SNS so that uncertainty does not occur.

3.1.8.4 Chase

Lastly, companies should search their environments in order to identify and understand the speed and direction of the flow of information that may affect their current or future market position. This can be following interactions and conversations involving a specific firm, brand, individual or product (Kietzmann et al. 2011). There are several analytic tools for social media, like Google Alert, Tweet-Deck and Social Mention, that can help companies with this process.

3.2 The Social Network Media Plan

Newman et al. (2013) explain that when developing a social media strategy, there are three major questions organizations need to ask themselves in order to develop an optimal social media plan. These questions are 1) what is our message and purpose of being here? 2) who are we trying to reach? and 3) what medium shall we use to reach our targets?

According to Newman et al. (2013), the first thing an organization must do is to identify the message they want to share through their social media channels and how the social media plan will be integrated into the overall marketing plan. When this is done, the organization can move onto the next step and identify the audience. In the opinion of Newman et al. (2013), the social media marketing plan needs to contain specific aims that have results that can be measured in order to know how the organization can draw visitors to their SNS. Related to identify the audience, one of the most desirable element on social media for organizations is how accessible it is for them to identify people based on their interests. Newman et al. (2013) explain that in some cases users even identify their interest themselves for example by tweeting about themselves as a fan of a specific team or club. Organizations can benefit from this by identifying their audience and fans, which also is potential buyers.

Lastly, Newman et al. (2013) state that organizations need to identify the medium they will use to spread their message, which type of SNS they are going to use to reach their audience. From a marketing standpoint, it is important for organizations to allocate its resources in a manner that gives the greatest impact. In the opinion of Newman et al. (2013), whichever way it is looked at, Facebook will most likely be the most important SNS of any plan for social media because of the enormous number of users, and thereby the potential number of fans and followers' organizations have the opportunity to reach.

Further, Newman et al. (2013) claim that even though it is up to the organizations to decide how they allocate their resources on their various SNS, and that the communication medium has changed, it is still important to have a carefully drafted message to its audience that is true.

4.0 Methodology

This chapter describes the methodology, in which way the data is collected, the reason for the data collection, how the data was interpreted, with what perspective the data was interpreted and why this is the best approach to answer the research question.

This thesis seeks to determine how Norwegian elite football clubs engage their audience/fans on their main social media outlets, and figure out how to engage them in a best possible way. To answer the research question, a content analysis was conducted in order to get an understanding of how elite football clubs were engaging their fans, and if necessary, to find a best practice for the clubs to engage their fans. Based on the content analysis interviews were conducted with the persons responsible for social media in the selected clubs in order to get an even better understanding of the football clubs usage of social media.

To determine the most effective method and identify “best practices” related to the clubs’ usage of social media to reach their target groups and consumers, six teams playing in Eliteserien the season of 2016 was studied. Two teams from the top, two from the middle of the league standing and the two teams who moved up from the league under Eliteserien from the 2015 season. These teams are, in ranked order, Rosenborg, Strømsgodset, Lillestrøm, Bodø/Glimt, Brann and Sogndal.

The structure of this chapter is as follows; the perspective of the data sampling, the type of data, the process of sampling and collection, reflection over the trustworthiness of the data, and ethics and limitations regarding this research.

4.1 Subjects and design

After the research question was clearly identified and determined, the research design best suited for the research question needed to be determined. According to Veal and Darcy (2014), to determine which research design to apply, is closely related to the research question. Further, Johannessen, Tufte and Kristoffersen (2010) explain that the process of collecting data from the reality need to be shown in the research design, and that the aim with a research design is to determine how the research is going to be accomplished and who and what are being examined in an early phase. Because this research is examining many variables through a narrow selection, Jacobsen (2005) describes it as an intensive research. This study was carried out as an intensive design when the key employees responsible for social media in the selected clubs was interviewed. The intensive design was preferred due to the researcher’s wishes to examine numerous variables and bring light to numerous details and nuances, in contrast to an extensive design which is more general and examines few variables but many entities. The intensive design was appropriate because this research is trying to obtain an as complete picture and understanding as possible of the use of social media in Eliteserien and how it can be optimized.

In the next step the author determined if the research question was descriptive or/and explanatory. Because this research wishes to describe the complex phenomena social media usage in Eliteserien and then explain what can be done to improve the usage and develop a “best practice”, the design of this study is therefore descriptive. Jacobsen (2005) describes it as a cohort study where the same sample is examined at different times. When trying to describe the current situation in the period of the research, this design was used. Based on this, this research tries to explain how social media usage in clubs can improve and how to develop a “best practice”.

By conducting a content analysis and interviewing the respondents, information was collected in a qualitative way, through words. The benefits of the qualitative method is the increasing ability to gather new information. It underlines that proximity leads to a better understanding of other people’s understanding of the real world. This has possibly resulted in supplementary information and data to the framework of the research, validation or invalidation of academic information or changes in relation to the predetermined framework, suggestions and expectations (Jacobsen 2005)

4.2 The Qualitative Approach

After the qualitative research approach was chosen, the next course of action was to determine in which way the information should be collected.

Firstly, a content analysis of the clubs’ usage of SNS was conducted, and specifically of Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. To obtain information that was as reliable as possible, the first two and the middle two weeks of the 2016 season was analyzed. The SNS Facebook, Instagram and Twitter was analyzed because these are the most used sites of both clubs and people in Norway (Ipsos 2016 and the SNS of the clubs 2016). Snapchat is also a very extensively used SNS for both clubs and people in Norway. However, because it is only possible to see what have been posted the last twenty-four hours and it is impossible to go back in time and see what has been posted earlier, it is extremely difficult and time-consuming to analyze this SNS based on the same conditions as the other chosen SNS.

Based on the content analysis of the clubs SNS, interviews were conducted with the persons responsible for social media in the selected clubs in order to get an even better understanding of the football clubs usage of social media.

4.2.1 Content Analysis

A content analysis of the six clubs Facebook, Instagram and Twitter pages were conducted through a four weeks' period, the first two weeks and the middle two weeks of the 2016 season. The analysis was conducted with the purpose of obtaining valuable information from the clubs SNS. A huge amount of information was collected during the data collecting period, and for the author to understand as much as possible of the information, it was important to structure the information in a best possible way.

Leedy and Omrod (2013) introduce several steps that explains how to structure a content analysis. First, the author identified the content that were going to be analyzed, namely the clubs Facebook, Twitter and Instagram pages. This is Leedy and Omrod's (2013) first step, namely identifying the material to be analyzed. Further, the second step on Leedy and Omrod's (2013) content analysis were carried out when the author coded various characteristics for each of the different SNS that were going to be examined. These were number of followers and posts, type of posts, type of content and the most engaging content. Next, the content was broken down into smaller items and analyzed individually. These were average number of daily posts, likes and comments (also retweets on Twitter); average type of posts: text, photos, videos or events; average type of content: activity, statements, active interaction, live updates, history, marketing/sales and other content; lastly the most engaging content were examined. This is Leedy and Omrod's (2013) third step in conducting a content analysis. Lastly, the author examined the content that were analyzed for characteristics that were connected to each other. This is similar to the last step of Leedy and Omrod's (2013) method of conducting a content analysis.

4.2.2 Open Individual Interviews

Based on the content analysis of the clubs SNS, it was desirable to conduct interviews with the persons responsible for social media in the selected clubs to get an even better understanding of the football clubs usage of social media. Jacobsen (2005) describes interviews as conversations between the interviewer and the respondent, where the content of the interview is barely decided in advance. Further, he (Jacobsen, 2005) explains that there are two types of interviews to choose between, individual open interview or group interviews.

Individual open interviews were chosen because of the costs related to a group interview with people based over half of Norway. Further, due to the costs to conduct these interviews face-to-face, the time consumed by phone-interviews and tape recordings and difficulties with the subjects and the authors schedule, it was decided to conduct most of these interviews via email. One of the interviews were a phone interview. The disadvantages of conducting the interviews in this way are that one loses the ability to observe how the interview objects appear and it is more difficult for the interviewer to see when he/she is crossing boundaries that make the objects to close up. Studies also show that it is easier to lie over an email interview rather than a face-to-face interview. On the other hand, an email interview can be seen as a positive experience for the objects because the objects feel more relaxed when being separated from the interviewer and it can lead to more open answers (Jacobsen, 2005).

The persons responsible for the clubs SNS were contacted via email to find out if it was possible to conduct an interview with them regarding the clubs' usage of social media.

Further, when determining how open or structured the interviews was going to be, it was clear for the author that some form of structure was needed since the interviews were to be conducted via email/phone. The author chose to use what Jacobsen (2005) calls "a medium degree of structuring" to obtain an as optimal quality of the information produced as possible and to guide the objects to the desired topics. Therefore, the objects received an email with three main questions to answer, with some talking points containing topics the author wished to address. If something was unclear in the objects answers or the author needed more detailed information, a follow-up email was sent for clarification.

Furthermore, the author does not see any intention of concealing the purpose of the interviews, as the usage of social media in Eliteserien should not be a sensitive/intimate topic for the respondents.

4.2.2.1 Sample

Table 4.1: Interview table

Interview number	Name	Representing	Role	Date	How
4	Jørgen Steneseth	Rosenborg Ballklub	Communication Manager	03.05.2017	Phone
3	Magne Jordan Nilsen	Strømsgodset Idrettsforening	Media and communication manager	02.05.2017	E-mail
2	Niklas Aune	Fotballklubben Bodø/Glimt	Sales manager	12.04.2017	E-mail
1	Ståle Lindblad	Lillestrøm Sportsklubb	Media manager	08.04.2017	E-mail
5	Gorm Natlandsmyr	Sportsklubben Brann	Media manger	12.05.2017	E-mail

Source: The author

The sample of this thesis is all the research units the author wishes to make observations about. In this case, the sample is limited to all the 16 clubs playing in Eliteserien in Norway. The population is therefore all the 16 clubs that played in Eliteserien the season of 2016. The author chose to examine a selection of the actual population because it would have been too resource- and time-demanding for the author to carry out a content analysis and interviewing the persons responsible for social media in all 16 clubs.

Therefore, the author chose her selection as follows: to obtain an as credible result as possible, the top two teams, and the middle two teams playing in Eliteserien the season of 2015 was picked out to examine, and in addition the two teams that pulled up to Eliteserien for the 2016 season from the league ranked as number 2 in Norway, after Eliteserien. In a ranked order, these clubs are Rosenborg Ballklubb, Strømsgodset Idrettsforening, Lillestrøm Sportsklubb, Bodø/Glimt, Sogndal Fotball and Sportsklubben Brann.

The aim with a qualitative research like this is to elaborate on concepts and phenomena, such as the usage of social media in Eliteserien. The author chose theoretical generalization, meaning to generalize data from a smaller selection of research entities to a more theoretical level. The research is carried out in this way because the author chose to have few research

objects, and they are chosen because the author thought it would constitute the most trustworthy selection. However, it may be difficult to affirm that the authors selection is representative for the entire population because it may be a weakness that the author has such a small selection. Nerveless, the author looks at it as a strength since it in all likelihood is the most trustworthy selection in relation to the research question.

