SOCIAL MEDIA, EMAIL MARKETING AND FANS ENGAGEMENT:
A STUDY OF THE ITALIAN BASKETBALL LEAGUE

By

Matteo Grigatti (Student Number: J00044811)

A research project submitted for the Master of Business Administration

University of Roehampton, London Online

2018

ABSTRACT

The impact of Social Media on the sporting world has completely changed the method of communication for both organizations and fans. In combination with email marketing campaigns, they became the first communication tools that enormously influenced the quality of fan engagement. The supporters are more than ever at the centre of teams' marketing and communication strategies. The purpose of this study is to analyse the current situation for Italian basketball teams playing in the First League (Legabasket Serie A).The study includes the way they use social media and email marketing to attract and inform their supporters which results in potential economic consequences such as sponsorships. The research is conducted using mainly quantitative methods, based on online statistics, and adding a qualitative facet via an online survey, several insights for future improvements were found.

The research analyses the social media activities of the 16 teams, divided into three Cluster Regions and based on geography: North, Centre, and South. The study focuses on three standalone case studies, based on detailed statistics, which are the result of the subscription of three online tools. The first one is purely quantitative and examines the teams' followers, posts, comments, shares, and likes across the three social networks: Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, over a timeframe lasting three months (from October to December 2017). The second step is still quantitative and focuses more on the followers' activities about their favourite team, also measuring the impact of won/lost games on their emotionality. The last case study covers both quantitative and qualitative results, and is dedicated entirely to supporters and their opinions on how their favourite teams use social networks and email marketing. The inquiry involves online survey addressed to 249 fans, with 19 closed questions (and one open investigation) on how they view the future of communication in the basketball world. Overall, this research contributes to the literature with a snapshot of the current communication situation in the Italian Basketball World.

DECLARATION FORM

The work I have submitted is my own effort. I certify that all the material in this Research project, which is not my own work, has been identified and acknowledged. No material are included for which a degree has been previously conferred upon me.

Signed _Mattes Grypott_ 13/02/2018

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

Social Media (SM) has undoubtedly had a significant impact on the sports world, transforming it even more into a business, with countless facets related to marketing and fan engagement. Image and brand equity of teams can benefit, or be negatively affected, by the power and the speed of social network platforms, that can connect people wherever they are in the world in real-time, and from both computers and mobiles (Kishner and Crescenti, 2010). As a matter of fact, sports teams have similar structures to business companies, and they share the very comparable goal of improving performance, such as increasing brand image and profit (Fransen et al., 2015).

SM has created a new form of communication that has affected both individuals and organizations, practically since Facebook was founded in 2004 (O'Boyle, 2014), taking the connection to a higher level, and making it available for a much more significant percentage of the world's inhabitants. Sports organizations were probably one of the first business entities that had, and still have, to face this new need for more engaged communication. Hambrick (2015) focused on the extensive investment in the communication strategies in sports, and more recently, Burk et al. (2016) delved much on various ways in which teams can take advantage of e-mail campaigns, social media, and other digital tools. Varmus and Kubina (2015), considers the digital tools vital not only for big clubs but also for small and local entities.

E-mail marketing was the first tool for this new method of communication. However, over the past decade, SM broke onto the scene, completely changing the focus of communications managers. It is even possible to state that we have all witnessed an astonishing rise that has turned the role of fans in the sports communication system upside-down: supporters have never been so under the magnifying glass of communications managers and their strategies, in a perfect 'Challenger Sale' style (Dixon & Adamson, 2013:21).

The initial purpose of this research was to focus just on how teams communicate through email newsletters. The fact that only five teams display the opportunity to enrol in the newsletter on their homepage (up to December 2017), in combination with the increasing involvement of the SM in communication strategies, changed the focus of this study.

This is mainly because sports organizations understood the potentialities of keeping fans informed and up-to-date: this can convince them of playing an essential role for the team (Strategic Direction, 2016), with many positive consequences for both clubs and supporters. Teams have been developing individual players' SM activities, in combination with sponsors' special packages, specifically for platforms such as Facebook and Twitter. For example, the Real Madrid football player, Cristiano Ronaldo, can "produce" more than 1 million likes for a post on Facebook (Korzynski and Paniagua, 2016). Having these athletes comment on specific companies on Facebook and Twitter, or wearing specifically-branded clothing in a photo on Instagram, could be valued at millions of dollars. Both teams and players are likewise taking significant advantage of SM in this context.

A lot has been said about social media over the last few years. However, there are limited studies on the application of the social media in the running of basketball teams. To date, no prior research has taken into consideration the Italian Basketball League (Legabasket Serie A); this study aims to address this gap.

The investigation focuses on the relationship between Italian Basketball fans and their favourite teams, in combination with the players' SM accounts. Using mainly quantitative methods, based on online SM statistics, and adding a qualitative facet via an online survey, several findings for future improvements were obtained. Through three different case studies, it was possible to gain a better understanding of the current situation in the Italian Basketball First League. Our cases focused initially on how teams used SM (also in comparison with other sports such as football), then moving on to the attention of fans and their level of engagement, regarding the type of content, and concluding with some consideration to possible future recommendations.

Research Objectives:

- define the current SM activities of Italian basketball teams, in order to analyse and understand performance and potentialities, based on clubs' geographical location and number of followers;

- analyse the related economic impact on sponsorships and investments (and eventual areas of improvement);

- define the typical characteristics of Italian fans, based on personal data (e.g. gender, age, and geographical location), and their SM activities;

- actively "listen" to fans' suggestions, in order to understand how they see the future of communication in the Italian basketball world.

Overall, this research contributes to the literature by providing a snapshot of the current situation of Social Media, Email Marketing, and Fans Engagement within the Italian Basketball World.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

One of the most substantial innovations found within SM was the capacity to remove communication barriers, offering costless information to everyone (Rayna and Striukova 2010; Dell'Anno et al., 2016). Twitter, which is one of the most popular and influential SM outlets (Jin and Phua, 2014), for example, has wholly driven supporters to engage with both teams and athletes (Crowley, 2017). Sport, in general, has had a significant presence in SM since the moment this communication tool first appeared: in 2009, the athletes Kobe Bryant, Tiger Woods, and Alex Rodriguez, were three of the top 10 most-mentioned individuals on Twitter (Kishner and Crescenti, 2010). This is because celebrities who attract significant followers on the social media can ignite a sort of confidence and trust (Jin and Phua, 2014).The athletes with large following continue to attract even more fans online.

The most significant digital platforms across the world include Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube; the sizes of these platforms depend on the number of followers and their high level of activity (Vásquez and Escamilla, 2014). According to Statista – The portal for statistics (2018a), the most popular social networks are usually the ones that have the highest level of user engagement. However, how many people use SM? Statistics as of January 2018, revealed Facebook as the most popular social network having active accounts with 2.2 billion users on a monthly basis. Instagram is rated as the seventh in popularity with 843 million monthly active users, and Twitter is immediately out of the top ten (11th) with 330 million (Statista – The portal for statistics, 2018a).

Moreover, numbers are continuously growing, considering that in 2009 Facebook had just 197 million users: at the moment, the percentage of the world population using Facebook stands at 22%. The number of Instagram users accessing Facebook is reported to be 51%; furthermore, 35% of the users do it more than one time per day; and Instagram now has five times more users than it had just five years ago (Lister, 2018).

Witnessing people connected to SM everywhere on the street is possible. Majority of the people, which stands at 80%, access various social media platforms using their mobiles (Lister, 2018). This number leaves a door of vast opportunities open because currently, just 36% of the world's population uses smartphones. If we merely consider China, the most populous country on earth, it is forecasted that half of its citizens will be using smartphones by 2020 (Statista – The portal for statistics, 2018b). SM managers and marketers should consider this important aspect when developing future strategies; even more, if we consider that according to Cho (2015) and Phua et al. (2017), the younger generations connect to many social media platforms to access to various information sources at any one point in time. The most straightforward option for fans is to subscribe to the social accounts of their favourite club to be kept up-to-date (Dima, 2015).

SM also shares similar market shares in Italy, with Facebook's "gold medal" that counts 30 million monthly active users; Instagram and Twitter have 14 and 9 million monthly active users, respectively (Grassi, 2017). 85% of Italians use a smartphone, and spend an average of 52 hours per month on

mobiles; it is one of the highest percentages in Europe, including, for example, Spain with 87%, and the UK with 75% (Cosenza, 2018).

According to Achen (2016), the sporting world seems to be the perfect environment for building and improving-upon relationships with customers and fans. It is imperative to understand the impact of social media on the marketing (Felix et al., 2017).When the social media is used as a proper and consistent communication strategy, it becomes a fantastic tool to foster fans' attachment to their teams (Achen, 2016; Pronschinske et al., 2012); and sponsors, as a consequence.

During the last decade, SM has almost wholly ousted the classic communications methods, with Facebook and Twitter replacing both television and e-mail (Mudrick et al., 2016). There is an interesting statistic that reveals that 26% of supporters utilize SM to get in touch with their favourite players, and gather information on their favourite club (Laird, 2012, mentioned in Mudrick et al., 2016).

The sport has become a leading actor in SM; for example in the 2014 Football World Cup semi-final between Brazil and Germany a record of 35.6 million tweets was reported during the 90 minutes of the match (Koch, 2014). Mudrick et al., (2016) states that 2016 Olympics saw millions of fans using SM for live updates and highlights (Kapko, 2016).Considered in many countries as "the King of Sport" (Barajas and Araujo, 2014), football is the most followed sport on SM. The top ten sports teams on SM are all football clubs; the NBA (National Basketball Association), had three of the top 12 in 2015 (Badenhausen, 2015).

As it is possible to see in table 1, up to the 31st January 2018, the two Spanish football teams Real Madrid and FC Barcelona are the undisputed leaders with 104.1 and 100.7 million followers (respectively) on Facebook, 55.2 and 54.7 on Instagram. The number of followers that the two best players in the world, Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi, count on their official accounts also influences these impressive statistics. Messi, for example, has 86.8 million followers on Instagram alone (32.1 million more than his club, FC Barcelona).

Football Teams	Twitter Followers (M)	Facebook Followers (M)	Instagram Followers (M)
Real Madrid	28.9	104.1	55.2
FC Barcelona	27.3	100.7	54.7
Manchester United	17.0	71.9	20.7
PSG	6.1	32.9	11.3
FC Bayern München	4.3	43.8	11.7
Manchester City	5.7	30.9	6.2
AC Milan	6.4	24.3	4.0
Juventus FC	0.8	30.7	8.8

Table 1. Real Madrid and FC Barcelona lead this special SM ranking.

According to Barjas and Aguro (2014), having just one profile is not enough; what clubs need is continuous interaction with their supporters; moreover, they need to make the most of their brand, regarding visibility and reputation, to attract sponsors who want to advertise their product. Forbes.com (2018), studied SM reaction during the last Spanish Championship game between Real Madrid and FC Barcelona, and estimates that SM generated 41% of the value of the sponsors for that match; furthermore, the "Full-Time Final Video" received 4.3 million views and generated $186,000 for sponsors. A recent study estimated that a sponsored content posted by the famous Brazilian football player Neymar it could be valued up to 459,000 € (Grandessa, 2018). Every message posted by Neymar can reach 187 million of followers: this is why, recently, brands are choosing this type of advertising, because they are able to reach very targeted audience.

Top football clubs can reach a much higher number of social media followers as compared to basketball. NBA teams have an average of 5.2 million followers on Facebook, 1.7 million on Instagram, and 1.95 million on Twitter (see table 1). Los Angeles Lakers have a significant number of Facebook followers, which stands at 20.85 million that is more than 50 million, fewer than the third football team (Manchester United with 71.9 million). However, the NBA has the most effective communication strategy on SM. Adam Silver, NBA Commissioner, in an interview, stated that more live content would be posted on Twitter, to bring fans closer to both games and the players (Eli, 2018). More live entertainment also seems to be Twitter's goal. In fact, the social network started broadcasting pre-and-post-games live at the Wimbledon Tennis Championship and are live-streaming Thursday NFL games (Eli, 2018).

In Europe, the SM situation for top basketball teams that play in the Euroleague is relatively diverse (to reiterate, Real Madrid and FC Barcelona occupy the senior two positions concerning the number of followers)-(see table 1). The 16 million Real Madrid followers on Facebook seem to be an incredible exception (14 million more than FC Barcelona). The average (not including Real Madrid) would be just 405,000 on Facebook; a number that is vastly different from what football can produce.

It is possible to notice the same relationship also in Italy between football and basketball teams (see Table 1). The average number of Facebook followers of the first basketball league does not reach the club with fewer followers in the first football league. In general, the ratio has ten times more SM followers in football. A significant portion of athletes, managers, and media advisors must continue to improve their ability to develop effective SM strategies (Korzynski and Paniagua, 2016). Analysing and understanding some of the statistics cited here could be beneficial for both basketball teams and managers, to improve the level of fans' engagement and interactions. However, a deeper dive into this topic would also help in understanding economic facets.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Three Cluster Regions

The research analyses the social media activities of the 16 teams from the First Italian Basketball League, divided into three Cluster Regions based on geography: North, Centre, and South. The last Cluster also includes the two big islands Sardinia and Sicily. The purpose is to define the average social media activities and the engagement effect that teams from the three clusters produce among their followers. It is immediately clear how the North has a significant impact on statistics and findings.

- **North**: 8 teams (Brescia, Cantù, Cremona, Milano, Torino, Trento, Varese, Venezia)

- **Centre**: 4 teams (Bologna, Pesaro, Pistoia, Reggio Emilia)

- **South**: 4 teams (Avellino, Brindisi, Capo d'Orlando, Sassari)

Each statistic you find in this research represents the average for each of the above-mentioned groups.
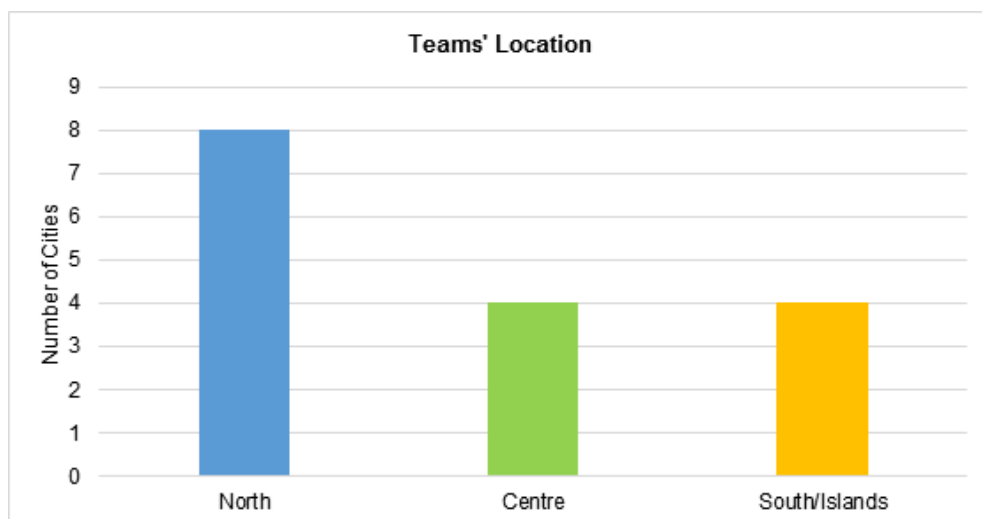
Figure 1. A graphical representation of the three Cluster Regions that shows North as a leader with eight teams.

