

# MOBILE MARKETING, BRAND ACTIVATION AND MULTIPLE CHANNELS USAGE AS PREDICTORS OF FOOTBALL FANS ENGAGEMENT IN IBADAN METROPOLIS

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## Abstract

*Fan engagement is vital for professional football clubs, enhancing success, revenue, and attendance. It fosters strong fan-club relationships, ensuring sustained loyalty and support. However, in Nigeria, fan engagement remains lower than in developed countries due to limited use of effective marketing strategies like mobile marketing, brand activation, and diverse sports marketing channels. These gaps hinder clubs' efforts to connect with their fan base.*

*This study investigates the role of mobile marketing, brand activation, and multiple channels in predicting football fans' engagement in Ibadan, Nigeria. Anchored in Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) and Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), a descriptive survey design was employed. Using purposive and total enumeration sampling, 188 registered football club fans in Ibadan participated. Data were analysed through descriptive and inferential statistics.*

*Findings revealed significant positive relationships between mobile marketing, brand activation, and multiple channels with fan engagement ( $r = 0.488, 0.624, \text{ and } 0.412$ , respectively). These factors explained 42.5% of engagement variance, with brand activation showing the strongest influence ( $\text{Beta} = 0.484, p < 0.001$ ).*

*The study concludes that combining these strategies significantly boosts fan engagement and recommends their adoption by sports organizations to strengthen connections with fans and enhance loyalty.*

## Introduction

Football fandom in Ibadan Metropolis, like in many urban centres, represents a vibrant cultural phenomenon that intertwines with daily life, commerce, and community identity. As the digital age redefines how fans interact with their favourite teams, mobile marketing emerges as a potent tool, offering real-time engagement and personalized content. Meanwhile, brand activation events create immersive experiences that resonate on an emotional level, fostering deeper loyalty. The strategic use of multiple communication channels—ranging from social media and apps to live events, on the other hand, amplifies these efforts, creating a cohesive narrative that captivates fans. This research, therefore, explores how these modern marketing strategies predict and influence the engagement levels of football fans in Ibadan, providing critical insights for brands and sports marketers aiming to harness the full potential of this passionate demographic.

The concept of fan engagement in sports marketing and management is complex and ever-evolving, attracting considerable attention. It encompasses a wide spectrum of interactions, spanning from attending physical games to participating in online communities and sharing content across social media platforms. In essence, this involvement is the mental, emotional, and behavioural bond that supporters form with the groups, players, or teams that they fervently follow. In order to fully understand fan involvement, a number of factors must be taken into account, such as attendance, social

media interactions, emotional attachment, and loyalty. Fan engagement is shaped by a number of elements, such as team performance, fans' affiliation with athletes, the use of social identity theory, and community involvement (Funk, Mahony & Ridinger 2019, Wann, Zaichkowsky, & Drew 2020, Kaplan & Haenlein, 2019; Wann et al., 2020).

The interplay between mobile marketing, brand activation, and multiple channels usage creates a synergistic effect that significantly enhances football fan engagement. Mobile marketing offers personalized and immediate communication, allowing brands to reach fans with targeted content and real-time updates. Brand activation takes this a step further by creating memorable and interactive experiences that emotionally resonate with fans, driving deeper loyalty and enthusiasm. When these strategies are integrated across multiple channels—such as social media, mobile apps, email campaigns, and live events—they create a cohesive and omnipresent brand experience. This multi-faceted approach ensures that fans are consistently engaged, whether they are at home, on the go, or at the stadium, thereby maximizing their overall engagement and attachment to the football team.

Researches (Cianfrone, Zhang, & Zhang 2019; O'Reilly & Connolly, 2019; Biscaia, Correia, Ross & Rosado, 2018.) have shown that Mobile marketing significantly enhances football fan engagement by providing personalized and timely content directly to fans' devices. This direct communication channel allows brands to share real-time updates, exclusive offers, and interactive features, fostering a sense of immediacy and connection. As a result, fans feel more involved and valued, leading to increased loyalty and active participation in football-related activities and events. In the realm of sports, mobile marketing has emerged as a potent strategy, affording direct and ubiquitous access to fans. This encompasses a diverse array of methods such as mobile applications, Short Message Service (SMS) marketing, location-based services, and mobile-responsive websites. Sports organizations are progressively investing in mobile applications, equipping them with features like real-time updates, live streaming, ticket purchasing capabilities, and interactive content, all designed to elevate fan engagement (Suh Kim & Shin 2019; Kim & Trail, 2018). Push notifications, in particular, play a pivotal role in promptly notifying fans about events, scores, and promotional offers (Cianfrone, Zhang, & Zhang 2019). Moreover, location-based services and geo-fencing enable the precise targeting of promotions when fans are in proximity to stadiums or venues, enhancing the impact of mobile marketing (Biscaia, Correia, Ross & Rosado, 2018). Beyond this, mobile marketing extends its reach into ticketing and merchandise sales, simplifying the fan journey by harnessing the convenience of mobile devices (O'Reilly & Connolly, 2019).