4.2.2.2 The Interview Process

Based on the results from the content analysis, categorized content, interviews were conducted with the persons responsible for social media in five of the six clubs. It was impossible to get in contact with one of the clubs, Sogndal Fotball. Due to high costs if these interviews were held face to face, and time- and resource-consuming if they were held as a telephone interview, it was determined to conduct the interviews via email. One of the interviews were however held as a phone interview due to the busy time schedule of the communication manager. The interviews were conducted throughout the period from 12th of April to 12th of May 2017. If the author had the opportunity, face-to-face interviews would have been preferred. However, due to high costs, time-limitation and resources, email interviews were chosen. Table 4.1 shows an overview of the interviews conducted.

4.3 Reliability, Validity and Trustworthiness

Throughout this thesis, data has been collected. The collected data needs to meet the requirements of reliability and validity. Meaning that the collected data needs to be reliable and trustworthy(reliability) and valid and relevant(validity) (Jacobsen, 2005).

Validity says something about how valid and relevant the collected data is. Meaning, that the research measure what the author wants to measure, and that data collected contributes to answer the research question. Jacobsen (2015) explains that validity can be divided into three types of validity; internal validity, external validity and trustworthiness. Internal validity looks at to what extent the research has coverage in relation to the conclusions the author draws. Is it possible for the author to see the connection between the collected data and the conclusions made?

External validity looks at to what extent the results from a limited area research is valid in other contexts (Jacobsen 2005). Is it possible for the author to generalize the findings from the research? This research focused only on Norwegian elite football clubs and their usage

of social media. That can make it difficult to generalize the findings and transfer them to contexts with other characteristics. Nevertheless, it is not impossible.

According to Jacobsen (2015), trustworthiness looks at the results of the research and to which extent they are certain and true. Certain means that the research results are backed up by the evidence. True means that the research findings correctly reflect the researched situation. The trustworthiness of this research was influenced by that the content analysis only analyzes six of the sixteen clubs playing in Eliteserien, and that interviews only were conducted with five of the sixteen teams. If the author had conducted a content analysis and interviews with all the sixteen teams in Tippeligaen that would most likely have improved both the validity of the collected data and the generalization.

4.4 Ethics

When collecting data for this research, the author encountered several ethical aspects and moral dilemmas that must be considered when data is collected. This applies especially when the interviews were conducted and the author needed to be in contact with other humans. Taking the ethical aspects into consideration were an ongoing process throughout the whole research, which Jacobsen (2005) emphasizes as important.

Firstly, the author addressed the ethical aspect of hiding the purpose of the research or not for the respondents. The author chose not to hide the purpose of the research from the respondent because the author did not see it as a threat to the reliability of the result if the respondents knew the purpose of the research.

Next, when establishing contact with the respondents, the author explained informed approval for interviewees, which is Jacobsen's (2005) first fundamental requirement in connection with ethical aspects. This means that persons participating in the research need to choose themselves whether to participate or not, the participation needs to be voluntary, and the respondents choose to participate or not based on themselves knowing the dangers and benefits such a participation may cause (Jacobsen 2005). The respondents choose if they wanted to participate or not based on the information the author sent out regarding the meaning of the interviews. However, one of the six clubs did not respond to the emails, and therefore only five of the six researched clubs from the content analysis were interviewed.

Jacobsen's (2005) second criteria is the requirement of privacy. This criterion points out that the respondents have the right to privacy, and that it is not all in the respondents' life that needs to be investigated, like sensitive and intimate information. This research focuses on the clubs the respondent represented and not the respondents themselves, and in the authors opinion, the topics investigated were not perceived as offensive for the respondents. Further, the participants had the choice to participate anonymous if they wanted to.

Lastly, Jacobsen's (2005) third criteria is the requirement for correct presentation of data, meaning that the respondents have the right to be accurately repeated. To get an as accurate result as possible, the author therefore tried as best as possible to repeat the respondents from the context their statements were given. Having the interviews on email helped the author uphold this criterion. To avoid abuse, the emails were deleted afterwards.

4.5 Limitations

As mentioned earlier, there are some limitations to this research. Firstly, only five clubs were interviewed although it was preferable to interview all six clubs from the content analysis. This was so because of limitations in time and resources as well as the interview objects' busy schedules. The interviews were conducted during the start of the season, which is a really hectic period for the clubs, making it difficult to get in touch with several of the clubs. Another limitation in this research is that the interviews were conducted through email instead of face to face. Since the interviews could not be conducted face to face, the author lost the opportunity to observe the interview objects while being interviewed, and was therefore not able to read their body language, and also the ability to ask follow-up questions while the interview objects answered the questions. Follow-up questions had to be answered at a later time when the interview objects might be in a different state of mind than the first time they answered the interview questions.

Another limitation is found in the framework. Because there is written few research papers about the usage of social media and social media strategies in European football, there were also few frameworks to choose from and little written about each of them. Therefore, a limitation in regard to the research framework is the limited usage of it in previous research.

5.0 Results

Through the results the author looks at the data gathered through the content analysis and interviews in a systematic manner that allows the author to be able to extract as good information as possible related to the examined topic. The results are the basis of the analysis that further is going to answer the research question(s). It is suitable to start with looking at which social network sites the clubs use and to which extent.

5.1 Social Network sites

In July 2016, all the six Norwegian top clubs playing in Tippeligaen that was investigated had a presence on the following social network sites: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat. In addition, Lillestrøm has their own YouTube channel, Rosenborg their own Flickr account and Brann their own LinkedIn account, but these channels are rarely used.

However, because it is extremely difficult and time consuming to analyze each clubs' presence on Snapchat, the author decided not to analyze that specific SNS. Further, because not all the clubs have their own YouTube channel, Flickr account or LinkedIn account, the author decided not to analyze these specific SNS either.

The average number of followers/fans on each of the examined SNS are 69,647 on Facebook, 11,366 on Twitter and 13,849 on Instagram. However, only two of the six clubs have figures above the average on Facebook and Twitter, and only three of the six clubs have figures above the average on Instagram. As seen in Table 5.1, Rosenborg have approximately 50% of all the clubs' followers on both Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. On the other side, four of the six clubs have in total less than 30% of the total fans on Facebook and on Twitter, and three of the six clubs have approximately 15% of the total fans on Instagram.

Table 5.1: Number of fans on the clubs official Facebook, Twitter and Instagram pages.

No.	Club	Facebook	Twitter	Instagram
1st	Rosenborg	216,456	36,000	39,900
2nd	Strømsgodset	36,948	4,504	15,500
7th	Lillestrøm	25,418	7,545	5,823
8th	Bodø/Glimt	38,552	4,304	4,191
15th	Sogndal	20,329	4,240	3,081
16th	Brann	80,176	11,600	14,600
Total		417,879	68,193	83,095

Source: The author from the clubs official SNS.

5.2 Posts on Social Network Sites

During the data collection period of four weeks, the six clubs posted a total of 1389 posts/tweets on the three different SNS Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. That makes the average per week 347 posts, and the average per day approximately 50 posts divided between the six clubs. As seen in Table 5.2, about 55% of all the posts are tweets posted on Twitter, while on the other hand, less than 10% of the posts are posts on Instagram. In other words, there is a big difference in the number of posts that are posted on the various SNS.

Table 5.2: Number of posts on all the clubs official Facebook, Twitter and Instagram pages.

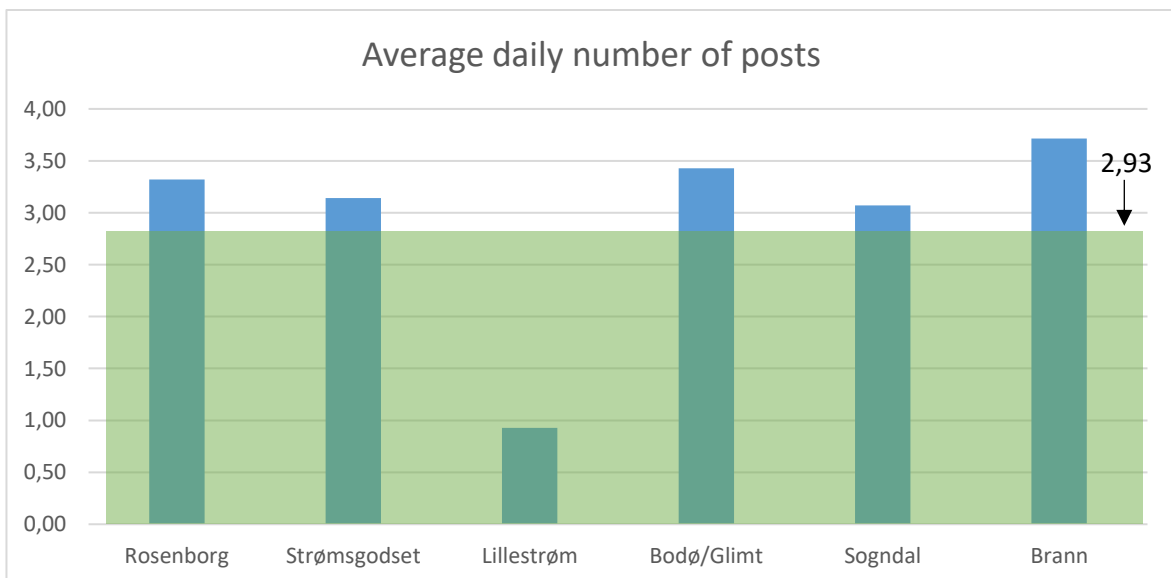
Social Network Site	Total number of posts
Facebook	493
Twitter	767
Instagram	129
Total:	1,389

Source: The author from the clubs official SNS.

5.2.1 Facebook

When gathering data during the content analysis, the author found that the clubs' upload posts to Facebook daily. As seen in Figure 5.1, the clubs uploaded an average of 2,9 posts per day on Facebook during the time of research. Further, Figure 5.1 shows that all but one club, Lillestrøm, have a post frequency above the average of 2,9 posts a day. Lillestrøm on the other hand had a post frequency under 1 post per day during the time of research.

Figure 5.1: Daily posting averages on the clubs official Facebook pages.



Source: The author from the clubs official Facebook pages.

When looking at the clubs Facebook followers and their participation, it is seen in table 5.3 that post average of “Likes” and of comments are 843 “Likes” and 42 comments per post. In all the six analyzed cases, the number of “Likes” is considerable higher than the number of comments. This was as the authors expected in the first place. This is so because the difference between a comment and a “Like” is that all the follower must do when liking a Facebook post is a single mouse click or a pad click. When commenting, the follower needs to think about what to write.

The club with both the highest average of “Likes” and comments is Rosenborg, with 2449 “Likes” and 123 comments per post. Their average is a great deal higher than the next club on the list, Brann, with an average of 752 “Likes” and 24 comments. On the bottom of the list Sogndal is found, with an average of 358 “Likes” and 14 comments. If this is seen in relation to the clubs’ number of followers, this is also as expected.