The research is the result of three different Case Studies, based on both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Each case study represents standalone analysis that, combined with the others, provides a detailed overview of social media behaviour of both teams and their followers. Three online tools were used to gather statistics from Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Each online platform (described in the next few lines) was subscribed, for three months, to benefit from all of the available content. All of the data analysed are also based on teams and followers within Italy: thanks to the features of these platforms, it was, in fact, possible to limit the statistics to justify the Italian territories. Pieters et al., (2012) noticed the importance of being tied to your territory to improve the commercial performance also made the clusters' division following the study.

3.2. Case Study #1 – Teams and Followers Overview

This first case study is purely quantitative and examines the 16 teams' followers, posts, comments, shares, and likes on the three major social networks. The second step is to compare the results with the number of inhabitants of the cities where the clubs are located. The online tool used to gather all of these statistics was TrueSocialMetrics.com, a social media analytics tool that measures the real value of social media activity by analysing followers' growth trends and how the activity of users on social media pages changes over time (TrueSocialMetrics, 2018). This portion of the research covers a timeframe lasting three months; from October to December 2017, which includes 203 games (between the Italian First League, and the European competitions such as Champions League, Euro Cup, and the Euro League). Each match somehow affected (both in a positive and negative way) the results of the research, based primarily on the number of comments and likes.

Competition	Type of Competition	Number of Teams	Number of Games
Italian First League	National	16	91
Champions League	European	4	37
Euro Cup	European	3	30
Euro League	European	1	15

Table 2. All the games played by Italian teams from October to December 2017, divided per competition.

Visible traces such as likes, comments, and shares are almost unanimously contemplated as the most reliable way to measure the level of supporters' engagement (Ellison et al., 2014). In this study, all of these facets were considered, in correlation with the number of followers, and number of teams' posts.

The statistics analysed in this first case study were:

- **Population and Avg. Population** per City and Cluster Region

- Total number and Avg. number of **Comments**, **Posts**, **Shares**, and **Likes** per Team and Cluster Region

- Four different **Rates** per Team and Cluster Region, such as:

  - *Conversation Rate* (comments/number of posts)

  - *Amplification Rate* (shares/number of posts)

  - *Applause Rate* (likes/number of posts)

  - *Engagement Rate* (comments + shares + likes / number of posts)

3.3. Case Study #2 – Mentions of the Team and Social Influence

The second step of the research is still quantitative and focuses more on the followers' activities about their favourite team. It also reveals a qualitative side, because it measures the impact of won/ lost games on the emotionality of fans within their respective social networks. The online tool used was to mention a real-time media monitoring system that follows what people say about brands and competitors (Mention, 2018). The system can keep track of every time, and label (i.e., teams in this particular case) is mentioned in a post or comment, from which social network; and assigns an emotional rate, called "sentiment." Statistics were analysed within a timeframe of one week (from Thursday 7th to Wednesday 13th of December 2017), with eight Italian First League matches, and considering just Twitter and Facebook, focusing on:

- **Total Mentions** and **Avg. Mentions** per Team and Cluster Region

- Mentions' **sources**

- Statistics of the **days of the week** with more mentions

The result is an interesting overview of the activities on social networks during the days of the games, and the way results influence the followers' emotions.

3.4. Case Study #3 – Supporters' Voice

The last portion of the research is entirely dedicated to supporters and their opinions of how their favourite teams use social networks.19 closed questions were addressed to 249 Italian fans about the social media activities of their favourite team and their level of happiness and engagement. Also, one open question at the end on how they view the future of communication in the basketball world. The survey was anonymous, and had been created with another online tool, Typeform, an intuitive and engaging online form builder, used to create surveys that engage users (Typeform, 2018), although it did not include any mandatory questions. The platform was able to generate a simple link to share it with potentially interested supporters easily. Three different paid online campaigns on various platforms (Google, Twitter, and LinkedIn), were used to disperse the form across Italian supporters, based on dedicated keywords, such as the name of the team and general basketball-related tags. In total, the survey received 3574 visits, with 249 forms being completed.

The first part of the survey was dedicated to specific questions, to get comprehensive information on the supporters' demographics; such as gender, age, city, team supported, and the league in which the club plays (e.g., First League, Second League, etc.). This quantitative section can be considered a type of supplement, in support of Case Study #1, because it further develops the picture of the typical Italian basketball supporter, with details, which were impossible to obtain by merely using TrueSocialMetrics.com (TrueSocialMetrics, 2018).

The second big part of the survey was dedicated entirely to the quality of the information that fans can find on social networks and email marketing (e.g., newsletters), personal preferences, and the evaluation of content. Of the 249 individuals who filled-in the form, just 130 responded to the last open question: "What's your idea about the possible future scenarios of the communication in the Italian basketball world? Do you see any possible improvement point?" To omit the non-relevant comments, an additional selection was applied and therefore led to 69 suggestions for future improvements. The same questions and the same answer' canalization was addressed to 67 teams' managers, coaches, and executives, with 12 for future improvements. This qualitative collection of comments and suggestions on what was lacking and what can be improved is the core of this last section of research.

4. RESULTS, ANALYSIS, AND EVALUATION OF FINDINGS

4.1. Cluster Regions and Population

The focus of the first step of this research is the relationship between teams and territory, which leads to an apparently visible predominance of the Northern Cluster over the other two regions, both in the number of teams playing in the Italian First League and the average population of the cities, which they represent. Statistics up to January 2017 (Table 3) clearly indicates that cities with a basketball team have a more prominent population in the North (avg. 372,538 per team). This statistics almost double the Centre (avg. 186, 21); with the South, that shows the lowest average population with 77,451 inhabitants (Tuttitalia, 2017).

Cities	Cluster Region	Population
Milano	North	1,351,562
Torino	North	886,837
Bologna	Centre	388,367
Venezia	North	261,905
Brescia	North	196,670
Reggio	Centre	171,491
Sassari	South	127,533
Trento	North	117,417
Pesaro	Centre	94,813
Pistoia	Centre	90,205
Brindisi	South	87,820
Varese	North	80,694
Cremona	North	71,924
Avellino	South	54,561
Capo d'Orlando	South	39,889
Cantù	North	13,296

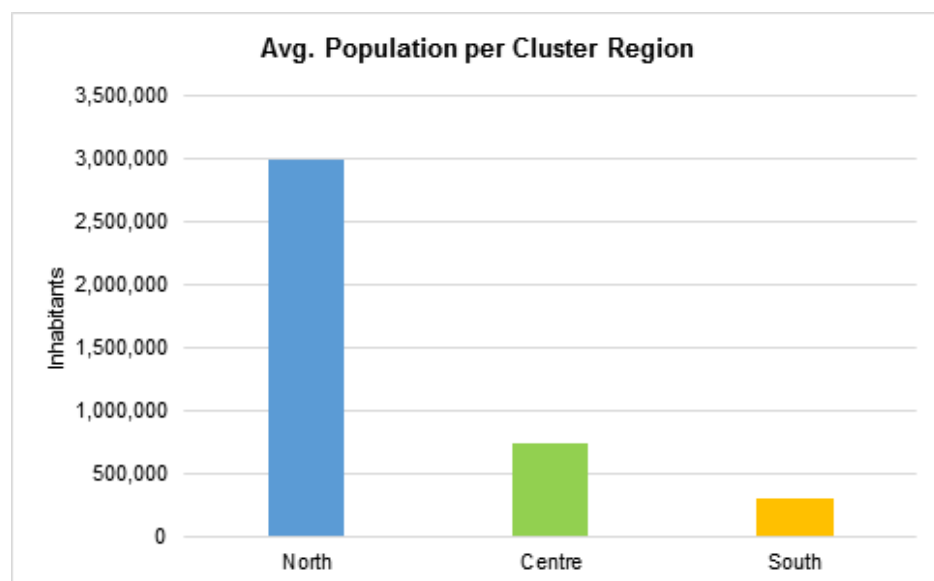Table 3. Population per city with a basketball team playing in the first league.

Figure 2. The average population per Cluster Region.

Even if northern teams have a more prominent number of potential followers, these statistics seem to be entirely unlinked for the number of followers (Figure 3).

4.2. Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram Followers

Facebook is the SM with more followers per team with an average of 39,645 followers. The difference of population does not affect the southern cluster that almost reaches northern clubs per number of followers (45,781 and 41,176 avg., respectively); practically unexpectedly, Central Cluster shows an average of just 25,844 followers per team. In percentage, southern teams show a way higher market penetration (regarding SM followers); compared to the other two clusters. This statistic leads to considerable higher SM engagement between teams and inhabitants in the South Cluster.

The second social network, based on the number of followers is Instagram, far behind Facebook, with an average of 15,722 supporters per Italian city with a First League team (23,923 fewer than Facebook). The South Cluster leads the groups with an average of 22,317 followers, with 7,067 more than the North (avg. 15,249), and 12,243 more than Centre (avg. 10,074). Also, in this case, the percentage of followers is a lot higher in the South Cluster (28.8%) than in the North (4.1%), and Centre (5.4%).The lesser used social network for basketball communications in Italy is Twitter, with an average of just 10,558 followers per city (29,088 fewer than Facebook and 5,165 fewer than Instagram). This number represents the 4.2% of the inhabitants (versus the 15.7% of Facebook, and the 6.2% of Instagram), a tiny portion of market penetration and engagement. These numbers are corroborated in the survey of the third step of this study (see Figure 2), in which the 93% of submitters cited Facebook as the most used Social network with which to gather information about their favourite team, followed by Instagram (40%), and Twitter (30%).
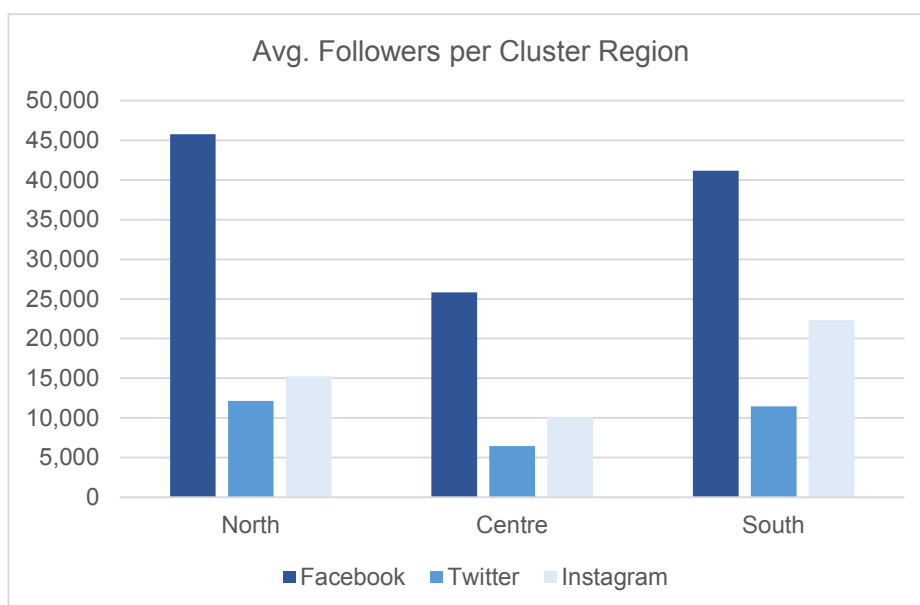
Figure 3a. The average follower on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, per Cluster Region.
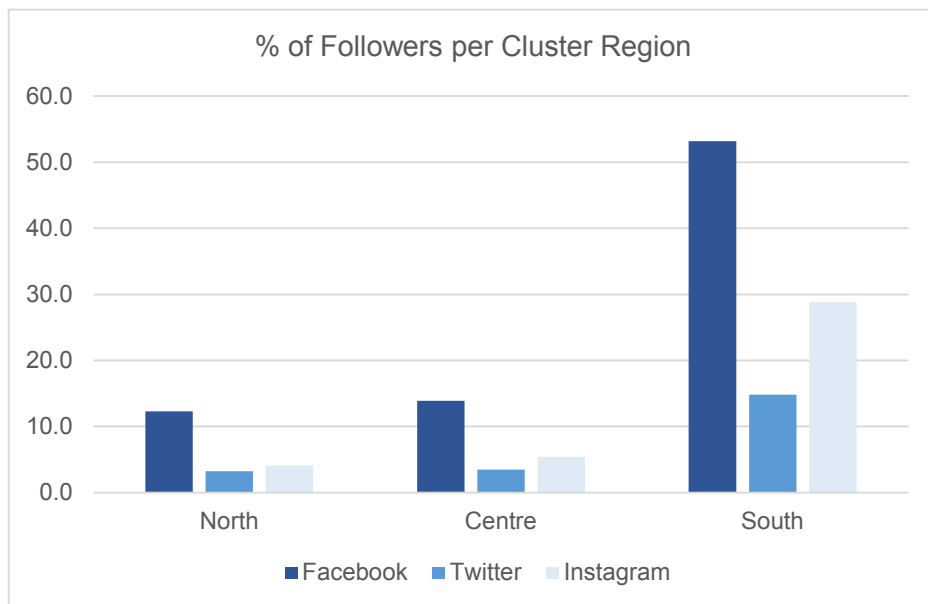
Figure 3b. The percentage of followers per Cluster Region.

4.3. Case Study #1: Social Network Performance

The level of engagement of each social network was calculated by analysing the relationship between the number of posts, shares, likes, and comments (Appendix II).

4.3.1. Posts

Surprisingly, even if it is the social network with the fewest followers and the least used by supporters, Twitter was the most used by teams that, during the three months of research, posted an average of 636 tweets. Statistics are similar in the clubs from the North and South Clusters (avg. 731 and 777 respectively), while Centre demonstrated a less active presence with an average of 399 posts per team.
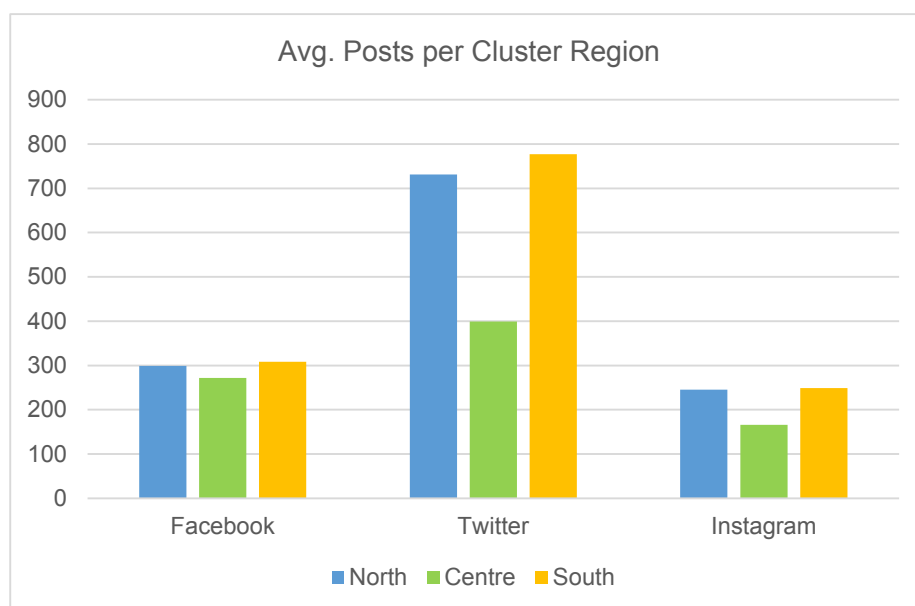
Figure 4. The average number of comments that teams post per Cluster Region.

