# FOOTBALL AND ACTIVISM ON SOCIAL MEDIA
## The Role of Fans in Identity and Social Values Construction

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**ABSTRACT**

*The global cultural phenomenon of football exerts a profound influence on the promotion of social values. This study examines how teams' followers, perceived as countercultural, utilise social media to convey messages of diversity and inclusion. The objective is to demonstrate, through a content analysis, how club supporters such as St. Pauli, Celtic and Rayo Vallecano engage in activism on X, Instagram, and TikTok. In an environment where major football conglomerates prioritize financial gain, fan profiles can promote messages of integration and plurality. The combination of passion and social values inherent to football can drive positive change.*

## 1. Introduction

Football is one of the most popular and universal sporting phenomena, transcending the boundaries of the playing field to become an important arena for the expression of social identities, values and opinions. Football's influence extends to all areas of our lives, socially, economically and culturally, shaping our perception of ourselves and projecting our future desires (Goldblatt, 2019). In the digital age, social media has amplified this dynamic by providing fans with a platform to engage in sport-related conversations, debates and activist movements. This paper examines the role of fans at the intersection of football and social media activism, exploring how they contribute to the construction of collective identities and the promotion of social values.

The influence of football on our lives is becoming increasingly evident, particularly in light of the media's (mainly radio, television and the internet) role in this regard. From an early age, sport becomes an integral part of our social interactions, fueling our passions and, in many cases, defining our identities. However, this pervasive influence raises questions about the cultural and social costs associated with such extensive influence.

At the social level, football can promote community cohesion and a sense of belonging by uniting people from different backgrounds around a common interest (Acuña-Delgado and Acuña-Gómez, 2017). However, it can also give rise to exacerbated rivalries that fuel violence and intolerance. From an economic perspective, football is a multi-billion-dollar industry that generates employment, revenue, commercial and advertising opportunities (Gay-de-Liébana, 2016) and can even have a strong influence as an element of tourist attraction (Cestino-González et al., 2020). However, this monetisation can lead to the commodification of sport, where financial interests prevail over sporting and social values, exacerbating inequality between clubs and exploiting players and fans. Culturally, football can be an expression of national identity and pride, reflecting the traditions and values of a society (Cuesta and Bohórquez, 2012). Conversely, this monetisation can perpetuate stereotypes and exclusion, both in terms of gender and ethnicity, marginalising those who do not fit the ideal of the true fan.

Furthermore, in this digital age, football teams, players and organisations leverage social media platforms to disseminate visual content, including images, graphics and videos. These visual elements serve to reinforce brand identity, engage with audiences and facilitate online discourse, thereby contributing to the construction of the visual culture associated with football (Castillo-Esparcia et al., 2016). Football clubs, players and related organisations have come to recognise the power of social media as an effective tool to reach their fans. In this context, football clubs and fans break the rules of production and consumption, becoming both producers and consumers of networked content. Consequently, there is a pressing need to understand the interactions between producers and consumers in the modern Internet age (De-Vicente-Domínguez and Sierra-Sánchez, 2022: 19). As elucidated by Sidorenko-Bautistaet al., (2021: 145), 'the model that social networks have been imposing around immediacy and participation' is increasingly influencing global digital communication. The sharing of stories and audiovisual narratives on platforms such as Instagram, Twitter (now X) and TikTok enables fans and clubs to create universes full of differentiated stories (Miranda-Galbe et al., 2021). These elements serve not only to strengthen the team's brand identity, but also to establish meaningful connections with the audience. Furthermore, they facilitate online interaction, prompting discussions and dialogues among fans on football-related matters. Ultimately, this activity contributes to the formation and reinforcement of a visual football culture, where fans actively engage and find a platform to express their passion and belonging.

In the internet age, football fans have developed a close and vibrant relationship with social media. These platforms act as a space where fans can express their passion, connect with other global followers and immerse themselves in football culture. However, social media is not only a space for the voices most suited to the system. These platforms also act as a loudspeaker for more alternative fan groups critical of the *statu quo*.