Also, Brand activation stands as a dynamic marketing strategy geared towards crafting immersive and memorable brand experiences. Brand activation engages football fans by creating immersive and memorable experiences that emotionally connect them to the team. These activations, through events, promotions, and interactive campaigns, foster a sense of community and excitement around the brand. Consequently, fans develop stronger loyalty and enthusiasm, enhancing their overall engagement and participation in football-related activities. In the context of sports, comprehending the influence of brand activation on fan engagement takes centre stage. This approach encompasses a wide spectrum of marketing initiatives, encompassing sponsorships, experiential marketing, events, and promotions. Within the domain of sports marketing, brand activation often revolves around creating meaningful connections between fans and brands (Boyle & Ott, 2018). Research underscores the affirmative impact of brand activation on fan engagement, particularly when activations are seamlessly integrated into the overall fan experience, such as in-stadium events or

interactive fan zones (Biscaia, Correia, Ross & Rosado, 2018). Furthermore, brand activations on social media platforms, inclusive of interactive campaigns and user-generated content, possess the potential to amplify fan engagement (Kuzma & Shanklin, 2019). It's worth noting that authenticity plays a pivotal role in this context, with genuine brand activations resonating deeply with fans when they align with the team's core values and fan culture (Ladwig, Anderson & Cuneen, 2020).

Similarly, the utilization of multiple channels in sports marketing has gained substantial prominence as organizations seek innovative avenues to engage and retain fans. Utilizing multiple channels in sports marketing ensures that football fans receive consistent and engaging content across various platforms such as social media, mobile apps, email, live events, and traditional media (radio/Tv and outdoor advertisement), now considered standard practice. This multi-channel approach maximizes reach and reinforces the brand message, creating a seamless and comprehensive fan experience. As a result, fans remain continuously engaged and connected to the team, boosting their overall involvement and loyalty. Research underscores the significance of adopting a multifaceted approach to effectively reach diverse fan segments (Pegoraro & O'Reilly, 2019). Empirical evidence suggests a positive correlation between active and interactive presence on social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram, and heightened levels of fan engagement (Wang & Zhang, 2019). Organizations that adeptly harness these platforms to disseminate content, engage with fans, and provide real-time updates typically experience elevated levels of fan engagement. Notably, traditional media channels, including television and radio, continue to wield influence, particularly when seamlessly integrated with digital channels, thereby crafting a consistent brand experience that accentuates fan engagement (Greenwell, Billings & Manning, 2020).

Mobile marketing, brand activation, and multiple channels usage collectively enhance football fan engagement by creating a comprehensive and dynamic fan experience. Mobile marketing offers personalized and real-time content, brand activation generates memorable interactions, and multiple channels ensure consistent and widespread reach. This integrated approach deepens fan loyalty and involvement, driving higher levels of engagement with the football team.

In summary, the cumulative impact of mobile marketing, brand activation, and the strategic deployment of multiple channels emerges as a potent predictor of football fan engagement in Ibadan metropolis. By capitalizing on the capabilities of mobile devices and the adaptability of diverse channels, sports organizations can construct immersive fan experiences that cultivate profound emotional connections and enduring engagement. This holistic approach holds immense potential for fortifying the bond between football clubs and their dedicated fan base within the context of Ibadan metropolis.

### **Research question**

There is no significant relationship between mobile marketing, brand activation, multiple channels usage and professional football fans engagement in Ibadan metropolis

### **Research Hypotheses**

1. Mobile marketing, brand activation and multiple channels usage have no joint prediction on professional football fans engagement in Ibadan metropolis.
2. Mobile marketing, brand activation, multiple channels usage have no relative prediction on professional football fans engagement in Ibadan metropolis.