Facebook and Instagram have similar statistics, with a general average of 293 and 220 posts per Italian team. Facebook is the only social network in which the three clusters have almost the same numbers: an average per team of 299 posts for the North, 272 for Centre and 308 for South (again the top performer) within three months.

4.3.2. Likes

The first performance indicator of a post that was analysed was the number of Likes that each post receives, which is considered as the most reliable key performance indicator for very content posted (Ellison et al., 2014). The leading social network in this particular field is Instagram, with an average of 122,216 likes per team over the three considered months, almost 100,000 more than Facebook that follows with 28,270. Twitter is, again incredibly considering the number of tweets that teams post, at the last position with just 3,694 likes. The trend for each social network rewards the North Cluster as the online community with the most active followers, regarding Likes with an average of 65,892 likes per team, closely followed by South (53,428), and Centre, as usual, more distant (34,859).

An excellent key performance indicator is provided by the Applause Rate, which represents the average number of Likes per one post (see Figure 4). Statistics again show the predominance of Instagram with 484.38 Likes per post; North is the best cluster with an applause rate of 536.24, followed by South (472.86), and Centre (444.05). The same results were found for Facebook (that has an average of 94.93 Likes), with the North Cluster with an applause rate of 116.96, and similar statistics for Centre and South (83.43 and 84.42). Twitter has the most inferior results with just 6.21 average Likes per post, and Centre Cluster, which is, for once, the top performer with a rate of 8.36, followed by North (5.88), and South (4.38).
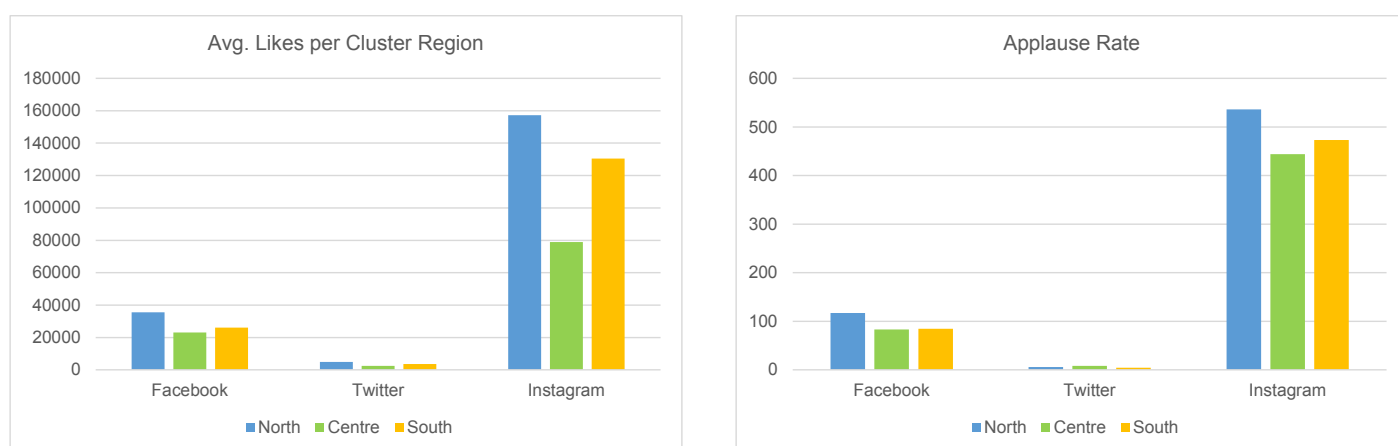

Figure 5. On the left, the graphic of number of Likes; on the right, the graphic of the Applause Rate.

4.3.3. Comments

The undisputed leader is Facebook with an average of 1,856 comments per team over the three analysed months, which means a medium 6.27 per post. This number represents the Conversation Rate that is the number of comments per post, and it sees the northern teams as the most commented with a rate of 7.02, followed by Centre (6.52), and South (5.28).

Instagram's performance shows a general Conversation Rate of 3.06, which is the result of the average from North Cluster (3.19), Centre (2.89), and South (3.10). These numbers highlight a more similar distribution between the three clusters, as well as for Twitter, which, even if it shows an almost non-existent Conversation Rate (0.25), confirms this trend between the three clusters.
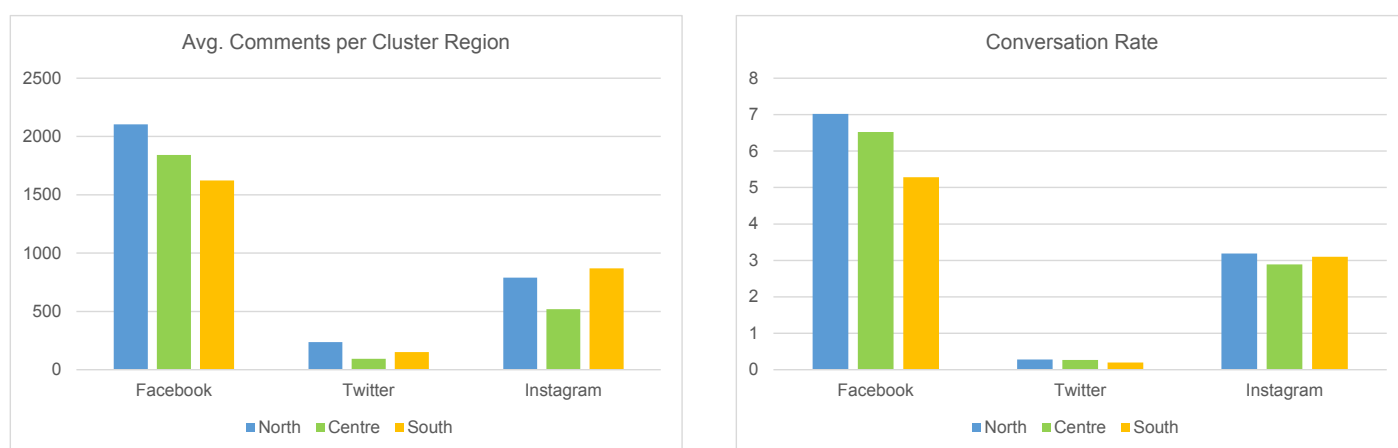
Figure 6. On the left, the graphic of number of Comments; on the right, the graphic of the Conversion Rate.

4.3.4. Shares

The last parameter for a post-evaluation with no calls-to-action (e.g., commercials), is the number of Shares. Facebook confirms its leadership also in this particular field, with a general team's average of 2,241 shares over three months. The three clusters still see the North as the most dynamic, with 2,920 shares per team, while Centre is far behind with just 1,448, with South almost in the middle between the two others (2,355).

With Instagram that had almost no performance (11 shares between all the three social networks), Twitter plays an active role with an average of 981 shares per team. The three clusters follow the same trend of Facebook regarding performance relationships, with the North as the leader with 1,180 shares, Centre in the last place with 764, and South in the middle with 999.

The key performance indicator for this field is the Amplification Rate, which indicates the number of shares per post (TrueSocialMetrics, 2018). With Instagram out of the game, Facebook can produce an average of 7.45 shares per post (9.63 North, 5.12 Centre, and 7.56 South). Twitter's rate is meager, as compared with the previous one, with just 1.73 average shares per post, and North teams that again "amplification" twice as much as Centre (9.63 North, 5.12 Centre, and 7.56 South).
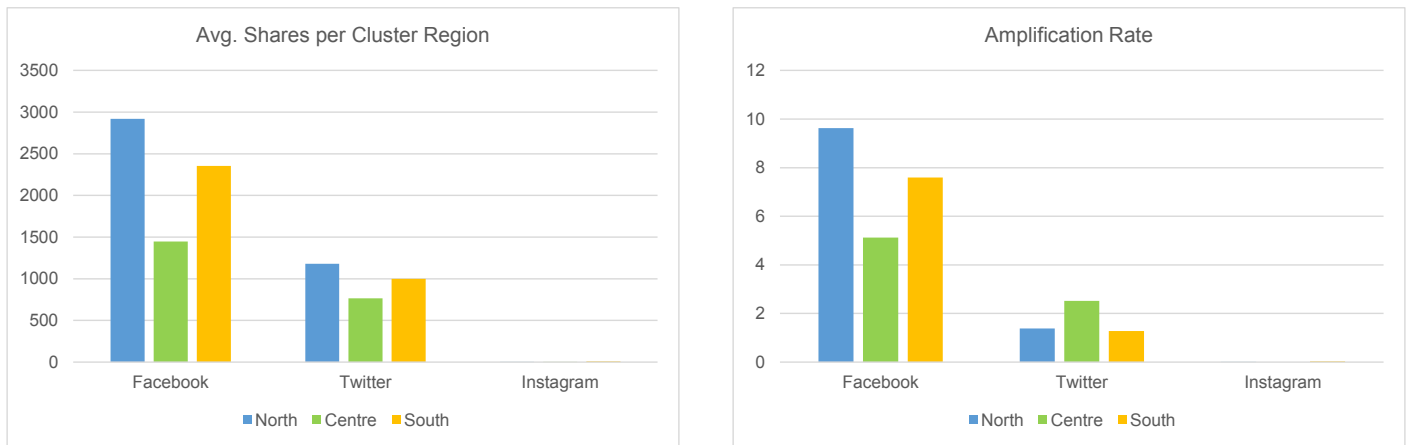
Figure 7. On the left, the graphic of number of Shares; on the right, the graphic of the Amplification Rate.

4.3.5. Engagement Rate

The last statistic considered in this case study is probably the most significant because it aims to combine all three Rates (Applause, Conversation, and Amplification Rate) analysed up to now. The Engagement Rate, in fact, is the result of the following calculation:

Engagement per Post = (comments + shares + posts) / number of posts

According to TrueSocialMetrics.com, this statistic is useful when comparing several accounts performance using compound Interaction values for all social interaction summarized (TrueSocialMetrics, 2018). As it is possible to see on Figure 7, that Instagram is the undisputed winner with an average per teams' post of 487.46, which is four times higher than Facebook (108.65), with Twitter wholly isolated at the bottom of this specific ranking with a rate of just 8.19. Focusing on each social network, Facebook shows similar numbers for Centre and Southern teams (respectively 95.07 and 97.29), while the northern ones have the highest engagement rate of 133.60. Similar ration performance for Instagram: North Cluster rules with a rate of 539.44, followed by South with 475.99, and Centre with 446.94. Twitter instead, sees the Centre as the top performer with a rate of 11.16, followed by North and South with a respective rate of 7.54 and of 5.86.
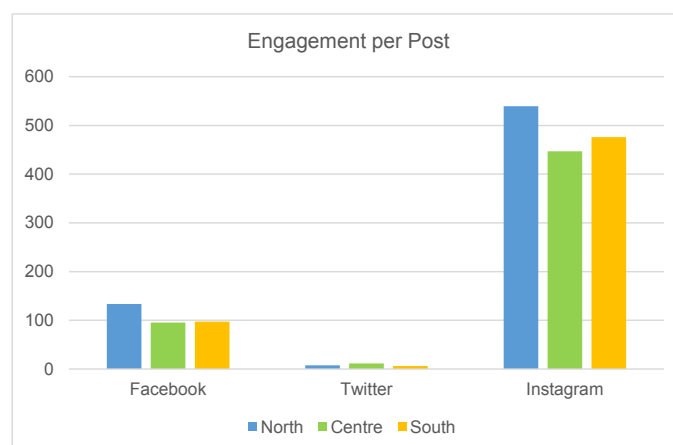
Figure 8. The graphical representation of the Engagement Rate based on both Cluster Regions and Social Media.

4.4. Case Study #2: Mentions about the Team and Social Influence

In the second step of this research, the focus shifts to the supporters' activities about their favourite teams on social media. The key performance indicator used to measure them is Mention, which is a post that contains the name of the team or a hashtag related to the club.

4.4.1. Which Cluster gets more mentions?

The seven days of the study demonstrated a clear predominance of the teams from the North and South Clusters, with an average mention per club of, respectively, 390 and 392 mentions. Centre revealed again far less social activity as compared with the other two clusters, with just 174 mentions. These numbers, translated daily, reveal a general average of 46 mentions, with the two top clusters' teams that receive an equal 56 mentions per day, and the third one just 25.
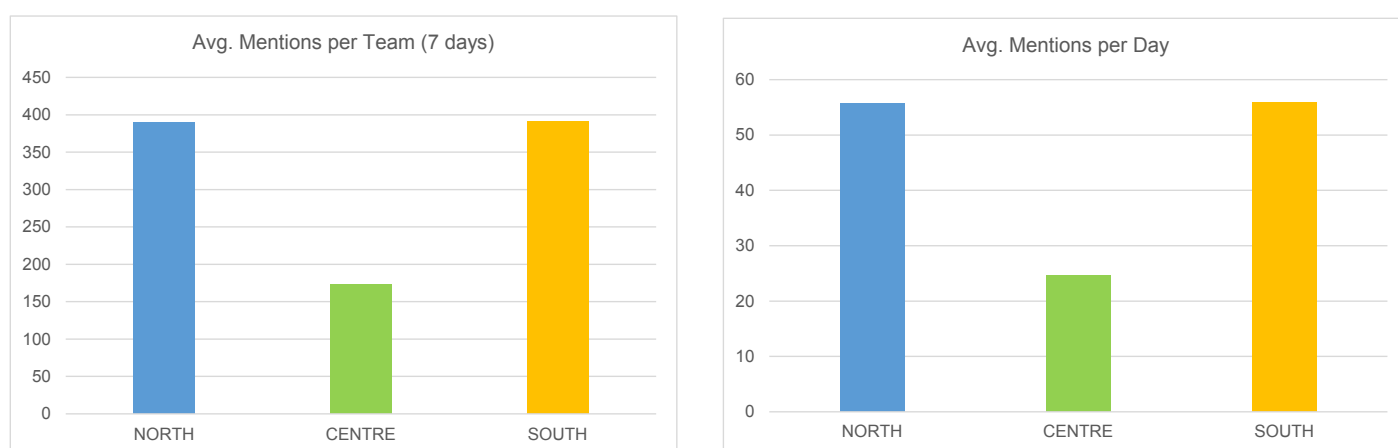
Figure 9. On the left, the graphic about the average mentions that teams from the three clusters received during a week; on the right, the graphic about the mentions per day.

