DIGITAL LITERACY AND TYPES OF COMMUNICATION WITH THE PUBLIC IN SPORTS

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Abstract: It is the responsibility of public relations professionals to encourage communication between the public and the organization. In sports clubs, discourse is crucial because it fosters tolerance and the coming together of individuals with disparate viewpoints and beliefs to work toward a shared objective. Sports teams may benefit greatly from using public relations techniques to strengthen their bonds with their fan bases. Measurement of fan groups' support and a better comprehension of the goals and missions of sports teams may be achieved by connecting the relationship outcomes to the PR process. External communication helps to build the club's reputation, gain financial support, and attract fans, sponsors, and media attention. Internal communication, on the other hand, ensures effective coordination and collaboration between players, coaches, and management personnel, enhancing teamwork and improving overall performance.

Keywords: Public Relations, Relationship Management, Sports Clubs, Sports and Public Relations

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Introduction

In this new, twenty-first century, digital technology and its unprecedented deve-lopment have not only become the hallmark of the new century but also a necessary condition for life. For the majority of people, the internet has become a common thing, akin to electricity and running water. Additionally, the internet is viewed as a symbol of a global revolution in communications, similar to the way Gutenberg's invention of the printing press once was.

So, how can one best utilize digital technology and handle the array of available tools? What is necessary to maintain a digital identity optimally? Is digital literacy essential in this context, and what concept of digital literacy, manifested in a multitude of different components, is created and open to significant possibilities for responsible enga-gement with the overall digital world, if one desires it.

Why is communication significant, and what are the ways in which information is shared? Communication is used daily in almost every environment, whether it's a subtle nod of agreement or the conveyance of information (Dašić, et al., 2021). Communication is absolutely essential in building relationships, exchanging ideas, delegating responsibilities or emotions, managing a team, and other interpersonal skills. The literature often mentions four main types of communication used daily: verbal, nonverbal, written, and visual. With all these communication styles, it is crucial to develop soft skills that can help better understand messages and respond thoughtfully. While these communication models simplify the representation of communication, they illustrate some of the complexities in defining and studying communication.

What conditions are necessary for successful communication? The effective use of language, spoken or written, is certainly the primary condition for successful commu-nication. Going back to ancient times, classical rhetoric was a combination of argu-mentation and persuasion, based on the classical systems of three ancient Greek teachers: Plato, Isocrates, and Aristotle. The ancient Greeks pondered the significance of language, as it was evident that the primary political skill of that era was the ability to speak effectively in favor of one's interests or the interests of the speaker's representative. This required citizen participation in communication, and decisions were made through deliberation and voting by all.

The power of communication

The term communication, or communicating, is of Latin origin (Latin: communicatio – connection, association; traffic, communication; communicare – establish a connec-tion, traffic, communicate). Communication is most commonly defined as a multi-

phase process, the essence of which is the creation of meaningful content through the sending and receiving of verbal and nonverbal symbols and signs, influenced by various contextual factors and conditions. An essential characteristic of this process is that human communication is the essence of social interaction (Dašić, Jeličić, 2016), and understanding through symbols is a fundamental characteristic that distinguishes humans from other living beings and their potential for communication.

However, defining the actual concept of "communication" poses various challenges, and for decades, communication professionals have struggled to reach any consensus on how to define the concept of communication (Johnston et al, 2016). It is often claimed in relevant literature that there is still no agreed-upon definition of communication to this day, especially after the period from 1970 to 1984 when Frank E. Dance (1970) reviewed and published 126 definitions of communication (found in relevant literature) and expressed the idea that attempting to find a single definition of communication that would satisfy everyone is like trying to nail Jell-O to a wall—a mission impossible.

When any organization, company, or institution establishes communication with the public, it does so more strongly and extensively through public relations and/or marketing—through its image and identity, the sense of its existence, and thus the advantages/disadvantages for all interested parties to contact and communicate with it. In the literature, four developmental periods of communication are mentioned:

1. Classical,
2. Medieval,
3. Renaissance, and
4. Enlightenment period.

They differ in terms of the relevant issues in communication processes, the topics that occupied participants in communication, and which experts (philosophers and/or scientists) interpreted communication as a phenomenon, or who had the greatest influence in that regard. In addition to these four periods, a distinct period represents the modern communication era that emerged in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Researching modes of public communication in today's world would not make sense without considering the role, significance, and effects of the internet. This is because the internet represents a specific infrastructure that is the generator and carrier of the habitus of all potentially emerging digital media, alternatively labeled with names such as new media, communication-information technologies, computer-mediated communication systems, interactive media, servers, networks, and the like (Ratković, Dašić, 2018). The web has completely changed the world, enabled billions of dollars in economic growth, and turned data into the gold of the 21st century. It has fostered

innovation in education, healthcare, and all other areas, eliminated geographical and social boundaries, influenced a media revolution, and prompted changes in all spheres of society, enabling constant two-way dialogue between those who heal and those who recover; those who teach and those who learn; those who sell and those who buy; finally, those who govern and those who are governed (hopefully within socially acceptable norms). Digital technologies impact individuals, organizations, governments, and countries. Digitization provides the opportunity for all activities to gather numerous real-time information and more effectively engage all those interested in participating in a given communication process (Dašić, 2021; Stanković, 2022).

Digital literacy as a sociocultural challenge

The theme of digital literacy, although present in many theoretical works and practical approaches to the implementation of interactive tools and web-based procedures using technologies such as email, web browsers, and databases for "information-related tasks," is characterized by vague definitions and limited research studies, often focused on specific segments in this field. At the end of the twentieth century, there emerged a need in the new era of the digital environment for everyone to be required to use various technical, cognitive, and social skills to perform tasks and solve problems in the digital world. This was defined as "digital literacy" (Gilster, 1997). However, like any new term, "digital literacy" enjoys a broad range of usage in literature, from conceptual theoretical explanations to technical aspects, and then to cognitive, psychological, or sociological meanings (Gilster, 1997; Tapscott, 1998).

The discourse of the contemporary digital age inevitably includes the concept of global citizenship, which takes on new meaning in educational contexts as a worldview or a set of values that prepares young people for a global or world society. This is based on high digital competencies and assumptions about valuing diversity in promoting literacy instruction based on the use of modern learning technologies. It is also argued that the availability of new technologies blurs differences in social status, origin, at home, school, community, online, and offline, requiring a reassessment of the relationships between all these concepts.

In terms of academic knowledge, it is considered that before the digital era, scientific knowledge was traditionally organized around the premise that knowledge was exhaustive, and its artifacts were materially limited. Manuscripts and books as knowledge artifacts were exhaustive and expensive to produce and distribute. Digital content, however, is persistent, replicable, and searchable. Artifacts of digital knowledge can be distributed with negligible costs to the originator or the user without being consumed or diminished. The widespread and increasingly mobile access to

artifacts of digital knowledge in the "world of information abundance is constantly changing" (Jenkins, 2006), indicating a transition from an era of knowledge scarcity to an era of knowledge abundance, even though access remains unevenly distributed.

"Literacy" must equally relate to current, informal electronic communications as well as the creation of formal, written, painstakingly crafted documents that are passed down through generations. This means that a balance must be found between technologies used in the past and those that will be used in the future (reading and writing technologies) in the process of defining the concept of literacy. If this cannot be achieved, then perhaps it is best to use another term or framing the concept, according to some authors (Belshaw, 2011).

It is generally believed that digital literacy is a vital component of individual compe-tence and enhances the "selling power of the national education market," emphasizing that literacy is a more important skill than ever in today's knowledge-based societies. A particular advantage of digital literacy is its individual aspect, as this literacy provides a foundation for skill development and lifelong learning and can help all citizens participate in national economic prosperity, as well as improve their quality of life. These approaches are largely based on the premises of human capital theories, aiming to show that investing in literacy and education is more important for long-term economic growth than investing in physical capital. Thus, the well-being of each individual enters the equation of general prosperity. However, issues related to digital literacy, even if they have almost no connection with information and communication technologies, with electronic and invisible binary sequences of ones and zeros, and almost no connection with the promises mentioned above, must surely have a relationship with the technocratic apparatus of managing people in the global world, economic competition, and teaching individual competencies of "networking" (Ran-tala, Suoranta, 2008).