## **Methodology**

The design for this study was descriptive research design of correlation type. The population for this study comprises of all registered football fans of Professional Football Clubs in Ibadan metropolis. The sample for this study comprised of one hundred and eighty-eight (188) registered fans of professional football club in Ibadan metropolis. Purposive and total enumeration sampling techniques are employed for the study. Purposive sampling technique was used to select registered fans of professional football club in Ibadan metropolis while total enumeration sampling technique was used to select all the two hundred (200) registered football fans for the study out of which only one hundred and eighty-eight (188) returned the questionnaire. A self-developed questionnaire named "Marketing strategies as predictors of professional football fans engagement scale" was used. It consists of three sections. The Likert scale was used for responses, with options ranging from "Strongly Agree," "Agree," "Neutral," "Disagree," to "Strongly Disagree." Section one collected information about the participants' demographic characteristics, including age, gender, education, and occupation. Section two explored the participants' perceptions of various marketing strategies employed in football with Marketing Strategies and Fans Engagement Scale (SMAFES). It included three items for each of the following sub-variables: mobile marketing, brand activation, multiple channels usage. Section three measured the level of fan engagement among the participants in Ibadan metropolis with Fans Engagement Scale (FEC). It included multiple indices such as: Attendance at football matches, Participation in fan communities or forums, Emotional attachment to the team, Purchase of team merchandise, Social media interactions related to football. For sections two and three, Participants were asked to express their agreement or disagreement with statements provided by the researcher in the instrument. The items of the questionnaire were close ended and in 5-point Likert scale. Cronbach alpha was used to analyse the data collected for the reliability of the instrument. Marketing Strategies and Fan Engagement Scale (SMAFES) yielded internal consistency of  $\alpha = .874$  and Fan Engagement Scale (FEC) indicated internal reliability coefficient of  $\alpha = .933$ .

## Data analysis and findings

**Table 1.0:** Demographics characteristics of the respondents

No	Items	Frequency	Percentage
<b>1.</b>	<b>AGE</b>		
	Below20	20	10.6
	20-24	82	43.6
	25-29	48	25.5
	30-34	18	9.6
	35 and above	20	10.6
	Total	188	100.0
<b>2.</b>	<b>GENDER</b>		
	Male	134	71.27
	Female	54	28.73
	Total	188	100.0
<b>3.</b>	<b>OCCUPATION</b>		
	Student	114	60.64
	Self-employed	36	19.15
	Employed	14	7.44
	Others	24	12.77
	Total	188	100.0
<b>4.</b>	<b>EDUCATIONAL LEVEL</b>		
	Primary education	22	11.70
	Secondary school	54	28.72
	Tertiary education	112	59.57
	Total	188	100.0

The table presents the demographic composition of the sample population involved in this study. The respondents' ages were categorized into five groups. The largest segment of the sample falls within the 20-24 age group, comprising 43.6% of the total respondents. This suggests that a substantial portion of the participants are young adults in this age bracket. Approximately 10.6% are below 20 years, 25.5% are aged 25-29, 9.6% fall between 30-34 years, and another 10.6% are 35 years and above. Gender distribution among the respondents is quite imbalanced, with a significant majority being male at 71.27%. Female participants constitute the remaining 28.73% of the sample.

Regarding occupation, the majority of respondents are students, making up 60.64% of the sample. Self-employed individuals account for 19.15%, followed by employed respondents at 7.44%, and others, which include various occupation types, totalling 12.77%. This indicates that a considerable proportion of the participants are students. In terms of educational attainment, a significant majority of respondents have tertiary education, representing 59.57% of the sample. Secondary school-educated respondents make up 28.72%, while those with primary education are the smallest group at 11.70%.

**Research question** - What is the relationship between mobile marketing, brand activation, multiple channels usage and professional football fans engagement in Ibadan Metropolis?

**Table 1.1:** Correlation matrix showing the relationship between mobile marketing, brand activation, multiple channels usage and professional football fans engagement in Ibadan metropolis

	Mean	Std. dev	Fans engagement	Mobile marketing	Multiple channels use	Brand activation
<b>Fans engagement</b>	30.0323	7.00649	1			
<b>Mobile marketing</b>	11.9468	2.17603	.488**	1		
<b>Multiple channels use</b>	11.9785	2.40710	.412**	.600**	1	
<b>Brand activation</b>	11.9140	2.06204	.624**	.572**	.493**	1
N = 188 Sig (2-tailed) Fans engagement = 0.00 Mobile marketing = 0.00 Multiple channels use = 0.00 Brand activation = 0.00						

Table 1.1 displays the correlation matrix of mobile marketing, brand activation, multiple channels usage and professional football fans engagement in Ibadan metropolis. There was a moderate positive correlation between fans' engagement and mobile marketing ( $r = 0.488$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), suggesting that as mobile marketing efforts increased, fans' engagement tended to increase as well. Similarly, a moderate positive correlation was observed between fans' engagement and multiple channels use ( $r = 0.412$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), indicating that using multiple channels for passing messages is associated with higher levels of fans' engagement. Also, a strong positive correlation was found between fans' engagement and brand activation ( $r = 0.624$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), suggesting that effective brand activation strategies were strongly linked to higher levels of fans' engagement. These findings indicate that mobile marketing, multiple channels use, and brand activation are important factors positively influencing fans' engagement. Sports organizations and marketers may benefit from focusing on these aspects to enhance fans' engagement in the context of professional football in Ibadan metropolis.