Moving the attention to each social network's number of mentions per club, Facebook and Twitter can be easily equated with teams from Northern Italy (26.8 and 25.9 per day, respectively). However, they reveal a bit of difference in southern clubs (27.4 and 24.8), which becomes more noticeable in the central cluster (6.5 and 18.3).
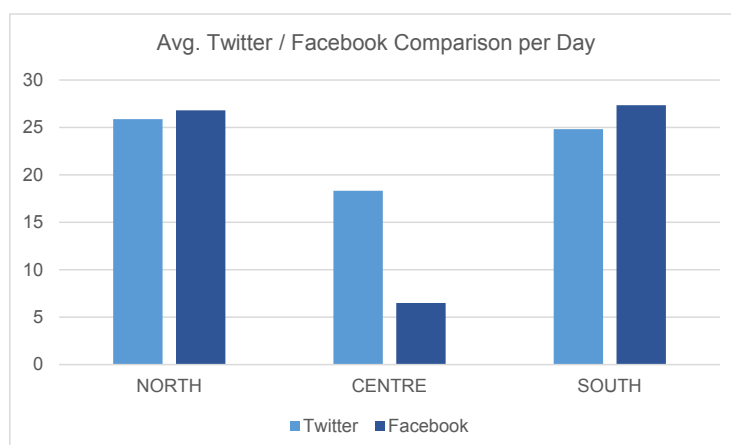
Figure 10. The comparisons between Facebook and Twitter of the mentions received by teams per day.

4.4.2. The days of the week with more Mentions

A table was created considering the two days of the week with more to see if there was a day of the week in which fans are more active in talking about their team on social networks. These days seem to be the one of the match and the one before. The typical Italian League game-day is Sunday (it can change because of television agreements' needs), and, in fact, it is the one that received more mentions for nine teams, while it happened to be the second one for five other. Therefore, Saturday occupies the second position with seven teams: for five of them, it was the day with the most mentions and the second for the other two.

Studies also indicate Mondays and Thursdays are the best days for publishing on Instagram (Pozzetti, 2017), while on Facebook, the best time for posting is every day between 1 and 4 pm (Laganà, 2017).
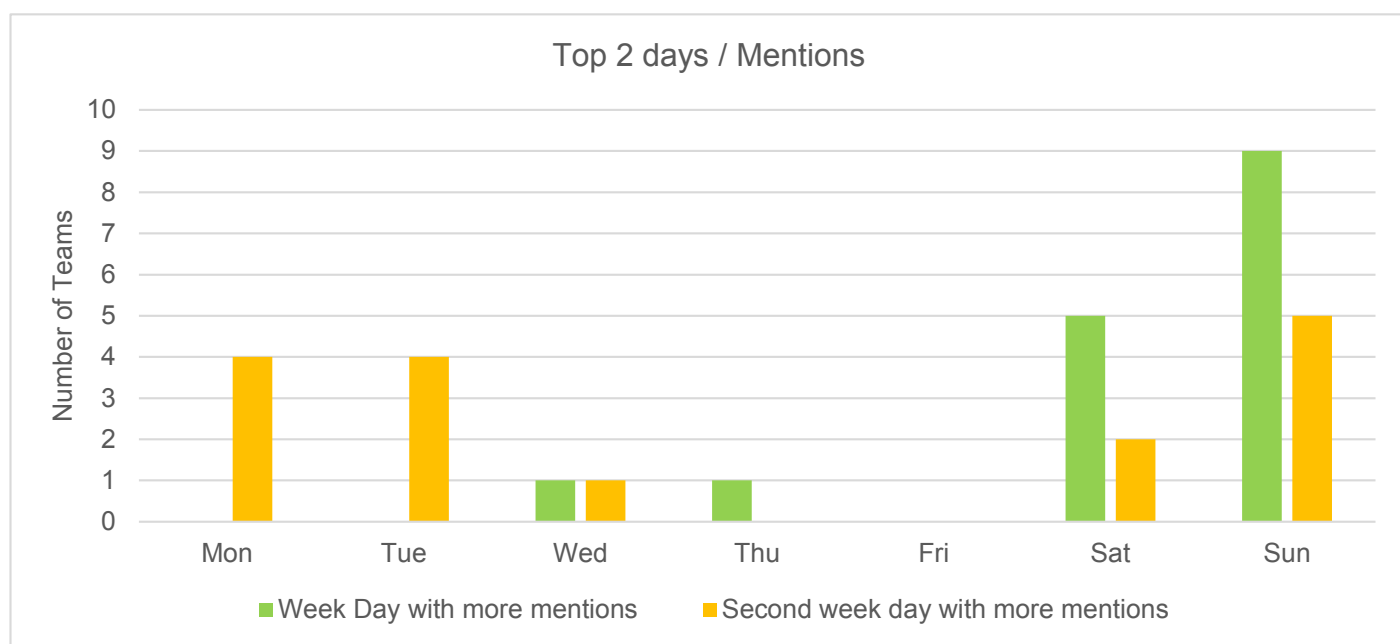
Figure 11. The days of the week, that received more mentions.
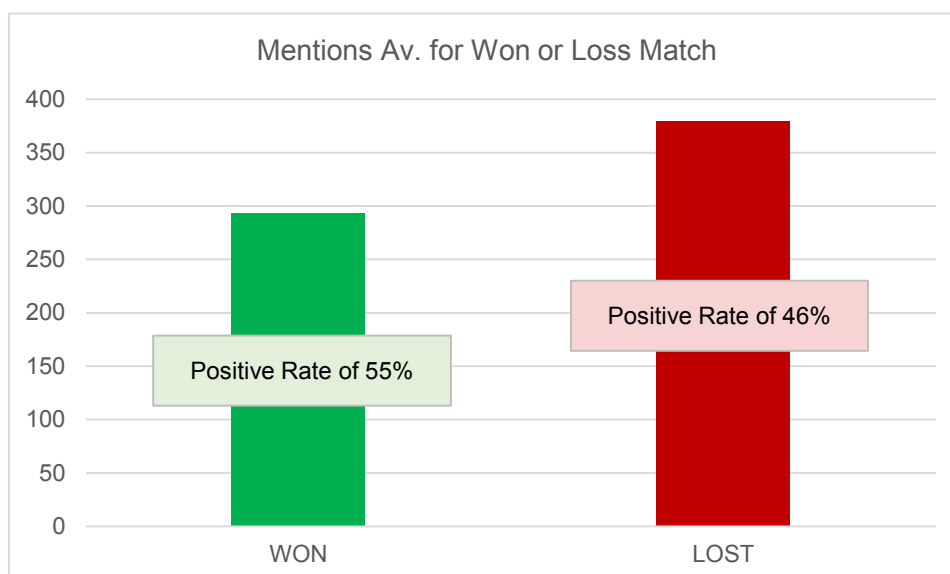
Figure 12. The graphic of mentions based on won/lost games and positive rate.

4.4.3. The Emotionality of a Mention

Another exciting analysis determined by Mention.com is the emotional aspect of each post, based on the game is either won or lost (Figure 12). The eight winner clubs received fewer mentions with an average of 42 per day, while the eight teams who faced defeat received 54. The online tool also calculates a positive rate per mention (negative below 50%), which translates into a 55% for teams with victories, and 46% for the ones with losses. This statistic seems to point out that followers comment more on defeats (using negative criticisms) than victories (in a positive manner).

4.5. Case Study #3: Supporters' Voice

The last step of the research focuses even more on supporters and their points of view on communication by favourite teams, using an anonymous survey, addressed to 249 people.

4.5.1. A Quantitative Study of the Results

The first large section of the survey is useful in identifying a typical recipient of the information sent by teams, starting from gender and age. Results show a neat predominance of males, represented by 82% of the participants, and just 18% of female supporters. This is already a meaningful indicator of the typical average fan. This statistic is complemented by the age analysis that falls into three sections:

- 25 to 34 years old = 23%
- 35 to 44 years old = 27%
- 45 to 54 years old = 27%

The first two combine to constitute more than the 50% of the market share, while younger than 24 and older than 55 years old seems to be a smaller audience. These numbers find confirmation on a statistic by Cosenza (2018), which indicates that the 53% of Facebook users have more than 35 years. 72% of submitters defined themselves as Supporters, while journalists represent 14%, and the remaining 14% includes managers, players, and sponsors.
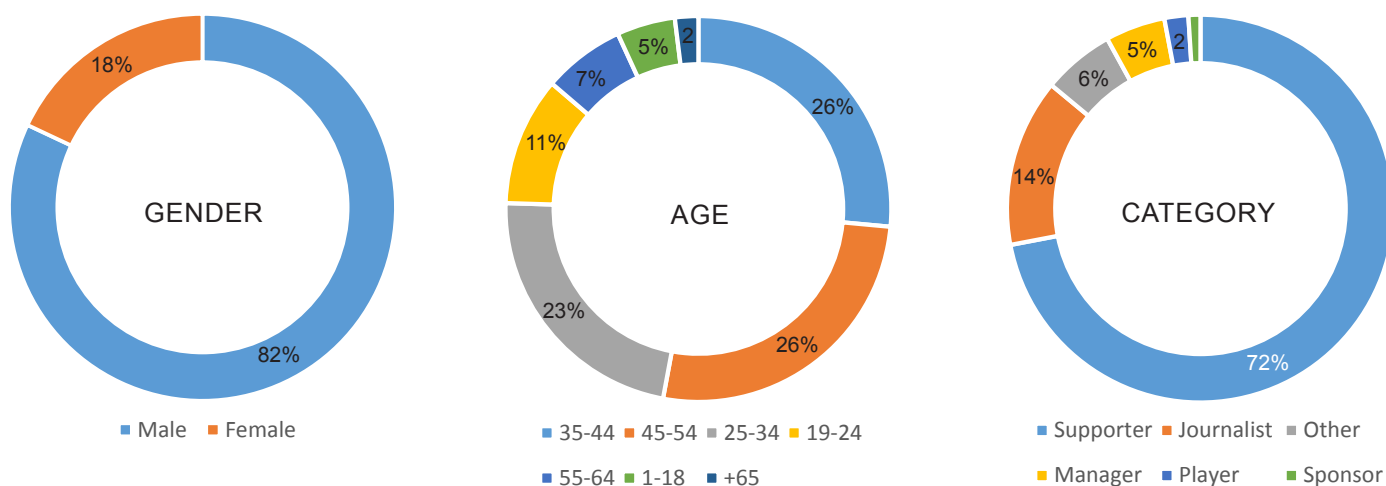
Figure 13. Three graphics that show details such as gender, age, and category, about the survey's participants.

The geographical dislocation by Cluster Regions of the participants completes the picture, with a strong predominance of people from the North (61%), versus 17% from the Centre, and 20% from South; there is also a tiny portion of people living outside Italy (2%) (Figure 14).
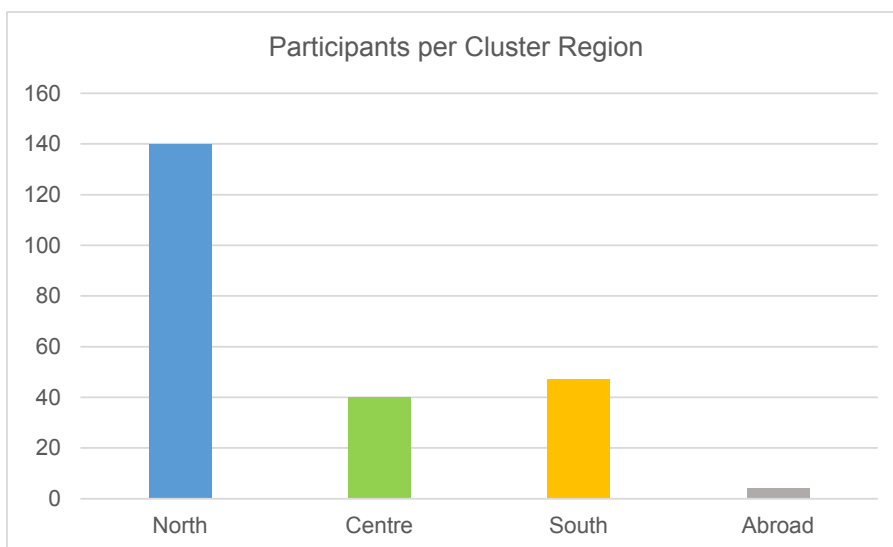
Figure 14. The participants of the survey divided by Cluster Regions.

4.5.2. What Supporter Like

The central part of the survey focuses on supporters' habits and the way they receive and use information about their teams. Fans prefer social media to e-mail blasts (75% versus 8%), with a few who quietly said, they use both (17%). Statistics confirm results from parts #1 and #2 of this research, with Facebook being selected by 96% of the survey's participants (195) as the most used social network. Instagram was considered to be a good source by 94 submitters (40), while Twitter by 70 (30%).
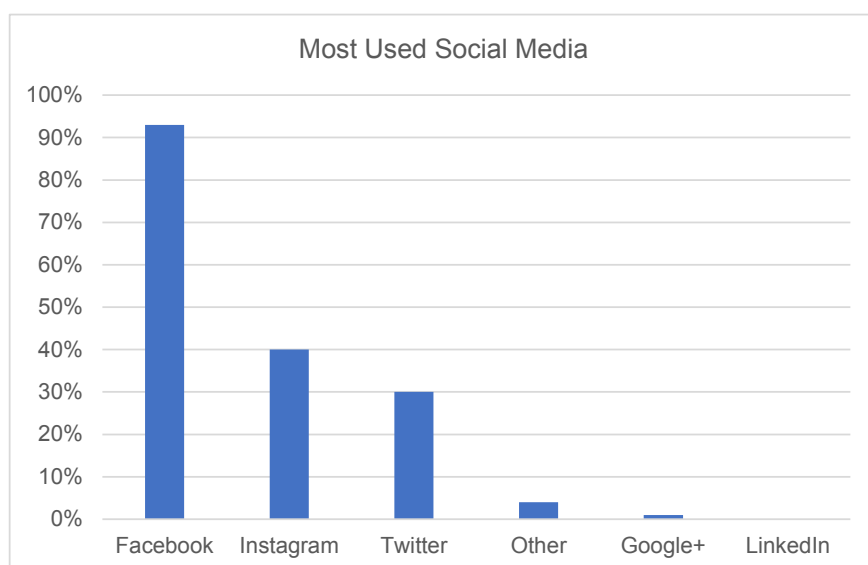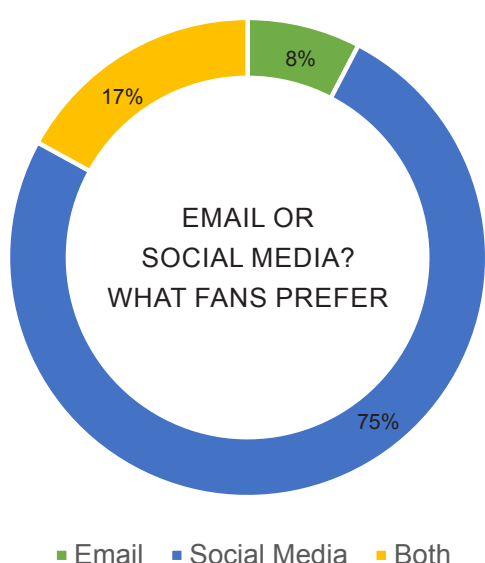
Figure 15 (left). The participants of the survey clearly indicate SM as a preferred communication tool.
Figure 16 (right). The most used social media by the participants of the survey.