The convergence of activism and football has generated a new dynamic that transcends physical boundaries and amplifies the voices of those who seek to bring about change in society. Some groups of football fans have found a space to express their activism in various social causes through social networks. Whether it is promoting inclusion, combating racism in sport, advocating for gender equality or demanding fairness and transparency in the management of clubs and sports organisations, football fans can become agents of change in the football community and beyond. This research analyses how

certain clubs and groups of supporters that challenge the prevailing culture take advantage of social media to disseminate messages that promote diversity and inclusion, through the main social networks. The primary objective of this research is to identify and elucidate the processes by which clubs and their most active and considered countercultural supporters, such as F.C. St. Pauli, Celtic F.C. or Rayo Vallecano, engage in the active promotion of these values on platforms such as X, Instagram and TikTok.

## 2. Theoretical Framework: Football, Power and Identity

The football team that many fans support represents a significant aspect of their personal identity. The choice of a team can be influenced by a variety of factors, including geographical location, family heritage, personal experiences, and even the values and principles associated with the club. Identifying with a team provides a sense of belonging and connection to a wider community of supporters who share the same interests and passions. At the same time, it differentiates one fan from another, in a process of constructing otherness in which social values are confronted with those of the other (Bundio, 2018). Furthermore, football can play an important role in the construction of cultural and national identities. Football teams can represent and embody symbols of regional or national identity, and sporting success can generate a sense of pride and unity among supporters. In some cases, the colours of a team or its symbols can be recognised as cultural emblems in themselves. Conversely, football can also be used as a tool to challenge and question existing identities. It can be observed that countercultural clubs, as exemplified by those under investigation in this paper, may adopt specific political or social stances that resonate with certain segments of society, thereby attracting supporters who identify with those ideologies.

It can be argued that football is not only a game, but also a powerful medium for the formation and expression of individual and collective identities. Whether through support for a particular team, the representation of cultural identities or the adoption of counter-cultural stances, football plays a significant role in shaping who we are and how we relate to others. It can be argued that football can be considered a religion, with Fulconis and Pache (2014) proposing that there are four dimensions to this phenomenon: the worship of the team and its players, the ritual participation in sporting events, the community of believers who share this devotion, and the search for meaning and transcendence through football. Over time, it has become evident that football has become an institution that can become an almost spiritual and meaningful experience for millions of people around the world. Such experiences are frequently shaped by the dominant forces, the prevailing powers.

It is evident that football, and its fans, are not exempt from the influence of the so-called powers that be. These powers can manifest themselves in various ways, including political and economic influence, as well as power dynamics within the sports organisations themselves (Segurola, 1999). Firstly, football can be used as a political tool by governments and authoritarian regimes to strengthen their national and international image, or even to divert attention from internal problems. It is evident that some countries utilise the organisation of major football events, such as the World Cup, to project a positive and powerful image on the world stage (Juárez-Centeno and Tuninetti, 2023). As De San Eugenio-Vela and Ginesta-Portet (2013: 45) elucidate, "Qatar employs, *stricto sensu,* a strategy of sports place branding, which entails leveraging the discourse of sport, and more specifically football, to alter the image that has historically been associated with the governments of the Persian Gulf region. This, in turn, necessitates a rebranding exercise." The contemporary evidence suggests that certain countries engage in image laundering through the use of football to enhance and force a positive image (Campbell, 2010). This can be observed in the case of Saudi Arabia (Satish et al., 2024).

In addition, economic power plays a crucial role in football. Wealthier clubs are able to acquire the best players, which gives them a significant competitive advantage. This creates a disparity between clubs with abundant financial resources and those with less economic capacity, which can distort competition and perpetuate a cycle of inequality. Multinational companies also have a strong influence in football, either through sponsorship deals with clubs and players or through direct ownership of teams. This relationship between football and capitalism or mercantilism is, in essence, inevitable (Rodríguez-Díaz, 2021). This influence can affect decisions on and off the pitch, from player recruitment to marketing strategies and ticket pricing policies.