**Hypothesis 1-** Mobile marketing, brand activation, multiple channels usage have no joint prediction on professional football fans engagement in Ibadan metropolis.

**Table 1.2 showing the joint prediction of Mobile marketing, brand activation, multiple channels usage on professional football fans engagement in Ibadan metropolis.**

R = 0.652 R-square = 0.425 Adj. R-square = 0.415 Std. error of the estimate = 5.35635						
Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	3769.929	3	1256.643	43.800	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	5106.906	178	28.690		
	Total	8876.835	181			

Table 1.2 presents the results of a regression analysis examining the joint prediction of mobile marketing, brand activation, and multiple channels usage on professional football fans' engagement in Ibadan metropolis. The regression model demonstrated a statistically significant joint prediction of mobile marketing, brand activation, and multiple channels usage on professional football fans' engagement ( $R = 0.652$ ,  $R\text{-square} = 0.425$ ,  $\text{Adj. } R\text{-square} = 0.415$ ,  $\text{Std. error of the estimate} = 5.35635$ ). The F-statistic was highly significant ( $F(3, 178) = 43.800$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), suggesting that the combination of these factors significantly predicts professional football fans' engagement in Ibadan metropolis.

The hypothesis, which posited that mobile marketing, brand activation, and multiple channels usage have no joint prediction on professional football fans' engagement in Ibadan metropolis, is hereby rejected based on the results of this analysis.

**Hypothesis 2** - Fans' segmentation, hyper-personalization of messages, influencer marketing have no relative prediction on professional football fans engagement in Ibadan metropolis.

**Table 1.3 showing the relative prediction of fans' segmentation, hyper-personalization of messages, influencer marketing on professional football fans engagement in Ibadan metropolis.**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.246	2.598		.480	.632
	Mobile marketing	.477	.246	.150	1.937	.054
	Brand activation	1.626	.239	.484	6.793	.000
	Multiple channels use	.319	.213	.109	1.492	.137

The regression model aimed to examine the relative prediction of mobile marketing, brand activation, and multiple channels usage on professional football fans' engagement in Ibadan metropolis. However, when examining the individual predictor variables, it was found that mobile marketing ( $\text{Beta} = 0.150$ ,  $t = 1.937$ ,  $p = .054$ ) and multiple channels usage ( $\text{Beta} = 0.109$ ,  $t = 1.492$ ,  $p = .137$ ) did not make statistically significant contributions to the prediction of fans' engagement. These variables had Betas close to zero and p-values greater than .05, indicating that they do not have a significant impact on fans' engagement. In contrast, brand activation was found to have a statistically significant positive impact on fans' engagement ( $\text{Beta} = 0.484$ ,  $t = 6.793$ ,  $p < .001$ ). This

suggests that brand activation plays a significant role in predicting fans' engagement among professional football fans in Ibadan metropolis.

Based on these findings, the null hypothesis that mobile marketing, brand activation, and multiple channels usage have no relative prediction on professional football fans' engagement in Ibadan metropolis is partially accepted.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The results of the investigation into the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents indicated that the majority fell within the age range of 20-24 years, with a significant proportion being male. Furthermore, a significant portion of the respondents identified as students, and a majority had attained tertiary education as their highest level of education. These findings reflect the demographic composition of the study participants. In light of the research findings, it becomes apparent that sport marketing strategies collectively play a meaningful role in predicting the engagement of registered football fans in Ibadan. This suggests that the comprehensive implementation of sport marketing strategies has a substantial impact on fostering engagement among football fans, particularly in the specific context of Ibadan.

These findings align with the insights put forth by Shank (2014), who emphasized that successful organizations prioritize understanding consumer needs while simultaneously achieving organizational objectives. Another pertinent study conducted by Lee and Kwak (2019) delved into the effects of sport marketing strategies on fan engagement within the realm of professional baseball. Their research underscored the significance of fan segmentation and hyper-personalization of messages in enhancing fans' emotional investment and loyalty. The findings underscored that tailored marketing communications, rooted in fans' preferences and interests, contribute to a more engaging and personalized fan experience. However, it's crucial to note that, within the context of this study, only one variable exhibited a statistically significant contribution, while others were deemed statistically insignificant. Notably, mobile marketing and multiple channels usage demonstrated insignificant relative contributions, whereas brand activation exhibited a significant relative contribution.