185 participants (81%) confirmed the trend that sees mobile as the first source of information (see Figure 16), and selected the Smartphone as the most used tool to connect, followed by PCs and laptops with 41%. Surprisingly, tablets occupy the last ranking position with just 43 submitters (19%).

These statistics are confirmed by the fact that 66% of participants submitted the survey from a Smartphone, 29% from laptops, and 5% from tablets.
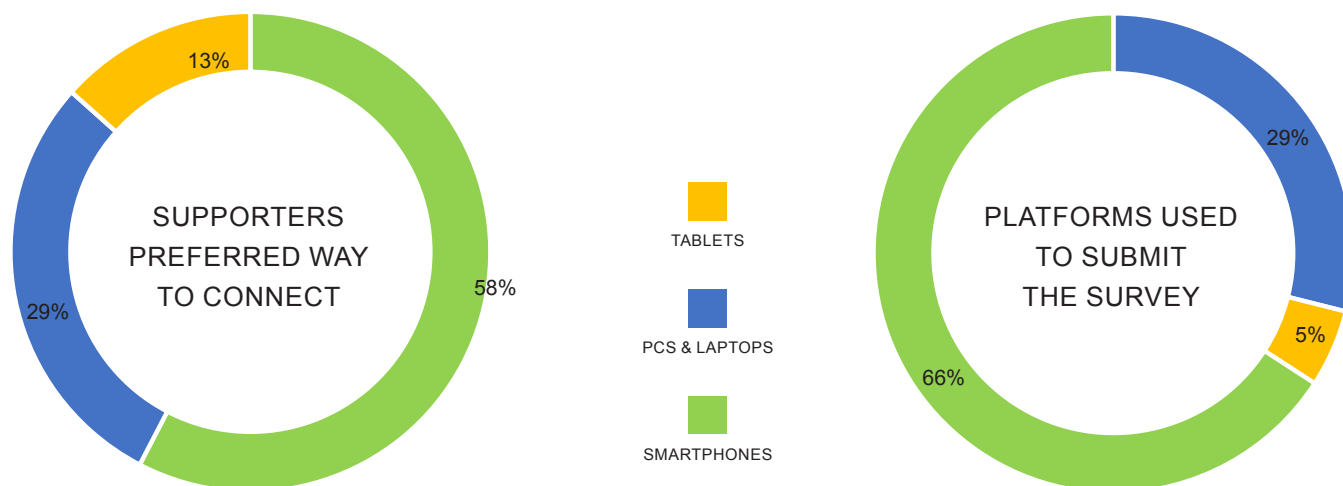
Figure 17. On the left, the platforms that fans use to connect; on the right, the platforms used by participants for the survey.

Participants were then asked to indicate how often they receive information to see if there was a difference between social media and emails. The majority (60%) stated that they receive information every day on social media; 15% once a week, and 23% twice a week. Results are a bit more evenly distributed for email campaigns, with also a tiny portion of supporters (4%) who requested to receive communication once per month.
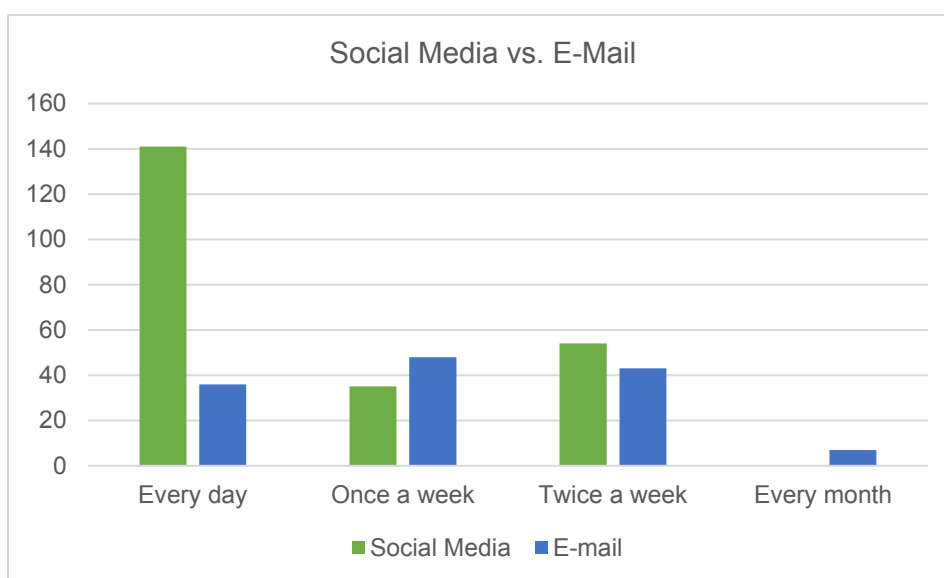
Figure 18. The frequency of emails and social media posts.

However, what is the content that supporters receive? Fans could choose between 10 different categories that demonstrate how the attention of the teams is to provide general information about the club. 226 participants selected this option. Pre- and post-game news occupy the second and third place with 168 and 160 choices. The last two categories will be an interesting topic, considering the final chapter of this results section, and are the news about young teams (97 votes), and the video interviews (94).
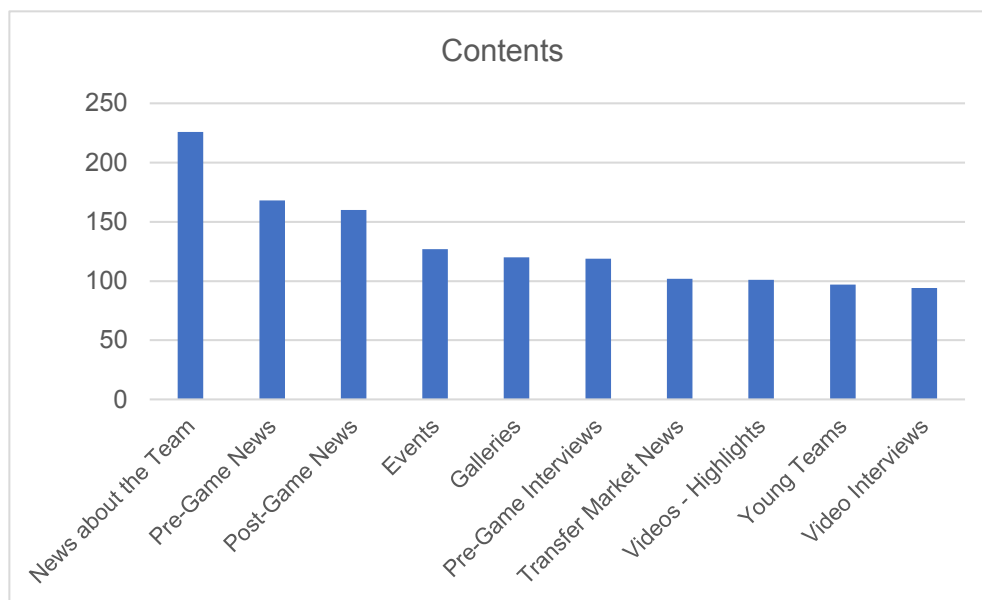
Figure 19. The different kind of contents the survey's participants detected.

In general, considering a scale from zero to five, fans seem to be happy about the quality of the information they can find on social media, or that they receive from their teams, with an average of 3.9.

4.5.3. What Supporters would like

The very last part of this research sought the participants' point of view regarding possible future scenarios of basketball communication, with the open question: What do you think about the potential future situations of basketball communication? In addition, which ones are the aspects that you would like your team to improve?

This optional inquiry received 130 answers (46% of participants); 27 of which were classified as "Not relevant (or incomplete)," and 34 as "Neutral (or ok as it is now)." Instead, the 69 answers that were labelled as "Interesting" and was divided into seven categories, such as:

- **Fan Engagement**: comments that suggest an improvement in the relationship between players and supporters off the court;

- **Live Game Entertainment**: observations related to the development of the entertainment level during games, with particular attention to engagement through Smartphone activities;

- **Video Improvements**: suggestions that consider video as one of the most (or the most) valuable source of information, and that state the importance of improving the general quality;

- **Mobile & Website Improvements**: these two areas were considered together because all of the observations that mention one of the two go in the same direction, which is improvement of the current website and team mobile app;

- **Web TV**: proposals that see Web TV as the future of basketball communication;

- **Email Communication**: there is just one interesting comment about this topic, that know this tool as the most important to communicate with the season ticket subscribers;

- **Young Teams**: all of the feedback that highlights the lack of proper communication between young teams, and that suggests a substantial improvement in both quality and quantity.

Answers could be part of a maximum of two categories.
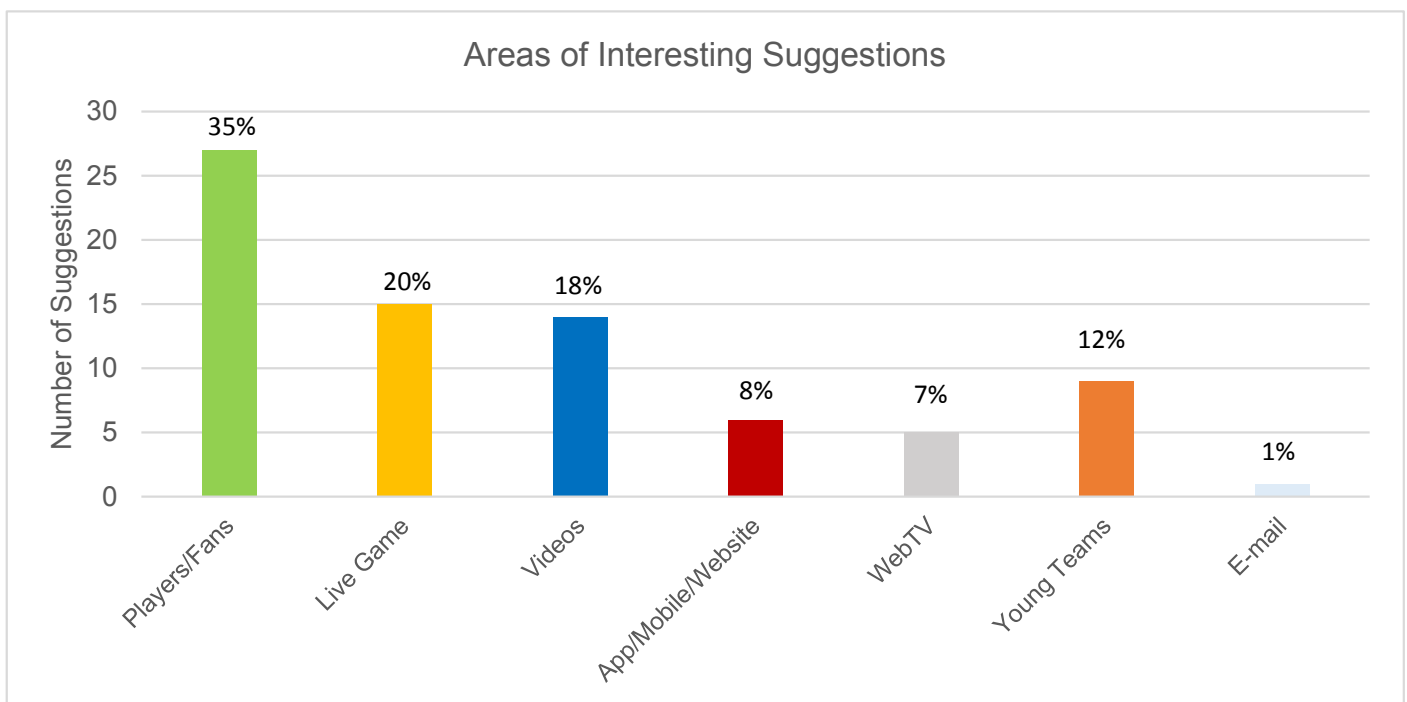
Figure 20. The areas of the suggestions that survey's participants indicated for future improvements.

It is possible to see that a significant portion of suggestions (35%) flows in the direction of improving the engagement between players and supporters. Live Game Entertainment (20%) and Video Improvements (18%) are the two prominent categories that follow. Young Teams (12%) then follow. Suggestions on website, mobile, and Web TV, round out the responses with 8% and 7%.

Some of the most exciting answers are analysed in the next few lines.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study provides some critical quantitative and qualitative observations in different areas, such as population, teams and supporter habits, and economy with the common denominator being the use of social networks as a tool, providing teams a method to update (and for fans to gather) information. The results generated practical and theoretical implications, categorized in seven points, which analyse the current situation and suggests some possible improvements for the teams, to strengthen their presence on social networks and thereby develop more effective messages, tailored to their various supporters' needs.

5.1. Population and Economic Impact on Sponsorships and Investments

The population distribution of the eight teams within the North Cluster, and just four within the other two regions, inevitably leads to disproportionate statistics, which are magnified even further and influenced by Turin and Milan, the only two big cities with a team in the first league. If we discount those, then the average population in the North Cluster would be just 92,738, and the average number of followers per team would be 22,330. This number would be more in-line with the other two regions. This trend (that can even be considered a limitation) follows the current Italian economic scenario, which sees a healthier situation in the Northern cities of the country, for both economy and work (Repubblica, 2015). This aspect probably also reflects the same reality in the basketball world and leads most perhaps to a more difficult way of attracting sponsors and investors in both the Centre and South of Italy. This is probably why these two clusters do not have many cities with a team in the First League.

The analysis of the regional trends of the last ten years shows the constant decrease of the Central Cluster, which had as many as nine teams in the 2008/2009 season, while the North witnessed stable growth, particularly during the last five seasons. Southern regions saw a similar (and constant) rise, overtaking central ones in the previous four championships.
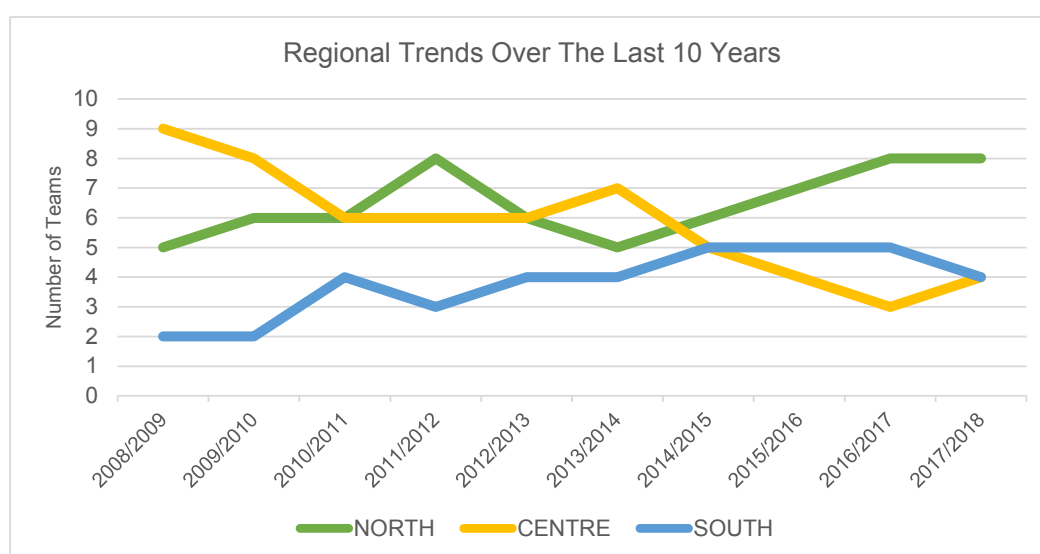
Fig 21. The graphic shows how the three Cluster Regions evolved during the last ten years.

