

# An Analysis of the Social Media Promotion Strategies of Romanian SuperLiga Football Teams



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**Abstract** This chapter examines the promotional strategies of Romanian SuperLiga football teams on social networks, analyzing their presence and activity on the online platforms Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. The study begins by contextualizing the growing importance of social networks in modern communication and especially in the sports industry, highlighting their role in building relationships with fans, increasing brand awareness, and generating revenue. A comprehensive analysis of the online presence of all 16 teams in the Romanian SuperLiga reveals an almost universal adoption of these platforms, with Football Club FCSB dominating in terms of audience. The study then focuses on a qualitative examination of the content posted in March 2024, a period characterized by intense sporting activity and increased efforts by teams to connect with fans via social networks, classifying it into nine categories relevant to sports marketing. The results show a variety of approaches, from club and player information and facts to behind-the-scenes stories, match announcements, and promotional content and activities. In addition, the study highlights the strategies of different teams, suggesting both strengths and opportunities for improvement. In conclusion, this chapter provides a valuable insight into how Romanian football teams are using social networks to achieve their marketing and communication objectives. The results of the study can be useful for both sports clubs and sports marketing specialists, providing relevant information for the development and optimization of promotional strategies on social networks.

**Keywords** Promotion strategies · Sports marketing · Fan engagement

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# 1 Introduction

The Internet has changed people's lives in many ways, the ease with which people can access the information they want, the way they choose to spend their free time, the ways they keep up to date with the latest news and updates from around the world, are just a few of the changes brought about by the advent of the Internet. In addition, the way people choose to communicate and keep in touch with other people has been radically changed by the social networks that have emerged over the years.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s the Internet experienced steady growth, but the real explosion of the Internet took place in the mid-1990s when it became accessible to people thanks to the advent of the browser. In November 2000 there were no less than 407 million users on the Internet, of which 113 million were in Europe [1]. The number of Internet users continued to grow significantly reaching 5.35 billion in 2024, which represents 66.2% of the total global population [2] and in Romania the percentage of households with Internet access at home was 85.7% in 2023, 3.6% more than in 2022 [3].

Boyd and Ellison [4] define social networks as web-based services that give users the ability to build a public or semi-public personal profile, establish a list of users with whom they form a connection, and be able to view and access the list created by both them and other users. Another definition of these is stated by Carr and Hayes [5] as web-based channels that provide users with the opportunity to interact and present themselves individually and selectively, either in real time or asynchronously to a large or small audience, deriving value from user-generated content and the perception of interactions with others. Based on these definitions we can say that the defining feature of social networks is the ability of users to create a personal profile through which they can interact with their acquaintances or form new connections with other users.

Social networks have been around since the 1990s, some examples of which are Classmates.com which appeared in 1995 and SixDegrees.com in 1997. They are the first social networks where users could create a profile and view their friends' pages. SixDegrees.com was successful reaching several million users in 2000 when it was also closed. Over the years, such websites continued to pop up: Ryze (2001), Friendster (2002), LinkedIn (2002), Shirky (2003), and Facebook (2004). Of those listed above only LinkedIn and Facebook have managed to remain relevant to this day [6, 7].

The most significant change that social networks have brought about is the shift of power from institutions to individuals. They give users a voice and an open platform where they can connect, collaborate, and create content for themselves and others. User-generated content has more influence on consumers and their purchasing decisions [8].

Given the major impact of the Internet and social networks on consumer communication and behavior [9], it is essential to take a closer look at how they are used in marketing strategies, especially in the sports field, as we will explore in this chapter. To further understand the context in which this research takes place, the

following section will explore the relevant literature on the use of social media in sports marketing, with a focus on how clubs can build strong relationships with fans and achieve their communication goals.

## 2 Literature Review

Football is a phenomenon of global importance; it is the most popular sport in the world and interest in the sport has been growing in recent decades. There are soccer teams and competitions for all age groups from juniors to seniors, for both men and women and the number of players and supporters is increasing [10].

For sports fans, a sense of belonging to a larger community is a key element, and they often identify with others and with the team. Fans communicate this sense of belonging through their words and actions. Social networks have expanded the ways we communicate with those around us, creating new virtual spaces where people can interact directly with brands and each other. This trend accelerated in 2020 around the time of the COVID-19 pandemic, when people around the world were isolated in their homes and this led to a shift in communication online, this shift allowed sports clubs to reach new audiences and interact with existing audiences in new ways and even encourage higher levels of physical activity [11].