Brand activation entails the process of invigorating a brand through experiential marketing endeavours. These initiatives encompass activities such as pre-game events, giveaways, and contests, which generate excitement and engagement among fans. Kunkel et al. (2016) emphasized the positive impact of brand activation on fan engagement and game attendance. This positive contribution, particularly in the context of football fans' engagement in Ibadan metropolis, is corroborated by claims by Biscaia, Correia, Ross & Rosado, (2018) which underscores the affirmative impact of brand activation on fan engagement, particularly when activations are seamlessly integrated into the overall fan experience, such as in-stadium events or interactive fan zones.

In contrast, the utilization of multiple channels to promote sports events, encompassing social media, television, and mobile applications, did not exhibit statistically significant predictive power within the study's framework. While previous research by Kim and Chae (2017) and Kuenzel, Mulcahy, & Broude (2014) underscores the importance of employing multiple channels to engage fans and enhance fan engagement, the specific findings in the context of Ibadan suggest that the use of multiple channels may not have a direct influence on the engagement of registered football fans.



Mobile marketing, which involves the promotion of products or services through mobile devices, such as smartphones and tablets, employing various digital channels, was explored by Kim and Ko (2018) in the context of professional baseball games in South Korea. Their study demonstrated a positive association between mobile marketing and fan engagement, as it offered fans a more interactive and personalized experience. O'Reilly & Connolly, (2019) also went further by noting that mobile marketing extends its reach into ticketing and merchandise sales, simplifying the fan journey by harnessing the convenience of mobile devices. Nevertheless, within the scope of this research, mobile marketing exhibited an insignificant relative contribution when predicting fan engagement behaviour in Ibadan metropolis.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, this study examined the relationship between some sport marketing strategies (brand activation, use of multiple channels and mobile marketing) with football fans' engagement in Ibadan metropolis. The findings provide valuable insights into the relationship between these variables and fans' engagement of professional football fans. The results indicated that the combination of marketing strategies (brand activation, use of multiple channels and mobile marketing) had a significant joint prediction on football fans' engagement in Ibadan. Furthermore, within the realm of sport marketing strategies, certain sub-variables demonstrated relatively significant contributions, while others were found to be statistically insignificant.

Brand activation was identified as relatively significant contributor to football fans' engagement in Ibadan. On the other hand, multiple channels usage and mobile marketing were not statistically significant predictors of fan engagement in the context of professional football fans' engagement in Ibadan.

In conclusion, this study highlights the significant contribution of sport marketing strategies to professional football fans in the Ibadan metropolis. The use of brand activation can enhance fan engagement and create a personalized and immersive fan experience. These findings have practical implications for sports organizations and marketers seeking to engage and retain football fans in the specific context of Ibadan.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study on the predictors of fan engagement in the Ibadan metropolis, the following recommendations are proposed.

1. Professional football clubs should invest in personalized and interactive mobile marketing campaigns. Utilizing data analytics to tailor content to individual preferences can significantly enhance fan engagement. Implementing features like in-app games, live match updates, exclusive content, and interactive polls can create a more immersive experience for fans.
2. Professional football Clubs should organize regular brand activation events such as fan meet-and-greets, stadium tours, and community outreach programs. These events should be designed to provide memorable experiences that strengthen the emotional connection between fans and the club. Collaborating with local businesses and sponsors can also amplify the impact of these events.
3. A coordinated approach across various communication channels (social media, email, SMS, websites, and apps) should be implemented to ensure consistent messaging. This integrated strategy helps reinforce the club's brand identity and keeps fans engaged through multiple touchpoints. Utilizing a unified customer

relationship management (CRM) system can help manage these interactions effectively.

4. Professional football clubs should focus on creating engaging content for social media platforms, including behind-the-scenes footage, player interviews, match highlights, and fan-generated content. Encouraging fan interaction through comments, shares, and likes can foster a sense of community. Social media contests and hashtag campaigns can also drive higher engagement levels.
5. Professional football clubs should implement robust data analytics tools to monitor fan engagement across different channels. Analyzing metrics such as click-through rates, engagement rates, and conversion rates can provide valuable insights into what strategies are most effective. Additionally, soliciting feedback from fans through surveys and focus groups can help refine marketing strategies and address any gaps in fan engagement.

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