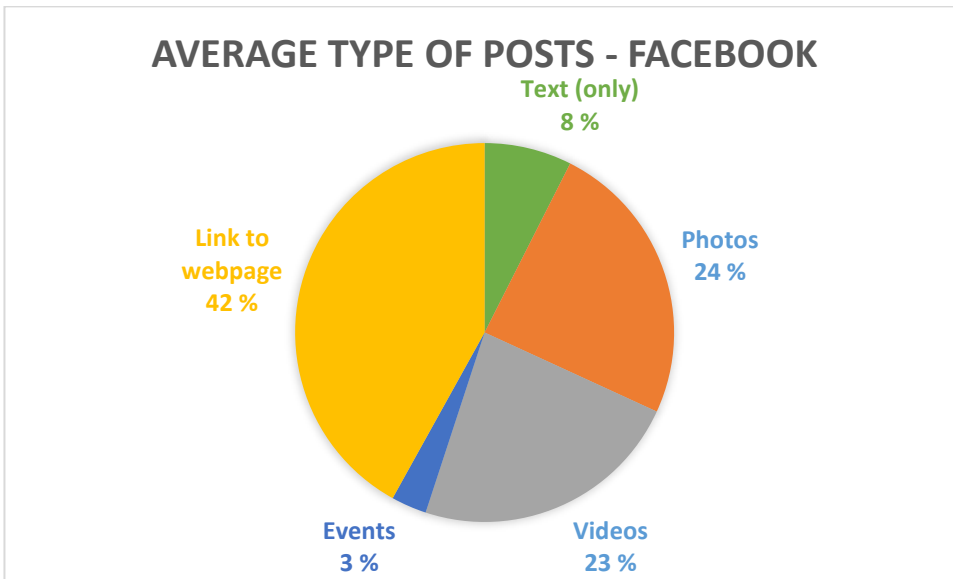
Table 5.3: Number of posts on all the clubs official Facebook pages.

No.	Club	Number of posts	Average Likes	Average comments
1 st	Rosenborg	93	2449	123
2 nd	Strømsgodset	88	435	20
7 th	Lillestrøm	26	454	47
8 th	Bodø/Glimt	96	612	20
15 th	Sogndal	86	358	14
16 th	Brann	104	752	24
Average		82	843	41

Source: The author from the clubs official Facebook pages.

Further, in order to evaluate the degree of fan engagement on Facebook, the author looks at the type of posts the clubs posted on Facebook and which type of content engaged most followers. Regarding the type of posts, the author gathered all the clubs Facebook posts during the research period, to see what type of posts the clubs posts. On Facebook, the posts ranged between text only, photos, videos, links to the clubs’ homepage and events. As seen in Figure 5.2 underneath, there is one type of posts that appears a great deal more than the rest of the type of posts. That post type is links to the clubs’ own homepage, with a 42% average between the clubs. On the other hand, the content type that is posted the least is events, with only 3% of the total post types. This may be because the clubs only have one game per week, and therefor they do not have as many events as they have other updates during a week. It should also be said that not all the clubs made an event on Facebook for all their home games.

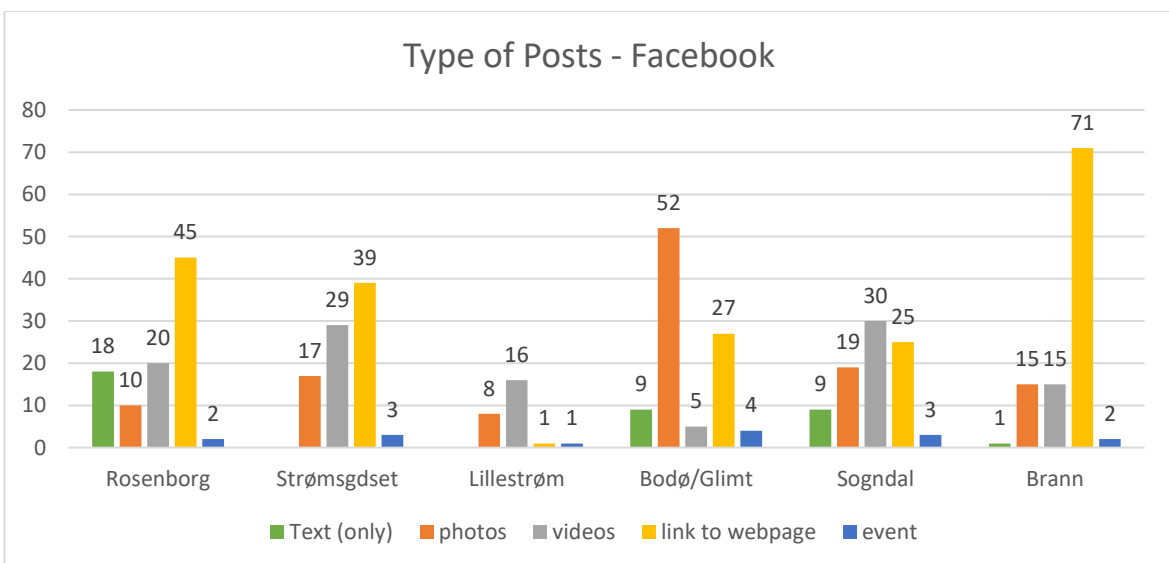
Figure 5.2: Average type of posts on the clubs official Facebook pages.



Source: The author from the clubs official Facebook pages.

Further, as seen in Figure 5.3, there is a difference in witch posts is posted most among the clubs. Three of the clubs follows the average, while the other three clubs go against the average in one or the other way. The three clubs that follows the average is also the three largest clubs in terms of number of followers. Among the three smaller teams, Lillestrøm stands out, because they go directly against the norm whit links to the team’s homepage as their least posted type of post. Further, Bodø/Glimt stands out because their most posted type of post is photos. The enormous number of photos posted by Bodø/Glimt is the reason why photos is so high on the average posts on Facebook, as seen in Figure 5.2.

Figure 5.3: Type of posts on the clubs official Facebook pages.



Source: The author from the clubs official Facebook pages.

Regarding which type of content engages most followers, the author looked through all the content the clubs posted during the research period, and identified seven different content types. The different content types are listed in Table 5.4, and their frequency is shown in Figure 5.4 and 5.5. Among the seven listed categories, three of them appears more frequently than the rest of the categories on an average basis. As seen in figure 5.4, these are – in ranked order – activity, marketing/sales and statements from players and coaches. On the bottom of the table the least posted category is found, namely history updates. Further, the category that needs the most interaction from fans and followers in terms of participation and response, namely active interaction, is ranked as number four, while live rappers and other updates both are ranked at as the fifth most frequent posts.

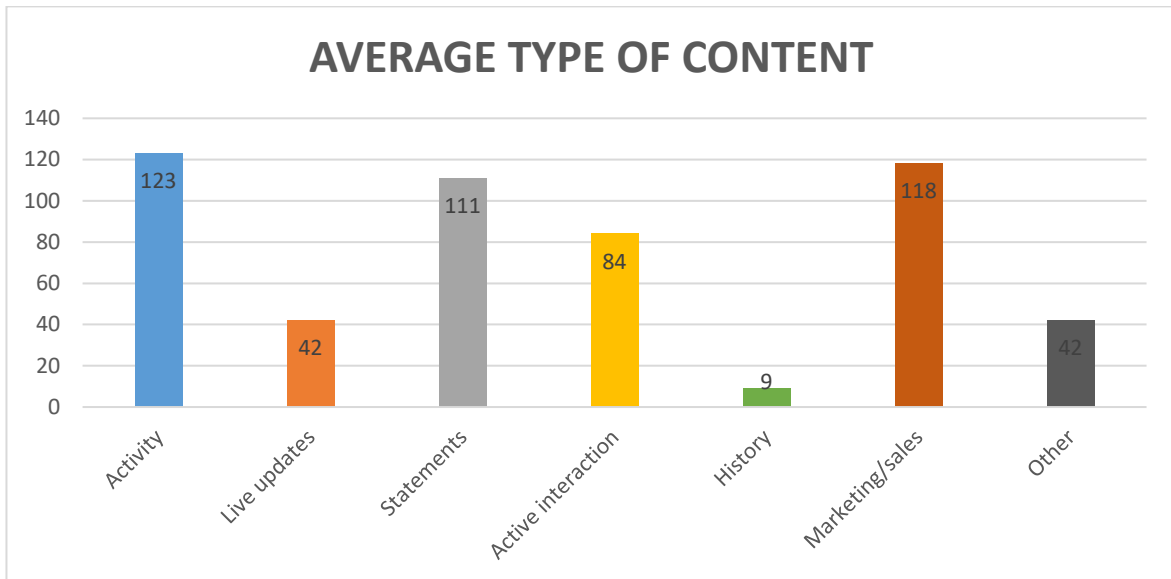
Table 5.4: Categories of posts as a function of content.

Category	Features
Activity	Updates from training, pre-matches, matches, post matches, live updates from matches
Statements	Statements from players and coaches
Active interaction	Pols, contests, greetings, questions, behind scenes, volunteer related updates
Live updates	Real-time match updates
History	Updates with historical features
Marketing/sales	Offers, discounts, ticket sales, product sales, package prices, online store, etc.
Other	Updates about youth team, constructions, newsletters, etc.

Source: The author.

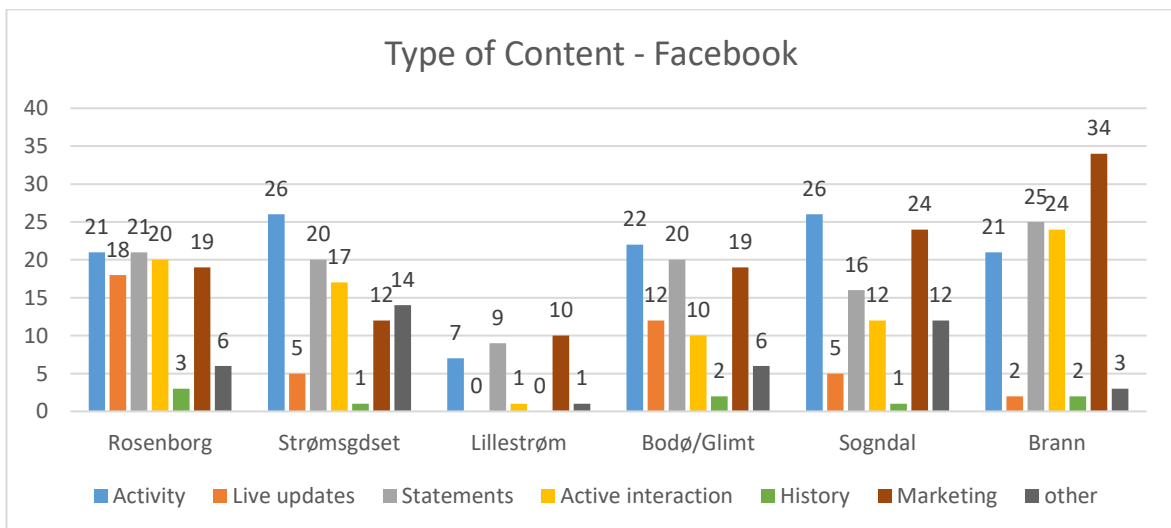
Looking at the different clubs and which content they post, most of them almost follow the rank found in Figure 5.4. However, some of the clubs differ in that one or several of their categories posted stands out from the rank found in Figure 5.4. As seen in Figure 5.5, Lillestrøm does not have a single live match update on Facebook during the research period. Further, the club has no update with historical features either, and they only have one active interaction post as well. Another club that differs from the ranked categories is Brann, who posts a much higher number of marketing posts than rest of the clubs does. The club also only have two live match updates on Facebook during the research period.