In this vein, the pressure for financial gain has led to the increased commercialisation of football, with the proliferation of advertising in stadiums, team shirts sold as fashion products and the growing importance of branding in club identity (García-López, 2016b). The concentration of wealth in the hands of a few clubs and tycoons has exacerbated inequality in sport, creating a widening gap between elite and lesser teams. In an environment where the financially biggest clubs have become entertainment multinationals (Ginesta-Portet, 2011), the relentless pursuit of profit can lead to questionable financial practices, such as speculation in the transfer market or the overexploitation of natural resources in the construction of stadiums. Ultimately, football and the power dynamics associated with the accumulation of capital, and the commodification of all football actors, are interconnected phenomena that reflect the complexities and contradictions of contemporary society. As sport continues to evolve in a world increasingly dominated by market forces, it is crucial to reflect on how to balance economic competitiveness with the fundamental values of equity, justice and universal access to sport.

Conversely, within the sports organisations themselves, such as FIFA (Fédération Internationale de Football Association) and UEFA (Union of European Football Associations), there are also power dynamics that can affect the development and management of football at the global and regional level. These power dynamics can potentially develop corrupt patterns or, as some authors indicate, corrupt dynamics (Ollier, 2023). The interests of different national federations, as well as major clubs and leagues, frequently conflict, which can result in decisions that benefit certain groups to the detriment of others. FIFA and UEFA are two of the most influential organisations in world football, and the power dynamics operating within them have a significant impact on the sport at the global and regional level. Both organisations possess considerable power over the development and regulation of football in their respective areas of influence. FIFA, as the governing body of football worldwide, sets the rules of the game, organizes international tournaments such as the World Cup, and oversees the development of the sport in every corner of the globe. Meanwhile, UEFA plays a similar role in Europe, overseeing competitions like the Champions League and the European Championship, in addition to establishing regulations and guidelines for European football.

It can therefore be inferred that these organisations are not exempt from criticism, and the power dynamics within them have often been the subject of scrutiny. At FIFA, for example, concerns have been raised about a lack of transparency and corruption (Jennings, 2015), especially during Joseph Blatter's tenure, which culminated in a series of scandals that shook the foundations of the organisation. Since then, FIFA has implemented reforms aimed at improving governance and integrity in world football, although challenges remain. Similarly, UEFA has also been the subject of debate regarding its power dynamics, particularly in relation to revenue distribution and club representation in continental competitions. Similarly, the formation of the European Super League, a project spearheaded by some of Europe's wealthiest and most influential clubs, including Real Madrid, highlighted the discord between the interests of the clubs and those of UEFA. This underscored the necessity of striking a balance between sporting competitiveness and financial solidarity in European football (Viñas-Gracia and Ginesta-Portet, 2022). Nevertheless, FIFA and UEFA are key players in the world of football, and the power dynamics within these organisations have a significant impact on the sport at the global and regional level. While both bodies have faced challenges in terms of transparency and governance, they have also demonstrated their ability to adapt and reform in response to external criticism and pressures.

It can be argued that football is inextricably linked to a multitude of factual powers, encompassing political and economic realms, as well as the internal dynamics of sports organisations. This power, which transcends materiality, becomes a symbolic power (Sullivan et al., 2019), capable of influencing thoughts and behaviours. Consequently, football has become an ideological institution, guiding the behaviours of fans across the globe (García-López, 2016a). It is therefore of the utmost importance to recognise and understand the influence of football in order to address the challenges of inequality, corruption and other issues affecting the world's most popular sport.