These numbers correspond with the teams' social media activities and with social engagement among their supporters. In fact, there is a general trend, which sees the North and South & Islands Clusters on top of performance in almost all of the statistics recorded.

Based on these analyses, four critical conclusions can be drawn:

1. Northern Teams have a massive pool with which to draw from, and consequentially, with a better likelihood of fan engagement.

2. Consequentially, there is a more significant chance of fan engagement that can be exploited, to improve the relationship between teams and followers. Managers, who handle the teams' social media platforms, should also pay particular attention to the content of the messages because the quality of the information is an essential influencer of the level of fan engagement (Guo et al., 2017).

3. Based on the relationship between the cities and the number of followers, increasing the number of followers is probably more difficult for the teams from southern and central regions.

4. Having a more substantial number of followers can be helpful in gathering sponsors and investors because it can be easily demonstrated that a message on social media can directly reach many supporters. Clubs are highly dependent on sponsorships, and that is why being able to establish effective and long-lasting relationships with this type of stakeholders, becomes essential for the economic wellness of a team (Pieters et al., 2012). Nowadays the firms are lowering, or abandoning, their promotions in sports activities because the social media accounts of the team offer direct interaction with fans (Kishner and Crescenti, 2010).

5.2. Social Networks and Engagement

One of the critical outcomes of this study highlights a discrepancy between the social media outlets with more followers and the most use by teams in posting their comments. If Facebook is, by far, the online community, which has almost four times the number of followers than Twitter (643,326 versus 168,922; and an average per team of 39,645 versus 10,558), then Twitter was revealed to be the most used by the clubs. In fact, the number of comments on this social media outlet is 636 (average per team), versus the 293 of Facebook and 220 of Instagram.

These differences and inconsistencies are even more prominent considering the level of engagement of each post. Statistics showed in Chapter 4.3., clearly indicate that Instagram provides the best performance, regarding Likes on Instagram (122,216 average per team, versus the 3,694 of Twitter), Shares and Comments on Facebook (respectively 2,241 and 1,859 average per team, versus 981 and 161).

Mention.com counterbalances these statistics, demonstrating a more equitable distribution, regarding the number of times that supporters mention their favourite team on social networks. In this direction, fans type their club with a daily average of 23 times on Twitter, and 20 on Facebook. However, further consideration must be made on these numbers, because it includes the comparatively low activity level of supporters from the Central Cluster on Facebook with 6.5 daily mentions versus the 18.3 on Twitter. These statistics are not in-line with the other two cluster regions, whereas Facebook has a slight majority of mentions (27.4 versus 24.8 in the South & Islands, and 26.8 versus 25.6 in the North).

Fans' suggestions, as shown in chapter 4.5.3., flow in a defined direction, with more engagement between teams and supporters, and during the game. The use of social networks can surely help in narrowing this gap. Some of the most interesting suggestions that came from the survey's open question highlight this particular need. Everything can be summarized in two brief points:

- More real-time activities, such as instant-messaging during games (replicating the NBA model), and more interactions through videos and smartphones

- Improve the relationship with the local territories, maybe with a museum, dedicated spaces for supporters, and more events "outside the matches" where fans can meet and interact with players.

Based on these statistics and fans' considerations, three improvement points can be highlighted:

5. Teams should probably focus more on Facebook and Instagram, to increase their fan engagement level, explicitly considering that they both offer excellent Amplification, Applause, and Conversation Rates. Achen (2016), for example, suggests recognizing engaging individuals with the explicit goal of fulfilling their needs of information about players and teams, because if influences positively their behaviour.

6. Twitter demonstrates a right engagement level, which deserves to be exploited, regarding further improvements, and considering that the level of live game entertainment requested by supporters, this exchange of communication becomes one of the best advantages of this social network (Drahošová & Balco, 2017).

7. ccording to Mason (2017), 'social video generates 1200 percent more shares than text and images combined'. Based on supporters' suggestions, managers should consider investing in increasing the quality of videos and the number of clips; maybe introducing something completely new like vertical videos instead of the classic landscape, and considering that more than 80% of supporters use smartphones to connect. Listening to supporters' suggestions, such as the ones mentioned above, is of strategic importance for nurturing and sustaining the love for the brand because it can improve their feeling of beginning an active part of the club (Strategic Direction, 2016).

5.3. Drawbacks and Limitations

This study presents some points, which can be perceived as limitations. Considering just the population of the cities, for example, can be a restriction. However, it can be viewed as a good indication point and a hint for future investigations.

As previously mentioned, another hindrance is the unbalanced regional proportion of the teams. Enlarging the research to the clubs of the minor series could improve the overall reliability of the study, and could justify future studies on the topic.

REFERENCE LIST

Achen, RM. (2016) Building Relationships between Fans and Teams in the National Basketball Association through Facebook: The Influence of Engagement on Relationship Quality and Consumer Behavior, *Dissertation Abstracts International*, Section A, 76, 12-A (E), PsycINFO, EBSCOhost (Accessed: 30/01/18).

Badenhausen, K. (2015) Barcelona and Real Madrid Head The Most Popular Sports Teams on Social Media, *Forbes. Com*, p. 7, Business Source Premier, EBSCOhost(Accessed:3/01/2018)..

Cho, J. (2015) Roles of Smartphone app use in improving social capital and reducing social isolation. *Cyber psychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 18, 6, pp. 350-355, PsycINFO, EBSCOhost (Accessed: 30/01/18).

Crowley, K. (2017) Network interactions-- implementing systems theory to examine NCAA basketball twitter accounts, *Dissertation Abstracts International Section A*, 77, 12-A (E), PsycINFO, and EBSCOhost (Accessed: 30/01/18).

Dell'Anno, R, Rayna, T, & Solomon, O. (2016) Impact of social media on economic growth – evidence from social media,' *Applied Economics Letters*, 23, 9, pp. 633-636, Business Source Premier, EBSCOhost (Accessed: 30/01/18).

Dima, T. (2015) The Business Model of European Football Club Competitions, Procedia Economics and Finance, 23, 2nd GLOBAL CONFERENCE on BUSINESS, ECONOMICS, MANAGEMENT and TOURISM, pp. 1245-1252, *Science Direct*, EBSCOhost (Accessed: 30/01/18)

Dixon, M. & Adamson, B. (2013) The Challenger Sale: How to Take Control of the Customer Conversation. London: Penguin.

Drahošová, M, & Balco, P. (2017) The analysis of advantages and disadvantages of use of social media in European Union, Procedia Computer Science, 109, 8th International Conference on Ambient Systems, Networks and Technologies, ANT-2017 and the 7th International Conference on Sustainable Energy Information Technology, SEIT 2017, 16-19 May 2017, Madeira, Portugal, pp. 1005-1009, *Science Direct*, EBSCOhost (Accessed: 30/01/18)

'El Clasico: Real Madrid-Barcelona Game Generates More Than $40 Million For Sponsors' 2017, Forbes.Com, p. 1, *Business Source Premier*, EBSCOhost (Accessed: 30/01/18)

Eli, B, @eliblumenthal, & USA, T n.d., '*Twitter, NBA agrees to Livestream shows, USA Today*, n.d., Academic Search Premier, EBSCOhost (Accessed: 30/01/18).

Ellison, N, Vitak, J, Gray, R, & Lampe, C. (2014) Cultivating social resources on social network sites: Facebook relationship maintenance behaviors and their role in social capital processes, *Journal Of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 19, 4, pp. 855-870, PsycINFO, EBSCOhost (Accessed: 30/01/18).

Felix, R, Rauschnabel, P, & Hinsch, C. (2017) Elements of strategic social media marketing: A holistic framework, *Journal of Business Research*, 70, pp. 118-126, ScienceDirect, EBSCOhost (Accessed: 30/01/18).

Fransen, K, Van Puyenbroeck, S, Loughead, T, Vanbeselaere, N, De Cuyper, B, Vande Broek, G, & Boen, F .(2015) *Who takes the lead? Social network analysis as a pioneering tool to investigate shared leadership within sports teams*, Social Networks, 43, pp. 28-38, ScienceDirect, EBSCOhost (Accessed: 30/01/18).

Hambrick, ME. (2017) Sports communication research: A social network analysis, *Sports Management Review*, 20, pp. 170-183, ScienceDirect, EBSCOhost (Accessed: 30/01/18).

Guo, L, Zhang, M, Kang, K, & Hu, M. (2017) Transforming followers into fans: a study of Chinese users of the WeChat Official Account. *Online Information Review*, 41, 7, pp. 1029-1045, Education Research Complete, EBSCOhost (Accessed: 30/01/18).

'How Real Madrid increases love for its brand: the importance of interactive communication 2016, *Strategic Direction*, 32, 11, p. 4, Complementary Index, EBSCOhost (Accessed: 30/01/18).

Jin, S, & Phua, J.(2014) Following celebrities' tweets about brands: The impact of Twitter-based electronic word-of-mouth on consumers ,source credibility perception, buying intention, and social identification with celebrities, Journal Of Advertising, 43, 2, pp. 181-195, PsycINFO, EBSCOhost (Accessed: 30/01/18).

Kapko, M. (2016) Rio 2016 Olympics on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat, CIO (13284045), p. 1, Complementary Index, EBSCOhost (Accessed: 30/01/18).

Kishner, I, & Crescenti, B. (2010) The Rise of Social Media. Entertainment & Sports Lawyer, 27, 4, pp. 24-26, SPORTDiscus with Full Text, EBSCOhost (Accessed: 30/01/18).

Korzynski, P, & Paniagua, J. (2016) Score a tweet and post a goal: Social media recipes for sports stars, Business Horizons, 59, pp. 185-192, ScienceDirect, EBSCOhost (Accessed:3/02/18).

'Managing celebrity via impression management on social network sites: An exploratory study of NBA celebrity athletes' n.d. Sport, Business, And Management: An International Journal, 4, p. 440, Emerald Insight, EBSCOhost (Accessed 30/01/18).

Mudrick, M, Miller, M, & Atkin, D. (2016) The influence of social media on fan reactionary behaviors. Telematics and Informatics, 33, pp. 896-903, ScienceDirect, EBSCOhost (Accessed: 30/01/18).

O'Boyle, I. (2014) Mobilizing social media in sports management education. Journal Of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education (Elsevier Science), 15, pp. 58-60, SPORT Discus with Full Text, EBSCOhost (Accessed:31/01/18).

Pieters, M, Knoben, J, & Pouwels, M.(2012) A Social Net-

work Perspective on Sport Management: The Effect of Network Embeddedness on the Commercial Performance of Sport Organizations, Journal Of Sport Management, 26, 5, pp. 433-444, Business Source Premier, EBSCOhost (Accessed:30/01/18).

Phua, J, Jin, S, & Kim, J. (2017) Full-length article: Uses and gratifications of social networking sites for bridging and bonding social capital: A comparison of Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat. Computers in Human Behavior, 72, pp. 115-122, ScienceDirect, EBSCOhost (Accessed: 30/01/18).

Professor Angel Barajas, A, & Araújo, N. (2014) Top European football clubs and social networks: a true 2.0 relationship? Sport, Business, And Management: An International Journal, 3, p. 250, Emerald Insight, EBSCOhost (Accessed: 30/01/18).

Pronschinske, M, Groza, M, & Walker, M. (2012) Attracting Facebook 'Fans': The Importance of Authenticity and Engagement as a Social Networking Strategy for Professional Sport Teams. Sport Marketing Quarterly, 21, 4, pp. 221-231, Business Source Premier, EBSCOhost (Accessed: 30/01/18).

Rayna, T, & Striukova, L. (2010) Web 2.0 is cheap: supply exceeds demand, Prometheus, 28, 3, pp. 267-285, Education Research Complete, EBSCOhost (Accessed: 30/01/18).

Vásquez, G, & Escamilla, E. (2014) Best Practice in the Use of Social Networks Marketing Strategy as in SMEs, Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences, 148, 2nd International Conference on Strategic Innovative Marketing, pp. 533-542, ScienceDirect, EBSCOhost (Accessed: 30/01/18)

Cosenza, V. (2017) Facebook in Italia supra i 30 milioni di utenti [Facebook overtakes 30 million users in Italy]. VincosBlog. 29th May. Available at: http://vincos.it/2017/05/29/facebook-in-italia-supera-i-30-milioni-di-utenti/ (Accessed: 28/01/18).

Cosenza, V. (2018) OFCOM: Uso di Internet e Social in Europa [OFCOM: Internet and Social Media usage in Europe]. VincosBlog. 31st January. Available at: http://vincos.it/2017/05/29/facebook-in-italia-supera-i-30-milioni-di-utenti/ (Accessed: 01/02/18).

Grandessa, A. (2018) Neymar, non-solo 37-milioni l'anno dal Psg: UN post vale 459.000 euro [Neymar, not only 37 million from Psg: every post has a value of 459,000 euro]. La Gazzetta dello Sport. 7th February. Available at: http://www.gazzetta.it/Calcio/Ligue-1/07-02-2018/neymar-non-solo-37-milioni-anno-psg-social-post-vale-459000-euro-250115995552.shtml (Accessed: 08/02/18).

Grassi, R. (2017) Statistiche Social Media [Social Media Statistics]. Social Media Easy. 12th July. Available at: https://www.socialmediaeasy.it/statistiche-social-media/ (Accessed: 28/01/18).

Laganà, A. R. (2017) Social sharing: gli orari e i tempi giusti per la pubblicazione dei post [Social sharing: the best time and schedule to post]. Inside Marketing. 13th May. Available at: https://www.insidemarketing.it/social-sharing-orari-pubblicazione-post/ (Accessed: 28/01/18).

Lister, M. (2018) 40 Essential Social Media Marketing Statistics for 2018. The WordStream Blog. 18th January. Available at: https://www.wordstream.com/blog/ws/2017/01/05/social-media-marketing-statistics (Accessed: 30/01/18).

Mason, S. (2017) The Importance of Using Video Content on Social Media. Multiview. 30th May. Available at: https://www.multiview.com/resources/blog/importance-using-video-content-social-media/ (Accessed: 30/01/18).

Mention (2018) Real-time monitoring. Available at: https://mention.com/en/ (Accessed: 12/01/18).

Pozzetti, A. (2017) 15 Statistiche interessanti su Instagram e l'influencer marketing [15 interesting statistics about Instagram and the marketing influencers]. APclick. 28th November. Available at: https://www.apclick.it/15-statistiche-su-instagram/ (Accessed: 28/01/18).