Today, social networks have a powerful impact on industries and people around the world. They are an important communication channel for both organizations and individuals. Social networks allow followers to receive information quickly over the Internet, so creating a social media strategy is now a common task within organizations. Especially in the sports industry, it is used by teams to promote themselves and communicate with fans. Social networks are a fundamental part of the activity of sports clubs and presence on them is necessary if they want to communicate with their fans and build their brand online [12].

Sports organizations are well-positioned to benefit from the use of social networks because of the existing fan base [13]. They have changed the way fans interact with sports teams and other fans. With the rise in popularity of social platforms, clubs are investing more time and resources to gain visibility on these networks and capitalize on the loyal attitude that fans have toward the team they support. However, in order to effectively use social media and properly manage their online presence, teams need more information about their fans and what they want [14].

Based on the importance of social networks in sports marketing and the need to understand fans' preferences, this research aims to analyze the promotion strategies of Romanian Superliga teams on Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube, evaluating their presence and activity on these platforms.

### 3 Research

The main objective of any football club is to satisfy its fans and generate profits. Social networks offer fans a direct way to connect with their favorite soccer leagues and clubs, providing a sense of comfort and belonging. Teams benefit from this interaction with their fans by receiving feedback that helps shape marketing campaigns and increase the value of the club. The most common reasons for developing a social media strategy are to build brand equity, increase online revenue, and attract as many fans as possible from around the world. They show unconditional attachment or even sport fan superstition to a particular club by providing it with monetization opportunities [15].

Football teams in the Romanian SuperLiga have started to focus more and more on social networks, investing more resources to promote themselves online and interact with fans. To analyze this in more detail, the most popular social networks were first documented, and then each team was searched to see if they were present on these platforms and generates relevant content in Romanian. Facebook [16] was chosen for this analysis because it is the social network with the largest number of users, namely 3.049 billion active users [17], Instagram because it is the preferred social network for users aged 16–64 [18–20], TikTok [21, 22] because of the huge popularity it has quickly gained both nationally and internationally, and is now the app that Android users spend the most time on [23], and YouTube [24] because it is the only social network for long-form video content, and is also the app that Internet users spend the most time on in a single session on average [25].

Having established the research context and identified the relevant platforms, as well as the presence of Romanian Superliga teams on them, we can proceed to a detailed analysis of the promotion strategies used in March 2024, as presented in the next section of this chapter.

### 4 Results and Discussion

Thus, according to the analysis conducted in March 2024 (an important period in the Romanian SuperLiga season, characterized by intense sporting activity and increased efforts by teams to connect with fans through social networks), all the football teams of the Romanian SuperLiga are present on the above-mentioned social networks, except for *FC Voluntari*, which does not have a YouTube account. The most followed football team in Romania is *FCSB*, which has no less than 1.7 million followers on Facebook, and on the rest of the social platforms, *FCSB* is also in first place, with 278,000 followers on Instagram, 110,000 followers on TikTok and 73,000 subscribers on YouTube. The team with the fewest followers is *FC Voluntari*, which has 17,000 followers on Facebook, 9,900 on Instagram and only 665 on TikTok, but the activity on the TikTok account is very low, with a total of six videos posted, losing the opportunity to promote themselves and interact with fans on this platform.

Social media activity can contribute to the growth of the sports club and the number of its supporters, depending on the content posted, fans may become more interested in the team and follow it, or they may distance themselves from the club if social media posts do not attract them. To understand what teams post, we will analyze the content posted by Romanian SuperLiga football teams in March 2024, which will be classified into nine categories, following the model used by Obradović et al. [26] for their analysis on English football teams. The nine categories are as follows:

1. Game announcements.
2. About game (new/live info)—team members on field, changes and injuries, scored goals.
3. The best moments (from the game)—the most attractive moves, goals, score.
4. Players and coach announcements/interviews.
5. Behind the scene—players on training, arrivals to stadium, hanging out, and stories from the locker room.
6. Interesting facts/info about players and club—past event reminders in history of club, player birthdays and interesting statistics.
7. Fan support—arrivals to stadium and cheer/support.
8. Promotion activities which are not directly connected with football—charity events and ceremony.
9. Sponsors and partner promotions.