Figure 5.4: Average type of content on the clubs official Facebook pages.



Source: The author from the clubs official Facebook pages.

Figure 5.5: Type of content on the clubs official Facebook pages.



Source: The author from the clubs official Facebook pages.

Lastly, the author looked at which type of content that leads to the most participation and response from the clubs' fans and followers. The content receiving the most participation from the fans and followers, in a ranked order, is as follow:

1. Winning games
2. Signing new players/coaches
3. Behind the scenes updates of players/coaches and club life

During the interviews conducted the author examined the subjects of which type of content the subjects perceived as the most popular content. Almost all the interview objects highlighted the following three topics as the most popular topics in relation to content: signing new players/coaches, winning games and updates about players currently playing for the clubs.

“There is very high engagement around player logistics, everything concerning the team and team selection. However, the engagement is highest around player transfers” (Interview 4).

“When the team wins, it is very easy to engage our followers on Facebook. After the team wins we will post a photo of the team celebrating with the text “Victory!”. This is what engage the most followers” (Interview 2).

“News posts about new signings or contract extensions achieve highest commitment with us. We have also experienced great engagement on match day, especially when it is going well” (Interview 3).

“Posts relating to sport is the most popular with us, both signing of new players and interviews with players who have excelled” (Interview 1).

This was so for both Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. As seen, the author’s findings is accurate with the interview objects statements.

5.2.2 Twitter

All clubs playing in the Norwegian Eliteserien have a presence on Twitter, and in July 2016 the researched club had an average of 11,366 fans on their official Twitter pages. However, as seen in Table 5.5, there are only two clubs with a number of fans that is higher than the average, namely Rosenborg with its 36,000 followers and Brann with its 11,600 followers. On the bottom of the list regarding the number of followers on Twitter Sogndal and Bodø/Glimt is found with 4,340 and 4,304 followers.

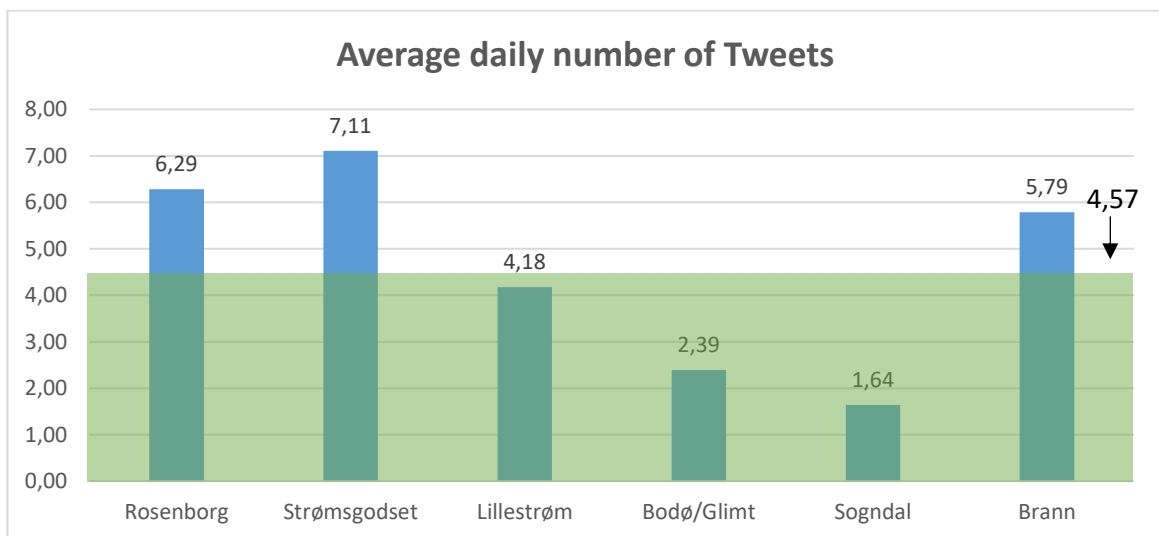
Table 5.5: Number of followers on the clubs official Twitter pages

No.	Club	Number of followers
1st	Rosenborg	36,000
2nd	Strømsgodset	4,504
7th	Lillestrøm	7,545
8th	Bodø/Glimt	4,304
15th	Sogndal	4,340
16th	Brann	11,600
Average		11,366

Source: The author from the clubs official Twitter pages.

Further it was found that all the researched clubs posted tweets daily. As seen in Figure 5.6, the daily average number of tweet per club per day was 4,57. Further, Figure 5.5 shows that half of the clubs have a tweeting frequency over the average, with Strømsgodset with the highest tweeting frequency with an average of 7,11 daily tweets. On the other end of the list, the last three clubs have a tweeting frequency under the average, where Sogndal has the lowest tweeting frequency with an average of only 1,64 tweets daily.

Figure 5.6: Average daily number of Tweets on the clubs official Twitter pages.



Source: The author from the clubs official Twitter pages.

When looking at the clubs Twitter followers and their participation, it is seen in table 6 that the average “Like” per post is 7, the average comment per post is 0,47 and the average retweet per post is 1,61. For all the clubs the following applies: The average “like” is higher than both the average retweet and the average comment, and the average retweet is higher than the average comment. This is as the author expected because the only thing needed to

“Like” or repost a tweet is a single mouse click, while a comment need some amount of thinking as well.

As seen in Table 5.6, The club with both the highest average “likes” and average retweet is Rosenborg with an average of 17,5 likes and 3,3 retweets per tweet. The club with the highest average comments is Lillestrøm with 0,9 average comments per tweet. Regarding to both average “likes”, comments and retweets, Sogndal is found on the bottom of the list with 2,4 likes, 0 comments and 0,2 retweets on average. Further, Table 6 shows the frequency of the clubs retweeting other Twitter users’ tweets. None of the clubs have an average of over 1 retweet per day, but four of the clubs ranked highest in the league is close. In the other end of the table, Brann is found. The club has not retweeted a single other Twitter users tweet during the research period.

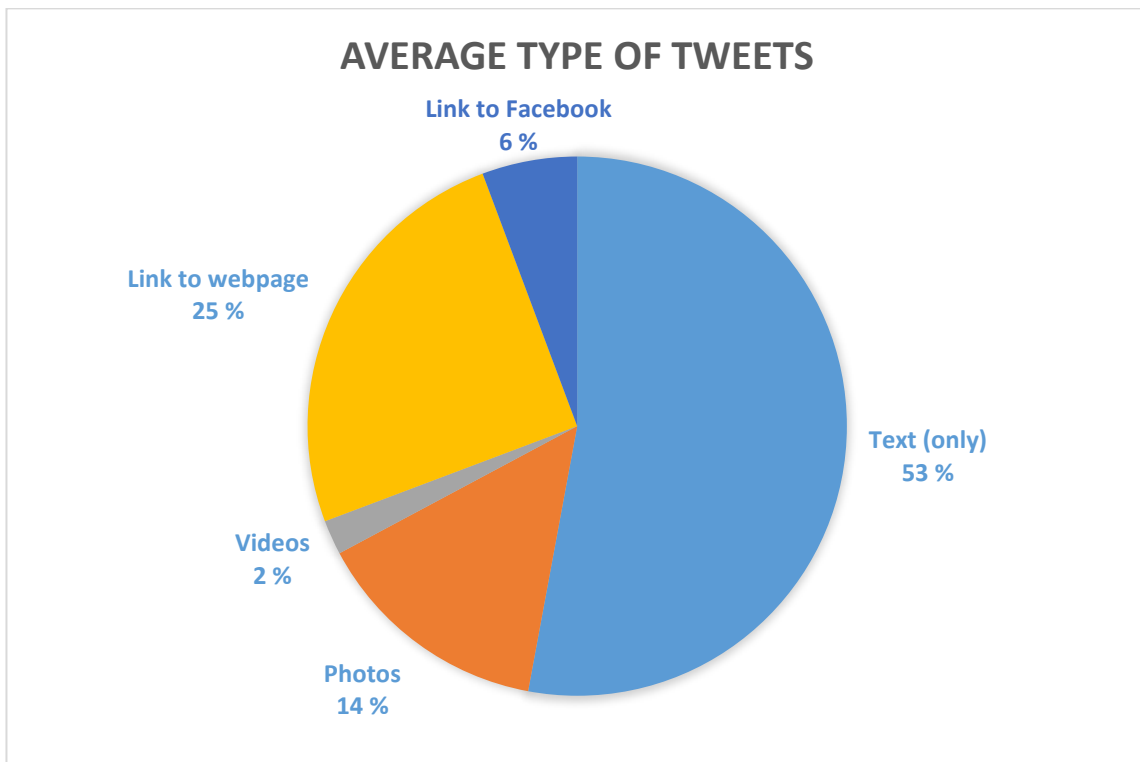
Table 5.6: Number tweets, retweets, average likes and comments on the clubs official Twitter pages

No.	Club	Number of tweets	Number of retweets of others	Average Likes	Average comments	Average Retweets
1st	Rosenborg	176	18	17.48	0.58	3.29
2nd	Strømsgodset	199	16	3.35	0.42	0.96
7th	Lillestrøm	117	17	6.70	0.93	1.56
8th	Bodø/Glimt	67	20	4.86	0.60	2.13
15th	Sogndal	46	4	2.35	0.00	0.19
16th	Brann	162	0	7.24	0.27	1.55
Average		128	13	7.00	0.47	1.61

Source: The author from the clubs official Twitter pages.

Further, to evaluate the degree of fan engagement on Twitter, the author looked at the type of tweets the clubs’ posts on Twitter and which type of content engages the most followers. Regarding the type of posts, the author gathered all the clubs’ tweets during the research period, to see what type of tweets the clubs tweeted. The tweets ranged between text only, photos, videos, and, links to Facebook and links to the clubs’ homepage. As seen in Figure 5.7, there is one type of tweets that are tweeted with a much higher frequency than the rest of the tweet types, namely tweets consisting only of text, with 64% of the all the tweets in total. On the other end of the figure, the tweet type videos are found, with only 2% of all the tweets in total. This finding is what the author thought initially because of how Twitter initially was designed to write short and precise messages and news updates.