Repubblica (2015) Benessere nelle città: al Nord più ricchezza e Lavoro, al Sud aria Migliore [Wellness in cities: more wealth and work in the North, better air in the South]. Repubblica. 23rd April. Available at: http://www.repubblica.it/economia/2015/04/23/news/urbes_rapporto_citta_benessere-112650757/ (Accessed: 28/01/18).

Statista – The portal for statistics (2018a) Most popular social networks worldwide as of January 2018, ranked by number of active users (in millions). Available at: https://www.statista.com/statistics/272014/global-social-networks-ranked-by-number-of-users/ (Accessed: 30/01/18).

Statista – The portal for statistics (2018b) Number of smartphone users worldwide from 2014 to 2020 (in billions). Available at: https://www.statista.com/statistics/330695/number-of-smartphone-users-worldwide/ (Accessed: 30/01/18).

Statista – The portal for statistics (2018c) Number of social media users worldwide from 2010 to 2021 (in billions). Available at: https://www.statista.com/statistics/278414/number-of-worldwide-social-network-users/ (Accessed: 30/01/18).

Typeform (2018) The Online Form Builder Created for humans. Available at: https://www.typeform.com/examples/forms/ (Accessed: 12/01/18).

TrueSocialMetrics. (2018) Turn social insights into action. Available at: https://www.truesocialmetrics.com/ (Accessed: 12/01/18).

Tuttitalia. (2017) Città italiane con più di 60.000 abitanti [Italian cities with more than 60,000 inhabitans]. Available at: https://www.tuttitalia.it/citta/popolazione/ (Accessed: 10/01/18). Tuttitalia (2017) Città italiane con più di 60.000 abitanti [Italian cities with more than 60,000 inhabitans]. Available at: https://www.tuttitalia.it/citta/popolazione/ (Accessed: 10/01/18).

Appendix I

Statistics about Facebook, Twitter and Instagram of the 16 teams of the first Italian basketball league, from October to December 2017 (TrueSocialMetrics, 2018), and about the population of each city with a team (Tuttoitalia, 2017).

| CITY | Population | | Followers | | |
	Cluster Region	Inhabitants	Facebook	Twitter	Instagram
Milano	North	1,351,562	170,459	44,468	57,031
Torino	North	886,837	17,149	1,963	6,723
Bologna	Centre	388,367	52,965	9,092	8,723
Venezia	North	261,905	33,984	10,083	16,143
Brescia	North	196,670	23,858	3,631	8,363
Reggio	Centre	171,491	25,637	8,364	21,063
Sassari	South	127,533	105,913	25,197	35,629
Trento	North	117,417	45,530	7,339	10,829
Pesaro	Centre	94,813	12,914	2,658	3,527
Pistoia	Centre	90,205	11,859	5,755	6,982
Brindisi	South	87,820	20,587	8,423	7,764
Varese	North	80,694	36,195	11,608	8,138
Cremona	North	71,924	12,574	6,238	6,373
Avellino	South	54,561	17,520	6,240	10,244
Capo d'Orl.	South	39,889	20,684	6,057	35,629
Cantù	North	13,296	26,498	11,806	8,395
ITALIAN Avg.		**252,187**	**39,645**	**10,558**	**15,722**

| CLUSTERS | Population | Avg. Followers | | |
		Facebook	Twitter	Instagram
North	372,538	45,781	12,142	15,249
Centre	186,219	25,844	6,467	10,074
South	77,451	41,176	11,479	22,317
ITALY	**252,187**	**39,645**	**10,558**	**15,722**

| CLUSTERS | Population | % of Followers | | |
		Facebook	Twitter	Instagram
North	372,538	12.3	3.3	4.1
Centre	186,219	13.9	3.5	5.4
South	77,451	53.2	14.8	28.8
ITALY	**252,187**	**15.7**	**4.2**	**6.2**

Appendix II

Statistics about Facebook, Twitter and Instagram of the 16 teams of the first Italian basketball league, from October to December 2017 (TrueSocialMetrics, 2018), divided in the three clusters, North, Centre, and South (including Sardinia and Sicily).

POSTS	Facebook	Twitter	Instagram
North	299	731	245
Centre	272	399	166
South	308	777	249

ENGAGEMENT PER POST [1]	Facebook	Twitter	Instagram
North	133.60	7.54	539.44
Centre	95.07	11.16	446.94
South	97.29	5.86	475.99

LIKES	Facebook	Twitter	Instagram
North	35,516	4,951	157,21
Centre	23,165	2,456	78,956
South	26,128	3,964	122,216

APPLAUSE RATE [2]	Facebook	Twitter	Instagram
North	116.95	5.88	536.24
Centre	83.43	8.36	444.05
South	84.42	4.38	472.86

COMMENTS	Facebook	Twitter	Instagram
North	2,104	237	790
Centre	1,841	94	520
South	1,622	151	870

CONVERSATION RATE [3]	Facebook	Twitter	Instagram
North	7.02	0.28	3.19
Centre	6.52	0.27	2.89
South	5.28	0.20	3.10

SHARES	Facebook	Twitter	Instagram
North	2,920	1,180	3
Centre	1,448	764	1
South	2,355	999	7

AMPLIFICATION RATE [4]	Facebook	Twitter	Instagram
North	9.63	1.38	0.01
Centre	5.12	2.52	0.00
South	7.59	1.28	0.03

(1) Engagement per Post Rate = (comments + shares + posts) / number of posts

(2) Applause Rate = likes per 1 post = likes / number of posts

(3) Conversation Rate = comments per 1 post = comments / number of posts

(4) Amplification Rate = shares per 1 post = shares / number of posts

Appendix III

Mentions overview based on statistics gathered from www.mention.com (Mention, 2018).

TIMEFRAME: 07/12/2017 - 13/12/2017

Legabasket (Italian First Basketball League) results of the championship game played between Saturday 9th and Sunday 10th of December, 2017

- Brescia - Sassari   78-79
- Venezia – Reggio   66-68
- Pistoia - Pesaro   86-83
- Cremona - Avellino   86-73
- Varese - Capo d'O.   82-58
- Brindisi – Trento   72-77
- Cantù - Bologna   94-87
- Torino - Milano   71-59

Results per Cities

| | MENTIONS | | | SOURCES | | | | | | | GAME 09/12/2017 | |
	Mentions	Avg./Day	Positive Rate	Twitter	Facebook	Images	News	Videos	Blogs	Forums	Home/Guest	Won/Lost
Trento	167	24	60%	90	70	0	4	0	2	1	Guest	Won
Torino	306	44	57%	87	170	45	1	0	2	1	Home	Won
Brindisi	292	42	35%	58	226	0	4	0	4	0	Home	Lost
Sassari	745	106	52%	430	236	3	22	2	5	2	Guest	Won
Brescia	325	46	40%	158	159	2	4	0	0	1	Home	Lost
Milano	1170	167	31%	422	665	57	15	0	9	2	Guest	Lost
C. d'Orl.	258	37	54%	170	73	4	7	1	3	0	Guest	Lost
Cantù	301	43	53%	173	115	0	7	1	4	1	Home	Won
Varese	276	39	51%	183	87	5	0	0	1	0	Home	Won
Pistoia	145	21	54%	112	33	0	0	0	0	0	Home	Won
Venezia	432	62	53%	256	173	2	1	0	0	0	Home	Lost
Avellino	272	39	67%	37	231	3	0	1	0	0	Guest	Lost
Bologna	188	27	39%	188	0	0	0	0	0	0	Guest	Lost
Pesaro	101	14	49%	56	45	0	0	0	0	0	Guest	Lost
Reggio	261	37	52%	157	104	0	0	0	0	0	Guest	Won
Cremona	145	21	61%	80	62	0	1	1	1	0	Home	Won

Results per Cluster Regions

| | MENTIONS | | | SOURCES | | | | | | |
	Avg./Week	Avg./Day	Positive Rate	Twitter	Facebook	Images	News	Videos	Blogs	Forums
NORTH	390	56	51%	181	188	14	4	0	2	1
CENTRE	174	25	49%	128	46	0	0	0	0	0
SOUTH	392	56	52%	174	192	3	8	1	3	1

Results based on game won or lost

| | MENTIONS | | | SOURCES | | | | | | |
	Avg./Week	Avg./Day	Positive Rate	Twitter	Facebook	Images	News	Videos	Blogs	Forums
Game won	293	42	55%	164	110	7	4	1	2	1
Game lost	380	54	46%	168	197	9	4	0	2	0

The 2 days of the week with more mentions per team

🟢 *day with more mentions*

🔵 *second day with more mentions*

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Trento			🟢				🔵
Torino	🔵						🟢
Brindisi	🔵						🟢
Sassari		🔵				🟢	
Brescia	🔵						🔵
Milano				🔵			🟢
Capo d'Orl.		🔵					🟢
Cantù	🔵						🟢
Varese		🔵					🟢
Pistoia						🟢	🔵
Venezia			🔵			🟢	
Avellino						🔵	🟢
Bologna		🔵					🟢
Pesaro						🟢	🔵
Reggio						🟢	🔵
Cremona						🔵	🟢

Appendix IV

General statistics about the online survey addressed to Italian supporters (Typefrom.com)

	Total Visits	Unique Visits	Responses (submitted forms)	Completion	Avg. time to complete
PCs & Laptops	281	210	72	32%	04:34
Tablets	79	69	13	18%	04:44
Smartphones	3241	2734	164	6%	04:41
Others	6	6	0	0%	00:00
TOTAL	**3607**	**3019**	**249**	**/**	**04:39**

Detailed statistics about the persons who submitted the form

Age	Total	%
35-44	63	27%
45-54	63	27%
25-34	53	23%
19-24	25	11%
55-64	16	7%
1-18	11	5%
+65	4	2%

Category	Total	%
Supporter	169	72%
Journalist	34	14%
Other	13	6%
Manager	11	5%
Player	5	2%
Sponsor	3	1%

Region	Total	%
Piemonte	95	40%
Lombardia	29	12%
Campania	28	12%
Emilia-Romagna	26	11%
Veneto	13	6%
Sardegna	10	4%
Lazio	5	2%
Toscana	5	2%
Abruzzo	4	2%
Abroad	4	2%
Puglia	4	2%
Sicilia	3	1%
Trentino	3	1%
Basilicata	2	1%
Other	4	2%

Gender	Total	%
Male	192	82%
Female	43	18%

What's your favourite social network?	Total	%
Facebook	195	93%
Instagram	94	40%
Twitter	70	30%
Other	9	4%
Google+	2	1%
LinkedIn	0	0%

What kind of news do you receive?	Total	%
News about the Team	226	96%
Pre-Game News	168	71%
Post-Game News	160	68%
Events	127	54%
Galleries	120	51%
Pre-Game Interviews	119	51%
Transfer Market News	102	43%
Videos - Highlights	101	43%
Young Teams	97	41%
Video Interviews	94	40%

What do you use to connect?	Total	%
Smartphone	185	81%
PC/Laptop	93	41%
Tablet	43	19%

What do you prefer?	Total	%
Email	18	8%
Social Media	177	75%
Both	40	17%

Appendix V - Survey's Answers

Original answers (in Italian language) at the question: Quali pensi che siano gli scenari futuri della comunicazione nello sport in generale, e nel basket in particolare? Quali sono gli aspetti che vorresti che la tua squadra migliorasse? *[What's your idea about the possible future scenarios of the communication in the Italian basketball world? Do you see any possible improvement point?]*

[English translation]

Penso che in futuro la comunicazione sarà ancora più rapida di così, difficile individuare quale forma sarà utilizzata. Credo che un buon modo di comunicare e diffondere le notizie di una squadra sportiva sia l'uso delle App, al fianco dei social, dei siti e delle e-mail.
[I think that in the future the communication will be even faster than that, it is difficult to identify which form will be used. I believe that a good way to communicate and spread the news of a sports team is the use of the Apps, alongside social networks, sites and e-mail]

Produzione interna ai club delle partite, con margini di crescita in termini di qualità per produzioni pre-post partita e cronaca. Realizzazione di musei, all'interno degli impianti sportivi, per una maggiore memoria e spirito di identificazione a favore dei tifosi. Crescita di eventi di intrattenimento nel contesto di una partita, sullo stile Nba e che, ad esempio, il calcio italiano continua a non recepire.
[Internal production of the match clubs, with margins of growth in terms of quality for pre-post production and news production. Creation of museums, inside the sports facilities, for greater memory and spirit of identification in favour of the fans. Growth of entertainment events in the context of a game, on the NBA style and that, for example, Italian football continues not to receive]

Highlights con commento
[Highlights with comments]

Penso che in futuro la comunicazione avverrà sempre più tramite video e sempre meno tramite comunicati stampa.
[I think that in the future communication will happen more and more through video and less and less through press releases]

Penso che la possibilità di comunicare con i social media faccia sentire il tifoso più vicino alla squadra, ha possibilità di essere informato su qualsiasi cosa in qualsiasi momento
[I think that the possibility of communicating with social media makes the fan feel closer to the team, has the possibility to be informed about anything at any time]

Penso alla scomparsa del cartaceo , per il basket spero in una web tv come per pallacanestro biella
[I think of the disappearance of paper, for basketball I hope in a web tv as for pallacanestro biella]

Video meglio editati Riassuntivi delle partite.
[better edited videos and summary of the games]

Si utilizzeranno sempre più i social network, sempre meno mail e carta stampata.
[More and more social networks will be used, with less and less mail and printed paper]

La mia squadra dovrebbe migliorare il contatto con i tifosi coinvolgendoli nella propria comunicazione.
[My team should improve contact with the fans by involving them in their communication]

Si potrebbero fare più dirette sui social per permettere alle persone che non possono essere presenti di vedere la partita ugualmente.
[You could do more direct social media to allow people who can not be present to see the game anyway]

Dettagli statistici su tutti i giocatori, giovanili comprese.

[Statistical details on all players, including youth players]

Più eventi insieme ai tifosi
[more events together with supporters]

Vorrei migliorassero le informazioni riguardo gli allenamenti, magari con un promemoria giornaliero di luogo e orario.