According to the previous determinants, literacy can be understood at three levels, and the levels of digital literacy can be seen in the same sense: first, at the operational level of technique and mastery of digital competencies; second, at the level of thoughtful use and contextually appropriate application of digital tools; and third, at the level of critical reflection, understanding transformative, as well as human and social impact of digital actions - a process in which digital literacy is put into practice (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Levels of Digital Literacy
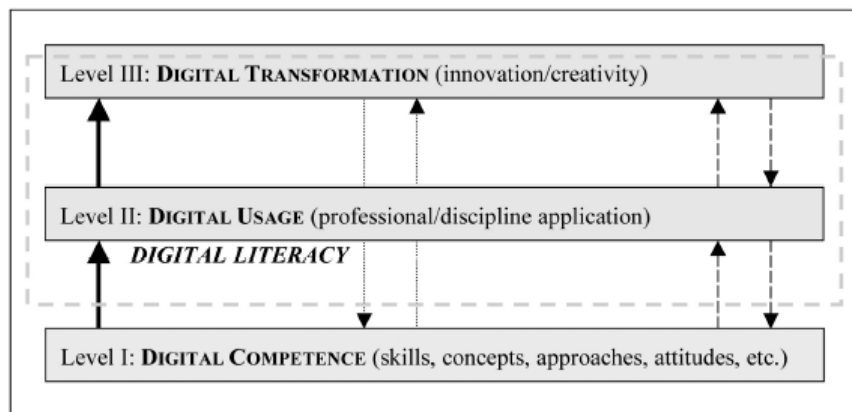
Source: (Martin, 2008)

Digital communication in sports clubs refers to the use of digital technologies and online platforms for more efficient and widespread communication with various interest groups, including players, coaches, fans, sponsors, and media. This type of communication encompasses various aspects, including:

Social Media: Sports clubs use platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and other social media to share news, images, videos, and interactive content with their followers. This allows direct interaction with fans and the creation of a community around the club.

Websites: Club websites serve as a central place where official news, schedules, match results, player biographies, and other relevant content are published. Proper website maintenance contributes to transparency and accessibility of information.

Email: Clubs use email to send official announcements, promotional offers, event invitations, and other information to club members, sponsors, and other interested parties.

Applications: The development of mobile applications enables clubs to communicate directly with users through their smartphones. Applications can provide information about live matches, exclusive content, ticket sales, and other functionalities.

Streaming and Video Content: Clubs often use digital platforms for live streaming or sharing video content to cover training sessions, player interviews, match highlights, and other interesting moments.

Interactivity: Digital communication allows sports clubs to engage their fans in interactive activities such as voting, asking players questions, organizing quizzes, and other online events.

Data Analysis: The use of data analysis enables clubs to track fan engagement, campaign effectiveness, and create targeted strategies to improve communication.

Digital communication in sports clubs helps build the brand, engage the community, attract sponsors, enhance fan experience, and optimize operational processes. This type of communication has become a key element in successfully managing sports organizations in the modern digital age.

Internal and external communication in sports organizations

External and internal communication are crucial aspects in the functioning of sports clubs as they facilitate effective coordination and collaboration among its members. External communication refers to the interaction between the sports club and individuals or organizations outside of its immediate environment, such as sponsors, media, and the general public. On the other hand, internal communication focuses on the exchange of information and ideas within the club, including communication between players, coaches, and management personnel. Both forms of communication are essential for sports clubs to achieve their goals, maintain their reputation, and ensure efficient teamwork.

External communication plays a vital role in enhancing the image and visibility of sports clubs. It involves activities such as public relations, marketing, and media management. Sports clubs need to effectively communicate with sponsors to secure financial support, with media outlets to gain publicity, and with fans to build a loyal following. This may include press releases, social media campaigns, and organizing community events. For example, by maintaining regular contact with the media, sports clubs can ensure accurate coverage of their matches, events, and achievements, which helps in attracting more fans and sponsors (Tasić, Đokić, 2022).

Internal communication, on the other hand, ensures effective coordination and teamwork within the sports club. It involves the exchange of information, feedback, and instructions among various stakeholders, such as players, coaches, and administrators. Good internal communication is crucial for setting goals, formulating strategies, and addressing any issues or conflicts that may arise. For instance, effective communication between the coach and players is essential for ensuring that everyone is on the same page regarding game plans and tactics. Similarly, clear communication

between team members can enhance collaboration and trust, resulting in improved performance on the field.

Sport's reputation has started to improve a little bit as a result of its perception as a career or a viable future. However, the sport organization's public relations duties and tasks have not performed as well as they could have. Because public relations was seen as an ally rather than the focal point of the business, it was still only used in the name of sports organizations. In addition to the lack of held athletic events, this prevented public relations from producing a newspaper or bulletin as a public relations product. Lack of funding, a parent organization's lack of understanding of the value of public relations during routine activities, journalists who are occasionally less supportive of reporting and more interested in stories that have a conflict-like odor, along with a lack of journalistic expertise in sports reporting, are all obstacles that sports organizations must overcome in order to conduct public relations activities (Novitaria, 2017).