In March, the Romanian Superliga teams showed an active presence on social media, using various platforms to connect with fans and promote the club's activity. Here is an analysis of each team's activity:

*AFC Hermannstadt*: posted 238 times, focusing on Facebook and Instagram. Posts included information about the club and players, behind-the-scenes live match information and interviews.

*Dinamo Bucharest*: had 121 posts on Facebook and Instagram, focusing on club and player information, match announcements, and behind-the-camera scenes.

*FC Botoșani*: was active on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube, with a total of 166 posts. Interviews with players and coaches were an important component of their social media strategy.

*FC CFR 1907 Cluj*: had a strong presence on Facebook and Instagram, with 317 posts. Information about the club and players dominated, followed by match announcements and behind-the-camera scenes.

*Farul Constanța*: they were the most active team on YouTube, with 58 posts. They excelled at match announcements, live information, and interviews.

*Petrolul*: had 241 posts, shared on Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok. Information about the club and players was prioritized, followed by behind-the-camera scenes and promotional activities.

*FC Rapid 1923*: topped the ranking with 507 posts, with an active presence on all platforms. Information about the club and players, behind-the-camera scenes, and promotional activities were the most frequent.

*FC Universitatea Cluj*: had a similar strategy to Rapid, with 380 posts on Facebook, Instagram and TikTok. Information about the club and players were predominant.

*FC Voluntari*: had less activity, with 51 posts on Facebook and Instagram, focusing on club and player information, and match announcements.

*FCSB*: posted 93 times on Facebook and Instagram, promoting club and player information, promotional activities, and match announcements.

*FCU 1948 Craiova*: had 285 posts on Facebook and Instagram, with a focus on club and player information and behind-the-camera scenes.

*Poli Iași*: had a moderate presence with 140 posts, including interviews, club and player information and match announcements.

*SC Oțelul Galați*: focused on Facebook, with 173 posts, featuring club and player information, match announcements, and promotional activities.

*Sepsi OSK*: favored Facebook, with 157 posts, focusing on club and player information, match announcements, and behind-the-camera scenes.

*Universitatea Craiova*: had an active presence on all platforms, with 496 posts. It stood out with a high number of fan-supported posts and promotional activities.

*UTA Arad*: had 281 posts on Facebook and Instagram, promoting information about the club and players, behind-the-scenes details, and promotional activities.

In conclusion, we can see that most teams have an active presence on Facebook and Instagram, as these are the preferred platforms for communicating with fans. TikTok is used to a lesser extent, but is growing in popularity, and YouTube is mainly used for interviews and longer videos. Club and player information are the most popular posts, followed by behind-the-scenes footage and promotions. Match announcements and live information are essential to keep fans up to date with the team's activities. Some teams, such as *Universitatea Craiova* and *FC Rapid 1923*, stand out with a more diversified and active social media strategy.

This analysis provides an overview of the social media activity of the Romanian Superliga teams. Each team has a specific approach tailored to its resources and objectives.

## 5 Conclusion

This study analyzed the promotional strategies of the Romanian Super League teams on social networks, focusing on their activity in March 2024 on Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. We found an almost universal use of these platforms, demonstrating their importance in modern communication and the sports industry.

The analysis revealed a variety of approaches to the content posted, from club and player information to behind-the-scenes stories, match announcements, and promotional content. Each team demonstrated a specific strategy tailored to their resources and goals, with some teams excelling in certain content categories.

While *FCSB* dominates in terms of number of followers, other teams such as *FC Rapid 1923* and *Universitatea Craiova* stand out for their intense activity and diversified content strategy. These examples show that success on social networks depends not only on the size of the audience, but also on the quality and relevance of the content and the ability to create a real connection with the fans.

The study also highlighted the importance of tailoring promotional strategies to the specifics of each platform. Facebook and Instagram remain the main platforms for communicating with fans [27, 28], while TikTok [29, 30] and YouTube [31] offer opportunities to reach a wider audience and experiment with innovative content formats.

In conclusion, this research provides valuable insights into how Romanian football teams use social media to achieve their marketing and communication objectives. The results can be useful for both sports clubs and sports marketing specialists, providing relevant information for the development and optimization of online promotion strategies. It is important that teams continue to invest in creating engaging and relevant content, monitor the performance of posts, and adapt strategies as fan preferences change. By using social media effectively, clubs can strengthen their relationship with fans, increase their visibility, and generate new revenue opportunities.

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