[I would like information on training to be improved, perhaps with a daily reminder of place and time]

Vorrei avere più notizie sulle trattative di mercato.
[I would like more information on market negotiations]

Rapporto societa-territorio-tifosi
[Team-territory-fans relationship]

Sempre maggiori sempre più vicini ai tifosi.
[Increasingly closer and closer to the fans]

Video delle partite. Qualità interviste. Highligts
[Match's videos, better interviews quality, and highlights]

Vorrei più promozioni
[I'd like more promotions]

Gestire i social network in modo adeguato e non come una duplicazione del sito ufficiale della squadra. manca completamente l'interazione.
[Manage social networks in an appropriate way and not as a duplication of the official website of the team. the interaction is completely missing]

La mia società si concentra quasi esclusivamente sulla prima squadra (A2), mentre dovrebbe migliorare la visibilità e le comunicazioni sul settore giovanile e sul minibasket.
[My team focuses almost exclusively on the first team (A2), while it should improve visibility and communication on the youth sector and on the minibasket]

Più risalto al settore giovanile.
[More attention to the youth teams]

Il futuro della comunicazione è sulla buona strada. La mia squadra dovrebbe valorizzare maggiormente i settori giovanili (di cui faccio parte) e fare capire meglio il messaggio che vuole mandare (cosa che a volte non succede e che crea scalpore nel pubblico.
[The future of communication is on track. My team should make the most of the youth sectors (of which I am part) and make the message he wants to send better understood (something that sometimes does not happen and creates a sensation in the public]

Sempre più vicini ai tifosi
[Always closer to supporters]

Penso che gli smartphone per diversi anni saranno ancora il mezzo di comunicazione più usato.
[I think smartphones for several years will still be the most used means of communication]

Fino ad oggi non ho mai riscontrato nessun problema.
[Until today I have never encountered any problems]

Social e manifestazioni correlate
[Socials and related events]

Vorrei un informazione più immediata magari con WhatsApp. Il testo al momento mi soddisfa.
[I would like more information maybe even with WhatsApp. The text at the moment satisfies me]

Migliorare i siti istituzionali
[Improving teams' websites]

Sempre più social. Interviste dettagliate e curiosità.
[More and more social. Detailed interviews and curiosities]

Dovrebbe permettere di avere maggior contatto coi giocatori,magari con interviste con le domande poste via Twitter o Facebook dai tifosi.
[It should allow more contact with the players, perhaps with interviews with the questions posed via Twitter or Facebook by the fans]

Settore giovanile
[Youth teams]

Credo che la qualità dei video pubblicati vada migliorata, così la qualità delle interviste, che sono troppo semplici e hanno un formato standard.
[I think the quality of the published videos has to be improved, so the quality of the interviews, which are too simple and have a standard format]

Maggiore spazio ai video.
[More videos]

News Mercato, poca comunicazione nella fase di mercato estivo sulle probabili strategie e possibili giocatori in arrivo.
[Market News, little communication in the summer market phase on the probable strategies and possible incoming players]

Vedere più video.
[More videos]

Credo che il marketing sia importante nello sport come in qualsiasi altro campo e la class action che segue la mia squadra è molto ferrata sull'argomento,spero che in futuro si dia solo un po' più importanza al settore giovanile che rappresenta il futuro di ogni Sport!
[I believe that marketing is important in sports as in any other field and the class action that follows my team is very firm on the subject, I hope that in the future it will give only a little more importance to the youth sector which represents the future of each Sport!]

Qualità dei video e migliore rapporto durata con contenuto.
[Video quality and better duration relationship with content]

I social media, anche nella comunicazione delle società di basket, sono diventati ormai un punto fermo per rapportarsi con i tifosi. Un modo facile e meno invasivo di tenere tutti aggiornati con notizie, curiosità, foto. Inoltre sono diventati sempre più importanti (e credo lo saranno ancora di più in futuro) per seguire gli eventi live.
[Social media, also in the communication of basketball companies, have now become a fixed point to relate to the fans. An easy and less invasive way to keep everyone updated with news, trivia, photos. They have also become increasingly important (and I believe they will be even more so in the future) to follow live events]

Siti Internet specializzati e partite in video streaming.
[Specialized Internet sites and games in video streaming]

Dirette streaming di quante più attività possibili.
[Live streaming of as many activities as possible]

Sempre più social. L'interazione squadra-tifosi è sempre più marcata, sarebbe bello che le squadre continuassero in questa direzione.
[More and more social. The team-fans interaction is always more marked, it would be nice for the teams to continue in this direction]

Credo che il basket italiano sia molto indietro nella promozione su media e social media, con contenuti e campagne non all'altezza, soprattutto demandati alle singole società, le quali ovviamente hanno risorse economiche diverse e investimenti in comunicazione diversi, per cui la qualità varia tra un club e un'altro. Sarebbe necessario un investimento da parte delle Leghe per creare campagne unitarie per promuovere i singoli campionati, a beneficio di tutti i club, migliorando soprattutto la produzione video sia in qualità che in quantità (non solo highlights, ma anche interviste, storie, approfondimenti).
[I think that Italian basketball is far behind in promoting media and social media, with content and campaigns not up to par, especially for the individual companies, which obviously have different economic resources and different communication investments, so the quality varies between one club and another. It would be necessary an investment by the Leagues to create unitary campaigns to promote individual championships, for the benefit of all clubs, especially improving video production both in quality and quantity (not only highlights, but also interviews, stories, insights)]

La gente non vuole più leggere, quindi alla lunga si perderà questa risorsa e si andrà sempre di più con video, sebbene corti, e riprenderà vigore Twitter, soprattutto se raddoppiano i caratteri disponibili.
[People no longer want to read, so in the long run you will lose this resource and you will go more and more with videos, although short, and will resume Twitter, especially if you double the characters available]

Diretta delle partite, concorsi per assistere a partite o allenamenti, merchandising di piccolo costo da vendere o vincere anche con vendite lampo.

[Live games, competitions to watch games or training, low-cost merchandising to sell or even win with flash sales]

Ormai i social media sono uno strumento irrinunciabile per creare interesse attorno a una società/squadra. Il prossimo passo potrebbe essere quello di pubblicare video in diretta delle partite.
[Social media is now an indispensable tool to create interest around a company / team. The next step could be to post live video of the games]

Interviste ai giocatori e conferenza stampa in diretta tv dell'allenatore prima e dopo le partite come nel calcio.
[Interviews with players and press conference live on TV coach before and after matches like in football]

Social Media da un lato, eventi in cui incontrare fisicamente i giocatori dall'altro.
[Social Media on one side, events in which physically meet the players on the other]

No tv, solo web.
[No more television, just web]

Più video, per il resto è perfetta così. il futuro è sempre più social, quindi presenza su tutte le piattaforme social presenti e future (ma la Virtus se la cava già bene soprattutto su Instagram, oltre che a Facebook).
[More videos, for the rest it's perfect like that. the future is increasingly social, therefore presence on all social platforms present and future (but the Virtus is already doing well especially on Instagram, as well as Facebook)]

Vorrei più spazio a video interviste curiosità orari e luoghi degli allenamenti ecc.
[I would like more space for video interviews, curiosities, time-tables and training places, etc.]

Più aggiornamenti su allenamenti e cose del genere.
[More updates on workouts and things like that]

Coinvolgere di più i tifosi rendendoli attivi.
[Involve the fans more by making them active]

Vorrei che la mia squadra sia organizzata per competere con tutte le squadre e migliorare il proprio metodo di comunicazione via e-mail in modo tale che i loro abbonati (io sono abbonato da 5 anni) siano informati.
[I would like my team to be organized to compete with all the teams and improve their e-mail communication method so that their subscribers (I am a 5 year subscriber) are informed]

Whatsapp, skype, iptv, social.
[Whatsapp, skype, iptv, social]

Eventi live.
[Live events]

Approfondimenti dalle giovanili sono allo staff societario.
[Insights from young people are to the company staff]

Dentro gli spogliatoi e interviste giocatori post-Partita.
[Inside the locker rooms and post-match players interviews]

Settore giovanile.
[Youth sector]

I social per la comunicazione.
[Social networks for better communicaiton]

Più incontri per tifosi.
[More opportunities of meeting with supporters]

Più interattività… - Highlights in diretta - Webcam dalla curva - Commenti dei cronista.
[More interactivity ... - Live highlights - Webcam from the curve - Comments from the reporter]

Sforzo per aumentare la presenza sui social e sulla TV in chiaro. Video con montaggi e commento accattivanti.
[Effort to increase the presence on social media and TV in the clear. Video with captivating montages and commentary]

Possibilità di trasmettere partite in streaming direttamente sui social.
[Ability to broadcast games in streaming directly on social media]

Sono di Cantù e i giocatori li incontravi in piazza...ora sono lontano ma vorrei poter essere più vicino alla mia squadra. Non pretendo una channel tv ma la comunicazione dovrebbe "aprire" società, giocatori e staff verso l'esterno: news, interviste, settore giovanile ma anche rivisitare il passato, abbiamo una storia immensa che molti giovani non conoscono. Partite da rivedere, gli scudetti e le grandi finali europee. C'è un glorioso patrimonio di immagini inaccessibili se non qualche spezzone su YouTube ed è un peccato.
[I'm from Cantù and the players meet them in the square ... now I'm far away but I wish I could be closer to my team. I do not pretend a channel tv but the communication should "open" companies, players and staff to the outside: news, interviews, youth sector but also revisit the past, we have an immense story that many young people do not know. Matches to review, the Scudettos and the great European finals. There is a glorious heritage of inaccessible images if not some footage on YouTube and it is a pity]

Social media, da migliorare: statistiche condivise e aggiornate (da eurolega a giovanili a campionati minori).
[Social media, to be improved: shared and updated statistics (from euroleague to youths to minor leagues)]

Dirette su Facebook.
[Live games on Facebook]

Canale tv.
[TV channel]

Maggiore comunicazione e live delle partite. Nella mia squadra le news sulle squadre giovanili.
[Greater communication and live matches. In my team the news on youth teams]

In NBA ci si concentra molto di più sul singolo giocatore, sul pre-gara e sulle condizioni generali. Vorrei sapere di più su come si gestisce la squadra.
[In NBA we focus a lot more on the individual player, the pre-race and the general conditions. I would like to know more about how the team is managed]

Social network e instant messaging.
[Social network and instant messaging]

Canale TV.
[TV channel]

Social media e dirette online per risultati e partite
[Social media and online live updates for results and games]

Appendix VI

Statistics about the difference on Social Media between football and basketball teams (updated: 31/01/2018)

NBA Teams	Twitter Followers (M)	Facebook Followers (M)	Instagram Followers (M)
Atlanta Hawks	1.18	1.61	0.75
Boston Celtics	3.12	8.65	2.20
Brooklyn Nets	0.87	2.68	0.75
Charlotte Hornets	0.86	1.73	0.82
Chicago Bulls	4.05	17.89	3.40
Cleveland Cavaliers	3.04	8.55	5.90
Dallas Mavericks	1.46	4.29	0.74
Denver Nuggets	0.77	1.92	0.60
Detroit Pistons	0.83	1.74	0.67
Golden State Warriors	5.40	10.96	7.90
Houston Rockets	2.42	8.07	2.10
Indiana Pacers	1.09	3.26	1.10
LA Clippers	1.36	3.79	1.80
Los Angeles Lakers	7.29	20.85	4.30
Memphis Grizzlies	0.90	1.80	0.56
Miami Heat	4.59	15.36	2.90
Milwaukee Bucks	0.84	1.58	0.91
Minnesota Timberwolves	0.82	1.83	0.97
New Orleans Pelicans	0.77	1.68	0.85
New York Knicks	2.04	5.85	1.60
Oklahoma City Thunder	2.45	7.11	3.20
Orlando Magic	1.58	2.68	0.64
Philadelphia 76ers	1.39	1.59	0.94
Phoenix Suns	0.96	1.84	0.69
Sacramento Kings	0.93	4.36	0.71
San Antonio Spurs	3.25	7.00	2.00
Toronto Raptors	1.63	2.20	1.20
Utah Jazz	0.76	1.23	0.53
Washington Wizards	0.83	1.50	0.82
Avg. NBA Teams	**1.98**	**5.30**	**1.78**
Avg. Italian Basketball Clubs *	**0.10**	**0.39**	**0.15**

European Basketball Teams *	Twitter Followers (K)	Facebook Followers (K)	Instagram Followers (K)
Anadolu Efes Istanbul	162.0	281.7	44.5
Olimpia Milano	44.4	170.4	57.0
Saski Baskonia	49.3	75.4	27.9
Brose Bamberg	27.7	55.3	19.2
Crvena Zvezda	83.9	450.9	92.5
CSKA Moscow	213.0	91.8	49.7
FC Barcelona	522.0	2,372.0	302.0
Fenerbahce Istanbul	543.0	1,249.5	501.0
Khimki Moscow	11.0	10.1	13.4
Maccabi Tel Aviv	63.6	224.5	48.9
Olympiacos Piraeus	70.4	394.5	109.0
Panathinaikos Athens	71.2	373.2	96.2
Real Madrid	502.0	16,089.4	1,500.0
Unicaja Malaga	75.9	42.8	19.6
Valencia Basket	134.0	103.9	43.8
Zalgiris Kaunas	89.8	184.8	39.8
Avg. European Basketball Teams *	**166.5**	**1,385.6**	**185.3**
Avg. Italian Basketball Teams *	**10.5**	**39.6**	**15.7**

Italian Football Teams **	Twitter Followers (K)	Facebook Followers (K)	Instagram Followers (K)
Atalanta	258.0	205.7	85.1
Benevento	9.2	66.5	51.0
Bologna	143.0	898.4	59.5
Cagliari	327.0	330.0	121.0
Chievo Verona	243.0	121.0	34.9
Crotone	19.6	127.8	43.2
Fiorentina	597.0	1,996.1	232.0
Genoa	293.0	283.9	85.0
Hellas Verona	246.0	268.3	56.1
Inter	1,550.0	7,712.8	1,700.0
Juventus	5,830.0	30,745.4	8,800.0
Lazio	521.0	781.3	235.0
Milan	6,460.0	24,339.1	4,000.0
Napoli	1,310.0	3,955.1	781.0
Roma	1,550.0	8,758.7	1,200.0
Sampdoria	319.0	293.5	91.6
Sassuolo	245.0	253.5	78.5
Spal	10.9	47.3	37.3
Torino	364.0	454.0	129.0
Udinese	270.0	453.0	69.2
Avg. Italian Football Teams *	**1,028.3**	**4,104.6**	**894.5**
Avg. Italian Basketball Teams *	**10.5**	**39.6**	**15.7**

Top European Football Teams	Twitter Followers (M)	Facebook Followers (M)	Instagram Followers (M)
Real Madrid	104.1	55.2	28.9
FC Barcelona	100.7	54.7	27.3
Manchester United	71.9	20.7	17.0
FC Bayern München	43.8	11.7	4.3
PSG	32.9	11.3	6.1
Manchester City	30.9	6.2	5.7
Juventus FC	30.7	8.8	0.8
AC Milan	24.3	4.0	6.4
Avg. European Football Teams	**54.9**	**21.6**	**12.1**
Avg. Italian Basketball Teams *	**0.10**	**0.39**	**0.15**

Avg. Italian Football Teams **	Twitter Followers (K)	Facebook Followers (K)	Instagram Followers (K)
North	1,583	6,488	1,505
Centre	511	2,123	307
South	416	1,120	249

Avg. Italian Basketball Teams ***	Twitter Followers (K)	Facebook Followers (K)	Instagram Followers (K)
North	12	45	15
Centre	6	25	10
South	11	41	22

playing in the 'Euroleague' Basketball Competition

*** playing in the Italian Football First League 'Serie A'*

**** playing in the Italian Basketball First League 'Legabasket Serie A'*

SOCIAL MEDIA, EMAIL MARKETING AND FANS ENGAGEMENT:
A STUDY OF THE ITALIAN BASKETBALL LEAGUE

Matteo Grigatti (Student Number: J00044811)

Master of Business Administration
University of Roehampton, London Online
February, 2018