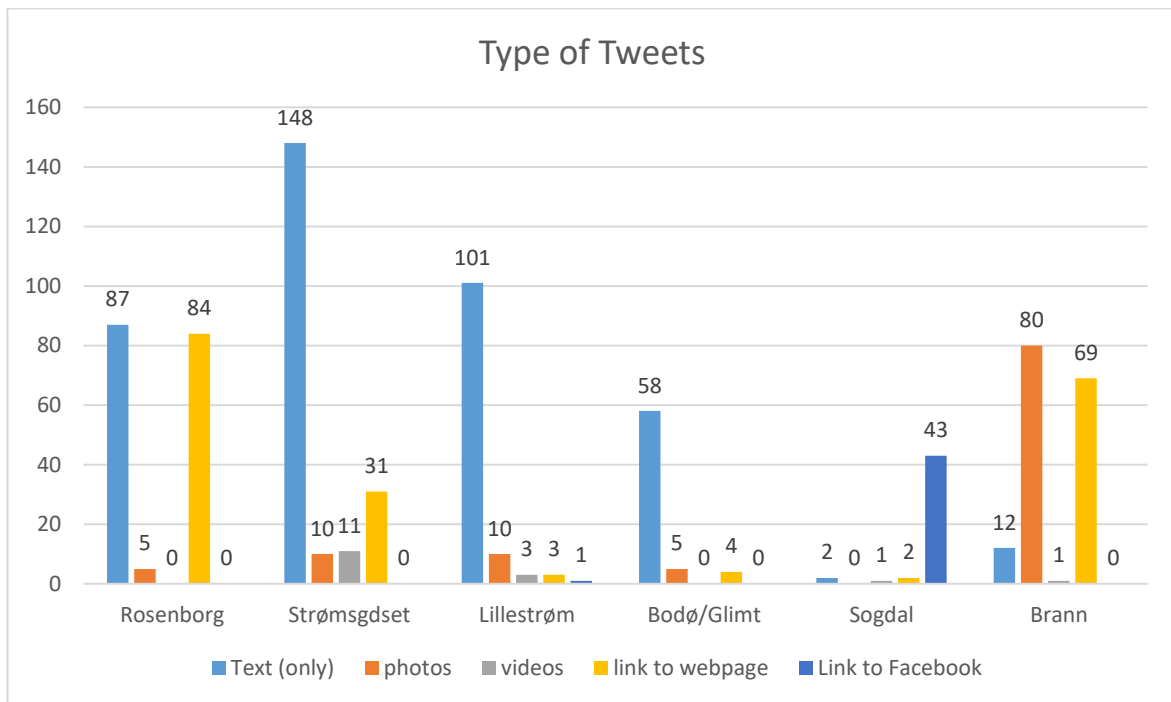
Figure 5.7: Average type of tweets on the clubs official Twitter pages.



Source: The author from the clubs official Twitter pages.

Further, as seen in Figure 5.8, there is a difference in which tweets are tweeted most among the clubs. Three of the clubs, Strømsgodset, Lillestrøm and Bodø/Glimt are close to the average regarding the type of tweets. During the research period, Rosenborg differed by posting a high frequency of links to the club's own homepage. This means that the clubs tweets in many cases was not complete because of the limited number of character on Twitter, and that makes it difficult to understand the content in the tweets without clicking the link and visit the clubs home page. Sogndal had the same problem, but with links to Facebook, instead of their home page. It looks like the two clubs have posted many of their tweets directly through Facebook, without considering the character limitation on Twitter. Another club differing from the average is Brann with their high frequency of tweets containing photos. About 50% of Brann's tweets contains photos, and it is because such a high amount of Brann's tweets contains photos that the average of photo tweets is as high as it is. All the other clubs have very few tweets that contains photos.

Figure 5.8: Type of tweets on the clubs official Twitter pages.

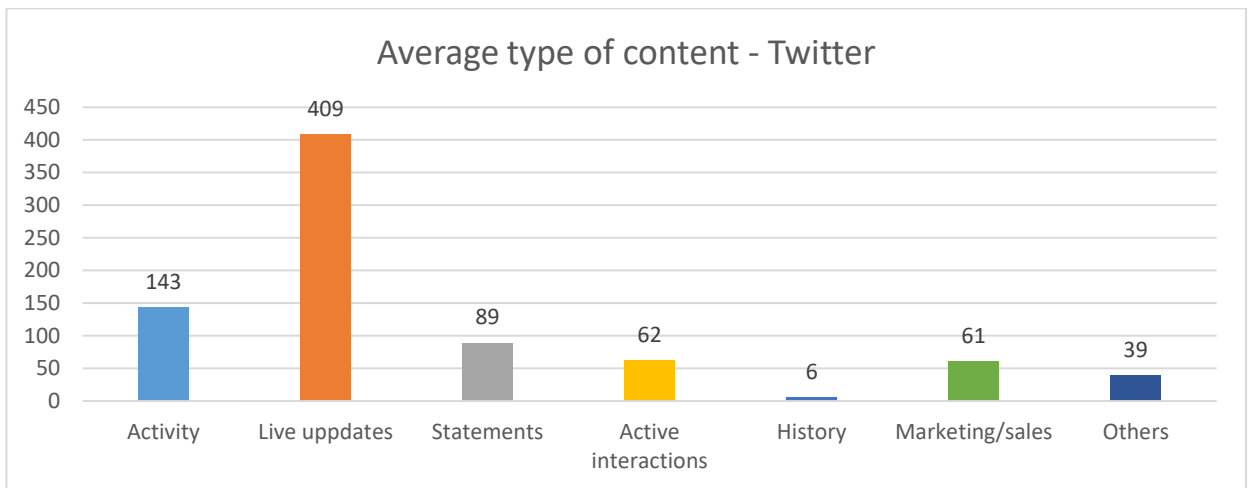


Source: The author from the clubs official Twitter pages.

Regarding which type of content engages most followers on Twitter, the author looked through all the content the clubs posted during the research period, and identified seven different content types. As said earlier, these content types are explained in Table 4 above. The frequency of the content types is shown in Figure 5.9 and 5.10. As seen in Figure 5.9, among the seven type of content categories, there is one category type that appears with a much higher frequency than the rest of the content types, and that is real-life updates from matches. Off all the seven content types, this content type represents approximately 50% of all tweets. The least tweeted content type during the research period is tweets containing history features with only six tweets divided between the six clubs. This represent approximately 1% of all tweets during the research period.

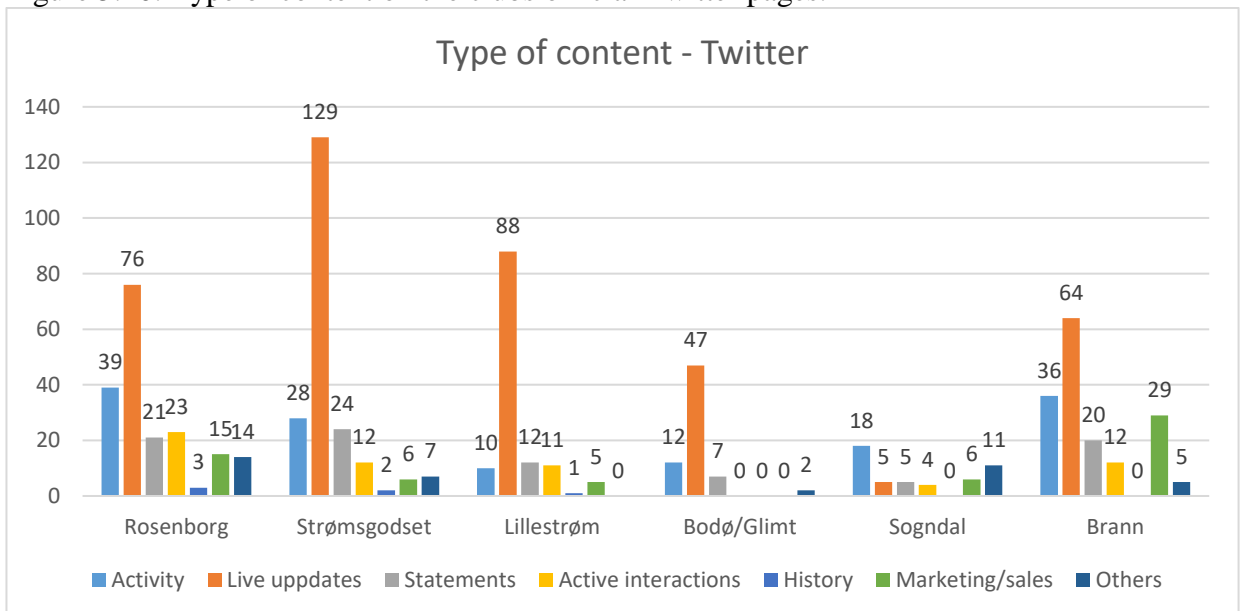
Looking at the different clubs and which content type they tweet, almost all the clubs follows the average shown in Figure 8. However, as seen in Figure 5.10, Sogndal differs from the average, with only 5 live match updates which makes up about 7% of the club's total tweets during the research period. Sogndal also differed by that approximately 10% of the club's tweets referred to the club's youth teams.

Figure 5.9: Average type of content on the clubs official Twitter pages.



Source: The author from the clubs official Twitter pages.

Figure 5.10: Type of content on the clubs official Twitter pages.



Source: The author from the clubs official Twitter pages.

Lastly, the author looked at which type of content that lead to the most participation and response from the clubs' fans and followers on Twitter, and found the same as was found regarding the clubs official Facebook pages. The content receiving the most participation from the fans and followers, in a ranked order, is as follow:

1. Winning games
2. Signing new players/coaches
3. Behind the scenes updates of players/coaches and club life

5.2.3 Instagram

As seen on Facebook and Twitter, all clubs playing in Eliteserien have a presence on Instagram, and in July 2016 the researched clubs had an average of 13,849 followers on the clubs official Instagram pages. As seen in Table 5.7, Rosenborg with its 39,900 followers have a much higher number of followers on Instagram than the rest of the clubs. The second club on the list, Strømsgodset with its 15,500 fans have almost 25,000 followers less than Rosenborg. On the bottom of the list Sogndal is found with its 3,081 followers.