Sports clubs should be aware of the volume of messages delivered via social media when they utilize social media venues as it was revealed at a conference conducted by the Sports Marketing Association in 2010 that using social networks as promotional tools irritates followers and supporters. One of the fundamental factors determining the reputation and image of a company is public relations. These days, it is necessary to be accurately seen in the public eye in order to obtain a favourable perception of any company, person, or nation. Public relations are a crucial strategy for influencing how accurately and clearly you are regarded by the general public (Göksel, Serarslan, 2015).

One of the fundamental factors determining the reputation and image of a company is public relations. These days, it is necessary to be accurately seen in the public eye in order to obtain a favourable perception of any company, person, or nation. Public relations are a crucial technique for influencing how the public perceives something (Kuyucu, 2015).

Sports organizations may benefit greatly from using new media in this way, but there are also risks, such as severe monetary and psychological harm. Athletes can be inspired to succeed and achieve goals by using the right technique to influence the public, but supporters and fans can also help teams out by boosting sales and turning contests into festivals (Bajić, 2022). By outperforming competing clubs, enormous chances may be established to achieve both sporting and financial success, stock market share prices can rise, and favorable conditions can be set up so that potential new sponsors are waiting outside the club's door. Sports organizations using new media incorrectly or poorly run the risk of spreading inaccurate information about their organizations, which poses serious risks (Dašić, Ratković, 2022). Failure to manage crises effectively in the event of unfavorable news and events and failure to communicate necessary public announcements via social media accounts with fans,

sponsors, athletes, the media, and relevant institutions, organizations, and people will lead to significant short- and long-term losses for clubs (Göksel, Serarslan, 2015).

Sport seems to be becoming better at grabbing people' attention and cash. This indicates that as the volume of public relations achievements and failures increases, there will be more career possibilities in sport public relations and associated fields (Isaacson, 2010).

Fans' motivation for loyalty may be affected by regular requests for input, clear and transparent informationflow, proving that their thoughts and recommendations are taken into account, and assuring their involvement in decision-making.It might be argued that the openness, effectiveness, and volume of the fan groups' communications can foster a feeling of commitment. Such interpersonal communication techniques are a technique used in public relations to build relationships. Additionally, it's important to concentrate on the reputation and image of the represented sports club's fan base, to foster a family atmosphere, to pay attention to behavioral interactions, and to guarantee dependability against corporate governance (Çelebi, 2021). More contact between the groups would improve sport PR training and, in light of study findings, maybe alter some of the conventional media relations strategies employed in the industry. Social media gives public relations, which are created in a different way for conventional media, a new dimension. Social media has enhanced individualism and feedback, which aids the emergence of new media. Thanks to social media, everyone produces their own media and communicates directly. Like many companies, the football industry is impressed by this social media feature.

Conclusion

Sport is both a local and personal experience as well as a worldwide phenomena. It is both a massive for-profit corporation and a massive charitable endeavor. Through a complex and symbiotic connection with the media and other economic interests, sport satisfies all of these competing responsibilities in contemporary society. There are several issues with modern sport, none of which have clear answers or definitions. Clubs are now leveraging new media for target-group input on brand image, business reputation, organizational culture, and products and services in addition to PR, advertising, and marketing campaigns. While sports teams' use of new media creates new avenues for communication, it also brings with it a host of new issues. Social media facilitates effective intraclub communication and gives clubs a direct channel of communication with target audiences; however, it can also quickly and easily spread rumors, false information, and biased views, which can occasionally result in potential crises.

Before entering new media venues, sports teams must decide what new media methods they will employ and undertake the necessary research. Clubs without any new media plans may find it challenging to stay up with the evolving nature of new media. In a broad sense, the clubs' goals, objectives, identities, languages, target audience characteristics, quality of domestic and international sources, and scope of reporting make up their new media strategy for usage in social media networks. Designing new media strategies for clubs is crucial since there are always institutions, people, or organizations that might be favorably or badly impacted.

In the end, external and internal communication are vital for the successful functioning of sports clubs. External communication helps to build the club's reputation, gain financial support, and attract fans, sponsors, and media attention. Internal communication, on the other hand, ensures effective coordination and collaboration between players, coaches, and management personnel, enhancing teamwork and improving overall performance. Sports clubs that prioritize these forms of communication are more likely to achieve their objectives and maintain a positive image in the eyes of the public.

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