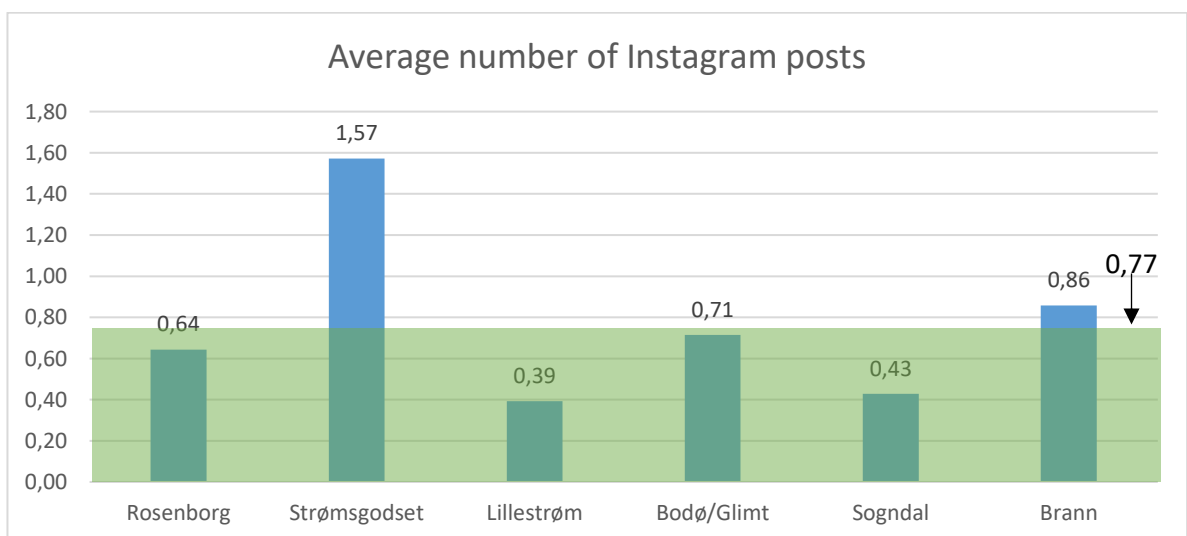
Table 5.7: Number of followers on the clubs official Instagram pages.

No.	Club	Number of followers
1st	Rosenborg	39,900
2nd	Strømsgodset	15,500
7th	Lillestrøm	5,823
8th	Bodø/Glimt	4,191
15th	Sogndal	3,081
16th	Brann	14,600
Average		13,849

Source: The author from the clubs official Instagram pages.

Further it was found that in most of the research cases, Instagram differs from Twitter and Facebook in that the clubs do not post content on Instagram daily. As seen in table 5.11, the daily average of posts on Instagram between the clubs is 0,77 post per day. Only one of the six researched clubs have a daily average of Instagram posts above 1, and that is Strømsgodset with an average of 1,57 daily posts. The club with the least posts on Instagram is Lillestrøm with an average of 0,39 posts daily.

Figure 5.11: Average number of posts on the clubs official Instagram pages.



Source: The author from the clubs official Instagram pages.

When looking at the clubs Instagram followers and their participation on the clubs Instagram pages, it was found that the average “Likes” and comments per posts was respectfully 1329 “Likes” and 15 comments per posts. As on Facebook, the average of “Likes” are much higher than the average for comments. This is probably so because of the simplicity by just “Liking” a post compared with having to post a comment.

As table 5.8 shows, the club with the highest frequency of both “Likes” and comments are Rosenborg with an average of 4101 “Likes” and 49 comments per post. Rosenborg has about three times as many average “Likes” and comments as the next club on the list that is Brann with its average of 1358 “Likes” and 17 comments per post. The club on the bottom of this list is Sogndal with its average “Likes” at 338 and comments at 3 per post. This is also as expected due to the number of followers each team have on Instagram.

Table 8: Average number of “Likes” and comments on the clubs official Instagram pages.

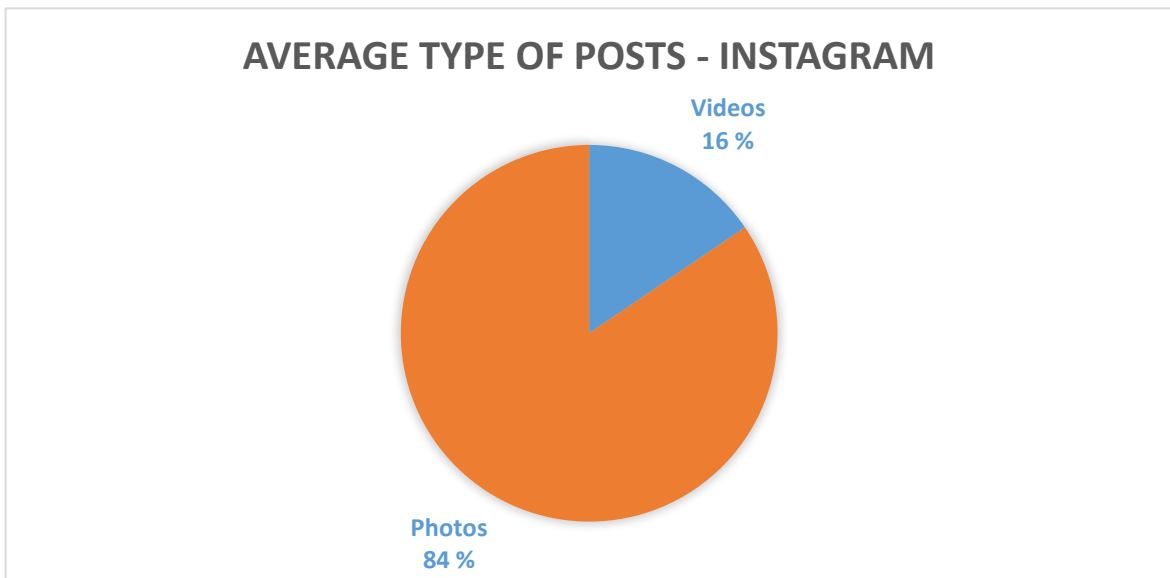
No.	Club	Number of posts	Average Likes	Average comments
1st	Rosenborg	18	4101	49
2nd	Strømsgodset	44	926	9
7th	Lillestrøm	11	658	10
8th	Bodø/Glimt	20	596	5
15th	Sogndal	12	338	3
16th	Brann	24	1358	17
Average		22	1329	15

Source: The author from the clubs official Instagram pages.

Further, to evaluate the degree of fan engagement on Instagram, the author looked at the type of posts the clubs posted on Instagram and which type of content engaged the most followers. Regarding the type of posts, the author gathered all the clubs’ posts on Instagram during the research period, to see if what type of posts the clubs posted. The posts ranged between photos and videos. As seen in Figure 5.12, 84% of the posts on Instagram consists of photos while only 16% of the posts are videos. These findings are what the author initially thought would be found because before it was possible to post videos on Instagram, Instagram firstly was designed to post only photos there. And, it is also easier and less time consuming for the people posting content on Instagram to edit and post a photo than a video.

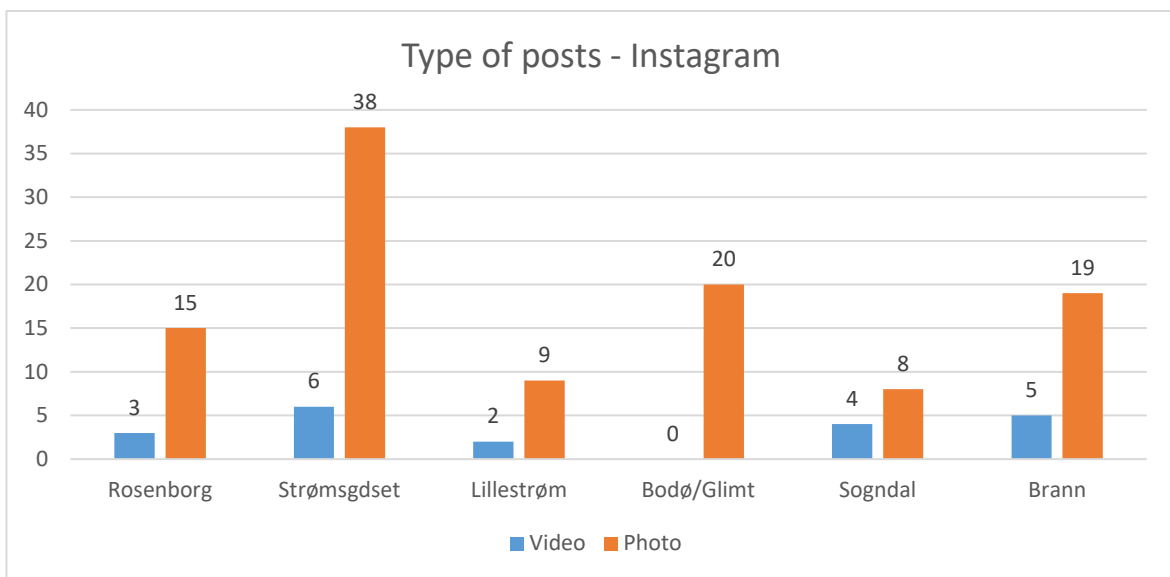
Further, as seen in Figure 5.13, almost all the clubs follow the average type of posts. The only club differing from the average is Bodø/Glimt with not a single video post during the research period.

Figure 5.12: Average type of posts on the clubs official Instagram pages.



Source: The author from the clubs official Instagram pages.

Figure 5.13: Type of posts on the clubs official Instagram pages.

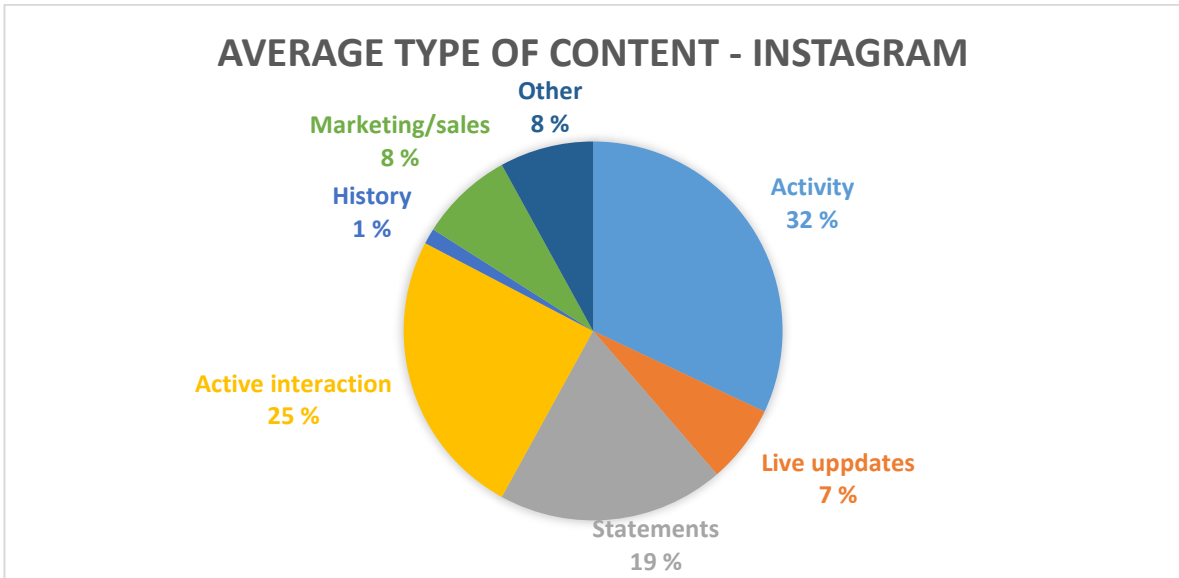


Source: The author from the clubs official Instagram pages

Regarding which type of content engages most followers on Instagram, the author looked through all the content the clubs posted during the research period, and identified seven different content types. These are found in table 4 above. The frequency of the content types is shown in Figure 5.14 and 5.15. As seen in Figure 5.14, there are three types of contents that are posted on Instagram with a much higher frequency than the rest of the content types on average. These are as follow; Activity (32%), active interaction (15%) and statements

(19%). On average, the least posted content type is posts with history features with only 1% of the total posts.

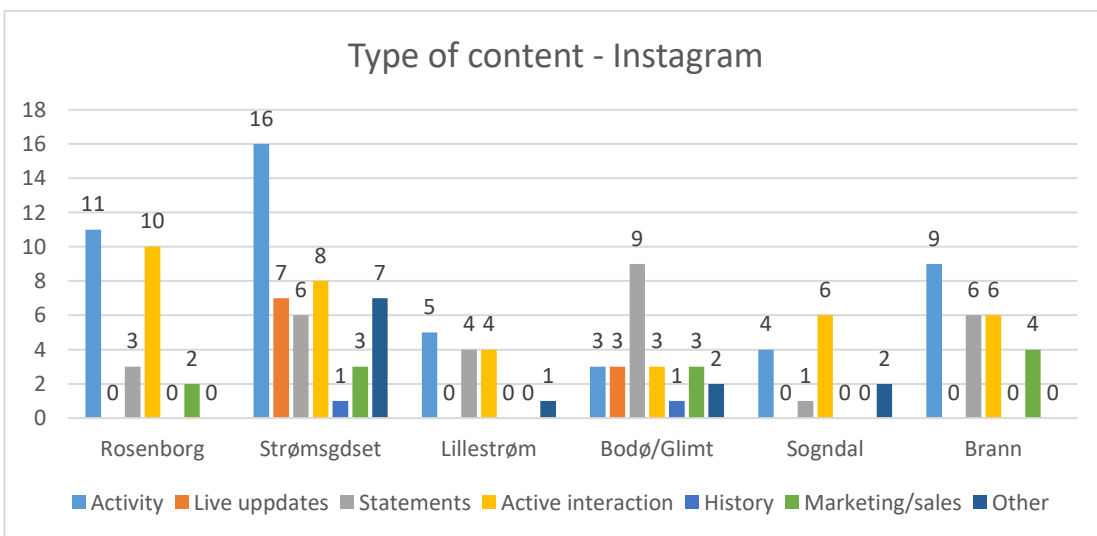
Figure 5.14: Average type of content on the clubs official Instagram pages.



Source: The author from the clubs official Instagram pages.

Looking at the different clubs and which type of content they post, most of the clubs follows the average seen in Figure 5.14. However, as seen in Figure 5.15, Bodø/Glimt and Sogndal differs by having few posts about activity. Something else standing out in Figure 13 is that four of the six clubs only have 4 of the 7 content types on Instagram. The content types that is not found on these clubs Instagram pages is live updates, history, marketing and other.

Figure 5.15: Average type of content on the clubs official Instagram pages.



Source: The author from the clubs official Instagram pages.

Lastly, the author looked at which type of content that lead to most participation and response from the clubs' fans and followers on Instagram. The findings show that the following content leads to the most participation and response from the clubs fans and followers:

1. Winning matches
2. Updates about players/coaches
3. Behind the scenes updates

5.3 Social Media Strategies

During the research period, the author contacted all the selected clubs for this research to examine their strategies for social media. When the clubs where asked about their usage of a social media strategy and its content, the answers varied a great deal. Some of the clubs were not particularly willing to share the content of their strategies, while other clubs shared benevolently. However, all clubs were comparable by having their own strategy for social media in one way or the other. Some clubs had their own strategy for social media while other clubs' social media strategy was a part of a larger communication plan. An example of the clubs' willingness to share and content of the social media strategies in the clubs is as follow:

We have a communication strategy that also includes social media. It contains information about what we use the different channels to, who the target groups are, and what we post and how often we post (interview 1).

As seen above, Lillestrøm SK have a strategy for communication which explains how they use their different social media channels and how often they post updates on their different channels. However, the club is not especially willing to share the actual content of this strategy. During the interview with SK Brann, the club stated that they have a social media strategy, they are however not willing to share its content with their competitors. Although SK Brann was not willing to share the content of their strategy, they were willing to share the following:

Our social media sites are used especially on game day, but they are also used actively to get people to go to our games. We also try to show how life is inside the club... We do not have a fixed number for how

many posts we share during a week, but the content range mostly between match updates, trainings, players and coaches, fans, behind scenes and ticket information (interview 5).

As seen, there are some clubs who do not want to share much of their strategies because they are not willing to share them with their competitors. While another club, Bodø/Glimt willingly speaks about how they use their various social media platforms, and what content should be posted on the various social media platforms they use:

On Facebook, we have a pretty strong strategy which says that everything we post shall engage. Therefore, we cannot post everything on Facebook, for example, when the opposing team scores. The goal is to have at least one video every day, and at the same time, it is important that we do not post too much. In order for us to reach as many as possible, we must engage those we actually reach. When the team wins, it goes by itself, but when the team loses we must work harder to engage those we reach. The content of our posts on Facebook can vary, ranging from happy kids to match posts, to beautiful goals and images from training. In addition, we obviously use Facebook to share information. Sometimes important information needs to be shared with our fans and follower. In these situations, we cannot always take into account that the content of the post has to engage our followers (Interview 2).

As seen in the statement above, Bodø/Glimt has a strategy regarding what content and how often to post on Facebook. As Niklas Aune states, their main strategy on Facebook is that everything they share should engage their followers in one way or the other. Therefore they do not for example post updates about their opponents scoring against Bodø/Glimt. Another strategy Bodø/Glimt has is to use Facebook as a platform to share information with their followers. They also have similar strategies for Twitter and Snapchat. Twitter is mainly used for match updates and sharing important information. Further, Bodø/Glimt has tried to use humor and not be too self-evident on Twitter. The club has received a good response on this strategy from several of their followers. However, for Instagram, the club acknowledges that there are few posts and that there is no strategy for this particular social media platform.

Further, Strømsgodset IF uses social media as a means to build the club's brand and to increase interest around the club:

We wish to create enthusiasm around Strømsgodset and create added value for our supporters, partners, media and other stakeholders who follow us. We have a comprehensive strategy for how we use social media, and one of our goals with social media is to increase sales of both tickets, season tickets and fan equipment. Another strategy we have is to drive traffic to our homepage through social media (Interview 3).

This suggests that Strømsgodset IF is committed to use social media for marketing to a much greater extent than for example Bodø/Glimt is. It also indicates that Bodø/Glimt is more aware of their followers while Strømsgodset IFs main focus is marketing and to increase sales. Further, Strømsgodset IF states that they have a pragmatic approach to how many posts they publish weekly. The club publish posts/tweets when they have something to publish whether it is a news story, pre-game updates and marketing or just updates from the life in the club.

Jørgen Stenseth explains that also Rosenborg BK have a strategy for how the club use social media. However, Rosenborg BKs strategy is not written down anywhere, but the people working with social media knows the strategy because some of them has worked in the club since they started using social media:

We do have strategies for how we use social media, but they are not written down. I have worked with social media since we started with it in 2008, and we definitely have thoughts about what we do and how we do things. We have a goal of using Facebook every day. Previously we had an auto feature which automatically tweeted what we posted on Facebook. We have stopped this feature now, and we are not necessarily on Twitter all the time anymore. At Instagram, we have a goal of posting updates a couple of times a week, and especially around match days (Interview 4).

As seen, Rosenborg BK have different strategies regarding how often they post updates on their different social media platforms, however they have a common strategy for all the platforms they use regarding number of posts and content:

We increase all activity around matches, and especially around home matches. We put more effort into the content before home games than away games because we want to fill up the stadium. We also know that

we get the most engagement during matches, therefore we are extra active during the games. We also know that the sooner we post updates after winning a match, the more response and spreading we will get.

This is a deliberate strategy we follow (interview 4).

Regarding the content of Rosenborg BKs posts, Jørgen Stenseth explains that there has been a change lately. Before Rosenborg BK posted a huge amount of posts to drive followers to their home page. Now they post content more directly on Facebook by posting photos, videos and texts and not so many links to their own home page. They still share some posts to drive people to their homepage to buy tickets and to see what other content they have there, but not nearly as much as earlier. Further, Jørgen Stenseth points out the following:

Social media has gradually become a customer service. We answer a lot of questions through Facebook and Twitter that we previously answered through requests we received on e-mail or phones.

Summed up, all the interviewed clubs have a social media strategy in one way or the other, and there seem to be both similarities and differences in these strategies. None of the teams have a locked number of updates to posts weekly, but they post updates when they have something to share with their followers. Further, Bodø/Glimt's strategy is focused on engaging the most followers, Strømsgodset IF's strategy is mostly focused on marketing, while Rosenborg BK's strategy is located somewhere between these two teams by focusing on both customer service and marketing.

6.0 Discussion

In this chapter, the author will go through the propositions made, the results from the content analysis and interviews and compare them to the literature and framework. This means that the author will start with the sub-questions and based on the discussion around them try to answer the main research question.

6.1 The Clubs Usage of Social Network Sites

The first proposition looks at which SNS the clubs use and to what extent. Clubs have endless options when choosing which SNS they should use to marketing and communicating with their fans and followers. As Regan (2015) explains, there are over 2,206 billion active social media users worldwide, and therefore, the clubs have a huge opportunity to reach millions of followers through social media. Thus, it is important that clubs chose to use SNS

where they can reach most of their fans and followers. All the researched clubs have chosen to use the four biggest and most popular SNS in Norway to reach their fans and followers; Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat (Ipsos 2016). In addition, some of the clubs have chosen to use Flickr, LinkedIn and YouTube to reach their followers. However, these platforms are not being used nearly as much as the four platforms mentioned earlier. The clubs should perhaps ask themselves whether if there is a point in having these SNS if they are almost unused and practically inactive.

When analyzing the clubs' usage of the different SNS, the author found that the most used SNS between the clubs where Twitter where the clubs have an average of 4,57 tweets daily. Facebook was not far behind where the clubs have an average of 2,93 posts daily. At the bottom of the list Instagram is found, where the clubs' posts 0,77 posts daily. The author thought it would be more equal between the average posts on Facebook and Twitter, but otherwise there was no surprises in these findings and this was as the author expected.

What did surprise the author however, was the lack of likes, comments and shares on the various SNS. Out of the average followers on Facebook which is 69 647 followers, the average number of likes was only 843 and the average comment 41. This is equivalent to respectively 1,21% and 0,06%. On Twitter the average number of likes was 7, the average number of comments 0,47 and the average number of retweets 1,61. This is equivalent to respectively 0,06%, under 0,01% and 0,01%. On Instagram, the average number of likes were 1329 and the average number of comments 15, which is equivalent to respectively 11,69% and 0,13%. Especially on Facebook and Twitter this is an extremely low average of how many followers are engaged by the content posted on these SNS. The average numbers for Instagram is a good deal higher, but still lower than what the author expected. Newman et al. (2013) explain the importance of keeping fans and followers entertain and get them to participate in actions in order to keep them following the clubs on Facebook. This is probably true for both Twitter and Instagram as well. In connection to these low numbers, the clubs have to initiate some actions that will make more of their followers to engage and involve in what is posted on the clubs SNS.

When looking at the type of posts published on the clubs different SNS, the author found that the type of posts published on the different SNS varies greatly from platform to platform. This was as expected due to the purpose of the different SNS and how they are structured. However, the fact that almost 50% of the posts published on Facebook were links

to the clubs' own websites and only 8% of the posts consisted of text only were somewhat surprising. When such a substantial proportion of the posts on Facebook are very similar, the content may be perceived as too similar as well and possible of little value for the clubs' followers. This may be one of the reason for the extremely low engagement on Facebook. Newman et al. (2013) also point out the importance of not only using text when publishing posts on Facebook. The usage of photos and videos are of excellent value when the goal is to engage followers. Because Twitter is composed as it is, it was as expected that over 50% of the tweets were text only, and that 25% of the tweets consisted of links to the clubs' homepages, to mostly news stories.

Further, the author looked at which type of content clubs posts on their SNS. On Facebook, there were three categories which stood out, namely activity, marketing and statements. This are categories that referres to updates about training and games, marketing initiatives and statements from players and coaches. The fact that clubs publish as many posts as they do especially about activity and statements from players and coaches, is most likely done deliberately since most of the clubs are aware that those are the posts that creates the most engagement. Further, it is quite natural that the clubs post as many marketing updates as they do because the clubs want to fill up their stands for home games and they also want to sell as much of their own products as possible. On Twitter, there was one category that really stood out, and that was live updates. This was not surprising since Twitter initially was created to create and share information instantly without any obstructions (Twitter, N/Ab). On Instagram, updates about activity and active interaction were posted the most by the clubs. So, this is the SNS the clubs have used the most for asking their followers questions, held competitions, shown behind scene photos and videos and so on. This is also the platform from all the examined SNS that has the most engagement and involvement from the clubs' followers. Therefore, it may be wise of the clubs to use more of the content type they publish on Instagram on their other SNS as well. Then perhaps the clubs are able to increase engagement on these SNS to the same level, or higher, as the current engagement level on Instagram.

6.2 The Clubs Current Social Media Strategies

While conducting the interviews with the persons responsible for managing the clubs SNS, the interviewees were questioned about their social media strategy and what it contains. The willingness to share varied a great deal, from those would not share any of their strategies

content because they were not willing to share their strategies with their competitors, to those who talked openly about the content of their strategies. However, because the author does not have access to the whole actual social media strategies the clubs have, but only the parts of the strategies that the clubs themselves want to share, it is difficult to discuss the totality of the clubs' strategies. It is therefore important to keep this in mind when the clubs' strategies for social media are discussed.

Based on the information collected through the interviews with the clubs, there are seven specific strategies that were mentioned. These are

- Using social media as a mean to build the clubs brand
- Increasing sales of tickets, season tickets and fan equipment – marketing
- All content published shall engage the followers in one way or the other
- Increasing all activity around matches – especially around home matches to fill up the stadiums
- Customer service
- Sharing information
- Driving traffic to the clubs' homepages

Looking at these strategies, they are mainly focusing on two aspects, the clubs' followers/fans or marketing. Increasing sales, building the clubs brand, driving traffic to homepages and increasing activity to fill up the stadium are various ways of using social media for marketing. On the other hand, engaging followers, customer service and sharing information are ways of communicating with the clubs' followers. If all clubs had used all of these strategies, it would give more varied content on the clubs SNS, and possibly more engagement among the clubs' followers. This is something Newman et al. (2013) point out as important for the clubs if they are going to be able to engage and keep their followers on various SNS. However, based on the information retrieved through the interviews, the clubs only use one or two of these strategies actively. This can lead to monotonous content on the SNS of the clubs, and thus little involvement and engagement from followers (Newman et al., 2013).

Further, the clubs do not explain which activities they use in the various strategies. What are they for example doing to increase sales of tickets and fan equipment? How do they build the clubs brand? How do they engage their followers? How do they share information? Does a club share a link to their homepage in order to increase sales or does the club give out a

discount code on Instagram? Whether the clubs choose to do this consistently in order not to share their strategies with competitors, or if they simply do not have specific activities written down in their strategies are uncertain.

The most shocking finding in relation to social media strategies was that Rosenborg BK, Norway's largest football club of all time, has no written strategy on how to use its social media sites. The club only has thoughts about how they do things. This could potentially become a huge disadvantage for the club. What happens if the club's communication manager suddenly becomes absent from work over a period of time and someone else must take over? Someone who does not know the club's thoughts around how they are using social media. Since nothing is written down, chances are huge that things will be done differently from how the club's absent communication manager does things.

From the information gathered during the interviews, it became known that Facebook is the SNS clubs use the most to reach their followers. This also concurs with Newman et al. (2013) statement that Facebook is most likely the most important SNS of any social media plan because of the enormous number of users, and thereby the potential number of followers the clubs can reach.

Further, the author lacks an answer to whether the clubs have identified their followers on the various SNS and based on who their followers are on various SNS constructed the messages they want to share. Do the clubs for example know which SNS is most popular for women in their 30-50 (potential mothers of children wanting to go to the clubs' games), and therefore construct messages with an aim of influencing this target group?

Based on the answers the author has received during the interviews, it seems like the clubs have strategies, thoughts and ideas about how to do things on social media, but maybe they should review their strategies and make them more structured and up to date with the ever-changing social media platform. If they do not already have it, they should create strategies that are modified by the structure of each SNS they use. And if they have SNS that are practical unused by the club, the club should consider whether or not it should at all have accounts on these pages.

6.3 Social Media Strategies That May Enhance the Clubs Reach

When looking at what may enhance the clubs reach on social media, the framework of this paper needs to be looked at. Firstly, the clubs can adopt Newman et al. (2013) social network media plan when developing their social media plan. This plan points out that for clubs to reach and engage their followers in a best possible way, it is important for a club to firstly identify what its message is and what the clubs purpose of being on social media is. The clubs must therefore find out what they should use social media for and what they want to share on social media. What is the message a club want to share, and it is possible to use social media for doing so? Then the club need to identify who to reach and which medium to use for reaching their target groups. If a club wants to reach a particular audience, it is important to use the right SNS to reach as many as possible of the target group. If a club want to reach young people from 16-28 years, it is vise to use Snapchat or Instagram, however if the target group is people aged 40 or over, it is best to use Facebook to reach most of the target group. This is so because these SNS are the ones the different target groups are most active on (Ipsos, 2016).

Further, if the clubs are based upon Kietzmann et al. (2011) framework when they develop their social media strategy, they can use this strategy to understand how they can use and engage in social media in a better way. The clubs can look at the characteristics of each SNS they are using and find out which functional blocks from the framework each SNS focuses on, and use this to understand, know and engage in a better way on the particular SNS. For example, the most important functional block for Facebook is relationship. Further, the following functional blocks is also of importance on Facebook: presence, identity, conversations and reputation (Kietzmann et al., 2011). Clubs should therefore have this in mind when developing strategies for the usage of Facebook, and eventually when they are going to create content for this SNS. Clubs can use this framework to identify the most important functional blocks for their other SNS as well. In other words, clubs can use this framework to understand scenery of social media; develop strategies that are consistent with, or suitable for various social media futures and the club's goals; develop strategies for their content and how they interact on social media; and further the framework can be used by the clubs as a tool to evaluate the ever-changing activities on social media (Kietzmann et al., 2011).

In addition, clubs can also look at previously developed strategies for specific SNS when they are going to develop their own strategies to see if there is anything applicable for the club. Examples of such strategies are Newman et al. (2013) theory about five key factors clubs needs to consider for creating an effective Facebook page, Kingston's (2013) twelve steps to successfully implement Twitter in clubs' social media marketing plan, and Instagram's (N/A) basic tips for businesses for using Instagram. However, it is important that the clubs adapt these strategies to their own situation, the goals of the clubs and the means the clubs have available.

7.0 Conclusion

What the best practice of social media usage to engage fans and followers for clubs is are very difficult to define. Some clubs believe that some strategies work best for them, while other clubs believe that there are other strategies that best suit them. This could have something to do with the size of the clubs, the clubs surroundings and history, and how well the team is doing in the league.

However, based on the findings from the content analysis it is necessary for the clubs to find new ways and activities to engage and involve their followers. If a club's followers' engagement is measured by looking at the amount of "Likes" and comments a club have on its posts, the engagement is almost equal to zero on both Facebook and Twitter for all researched clubs. At Instagram, the engagement level is a great del higher. In one way or the other, the clubs need to get better at engaging their followers.

The author believes that it is possible for the clubs to change the level of engagement among the clubs' followers, so that it increases considerably from today's engagement level. It may be a clever idea for the clubs to review their already existing strategy for social media. They need to determine what works effectively as it is and what has potential for improvement. The clubs need to take its situation as a starting point – if they are a small or a big club, whether they are on the top or the bottom of the league and so on – and based on that create their own specific goals and develop a plan/strategy for how to reach these goals. When or if the clubs chose to do this, it may be advisable to have a starting point on earlier research conducted on the usage of social media and social media strategies for clubs and organizations, as well as the clubs' own experiences.

The author agrees with Kietzmann et al. (2011) statement that a social media plan should include ways to increase customer happiness and customer input, integration between the social media strategy and other marketing strategies a club might have, and key activities and conversations to help the clubs obtain trust from community and key influencers. It is also of great importance that clubs select, organize and look after social media actions and content, including developing knowledge about how often and when a club should join in on conversations and SNS and who should represent the club online (Kietzmann et al. 2011).

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9.0 Attachment

9.1 Appendix 1 – Interview Guideline for Persons Responsible for Social Media in the Clubs

Information

- Explaining the background and purpose of the interview
- Explaining how the data will be used, and clarify confidentiality and anonymity
- Clarifying questions – ask if the respondents have any questions before we begin
- Ask if it is ok to record the interview – for the phone interview

General questions about the club

- Can you tell about your position in the club and experience with social media?
- What is are your general thoughts about social media?

Social media usage

- Which social media sites are your club currently using?
- To which extent are you using the different social media sites?

Social media strategy

- Does your club have a social media strategy?
 - In case not: do you have thoughts about how the club should use social media?
- How is your club’s social media strategy built up?
- What does your clubs social media strategy contains?

- Do your club have a certain number of posts that are going to be published each week on your social media sites?
 - If not: how do your club decide how any post to publish during a week?
- What should the content of the posts your club publish be about? (topics)

Social media engagement

- Which posts/tweets creates the greatest enthusiasm among your club's followers?
 - Considering both the type of posts and the content of the posts

Summery

- Sum up the researchers understanding
- Was anything misunderstood?
- Does the interviewee have anything to add?
- Thanks for the interview