## 3. Method

The study employs the methodology proposed by Castillo-Esparcia et al., (2016), which was used to identify the main European clubs that are considered countercultural from the perspective of their supporters and that play in the first or second division in their countries, i.e. teams that are part of professional football. Although this may appear to be a vast number of teams, in reality, there are not that many that challenge the status quo or whose communication aligns with this stance. Furthermore,

their fans have created alternative communication channels through the formation of activist supporters (Gutiérrez-Bayardi, 2022). Consequently, the sample has been narrowed down to three European clubs: The sample comprises three European clubs: Celtic F.C., the club from the Scottish city of Glasgow that plays in the Scottish Premiership or first division of Scottish football; Rayo Vallecano de Madrid, which plays in La Liga or first division of Spanish professional football; and F.C. St. Pauli, a club that competes in Bundesliga 2 or second division of German football, although it has participated several seasons in Bundesliga 1 or first division. Nevertheless, none of these clubs are among those that generate the greatest revenue, as evidenced by data from Deloitte's most recent study (2024) on the Football Money League.

**Table 1.** Deloitte Football Money League 2024. Revenues in European football.

| | Football clubs | Revenues in millions of euros | | Football clubs | Revenues in millions of euros |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Real Madrid | 831,4 | 11 | Juventus | 432,4 |
| 2 | Manchester City | 825,9 | 12 | Borussia Dortmund | 420 |
| 3 | Paris Saint-Germain | 801,8 | 13 | AC Milan | 385,3 |
| 4 | FC Barcelona | 800,1 | 14 | FC Internazionale Milano | 378,9 |
| 5 | Manchester United | 745.8 | 15 | Atlético de Madrid | 364,1 |
| 6 | Bayer Munich | 744 | 16 | Eintracht Frankfurt | 293,5 |
| 7 | Liverpool | 682,9 | 17 | Newcastle United | 287,8 |
| 8 | Tottenham Hotspurs | 631,5 | 18 | West Ham United | 275,1 |
| 9 | Chelsea | 589,4 | 19 | SSC Napoli | 267,7 |
| 10 | Arsenal | 532,6 | 20 | Olympique de Marseille | 258,4 |

Source: Deloitte, 2024.

In order to gain insight into the communication strategies employed by the clubs selected for analysis, the most popular social networks used by both the teams themselves and the main fan groups, where applicable, have been considered. In this context, Gutiérrez-Bayardi's (2022) findings have been utilised to analyse the X, Instagram and TikTok profiles of the three selected clubs: Celtic F.C., Rayo Vallecano de Madrid and F.C. St. Pauli.

In order to ascertain the determining factors of each of the social networks to be studied, and with the argumentative support of Castillo-Esparcia et al., (2016), a week of analysis has been selected, from 26 February to 3 March 2024. This will be conducted using the content analysis method of the following components:

- Social networking.
- Number of followers, likes or subscribers.
- Follow-up with other entities.
- Comments.

The analysis of these elements can provide relevant information on the counter-cultural activity of each of the clubs studied, as well as the existing relationships with their supporters and the potential social and cultural activism of some of the most active fan groups.

# 4. Results

The football teams Celtic FC, Rayo Vallecano and St. Pauli are renowned for their staunch commitment to countercultural values and social activism. In the social networks analysed, these clubs utilise their platforms to disseminate messages of diversity, inclusion and social justice, with F.C. St Pauli doing so in an institutional manner. In the cases of Celtic and Rayo Vallecano, the level of activism demonstrated by their supporters is more pronounced than that of the clubs themselves, which tend to adopt a more institutionalised or establishment-aligned communication approach. Celtic FC, based in Glasgow, Scotland, utilises its social media accounts to engage with its fan base, disseminate team news, interact with supporters and promote social responsibility campaigns. The club has demonstrated its support for a range of causes, including gender equality, ethnic diversity and LGBTQ+ inclusion.

Rayo Vallecano, based in Madrid, Spain, is also known for its social and political engagement. The club's social media platforms serve as a platform for promoting equality, justice and solidarity. They have campaigned against gender-based violence, supported disadvantaged groups and demonstrated their commitment to diversity and inclusion.

St. Pauli, situated in Hamburg, Germany, is renowned for its countercultural identity and political activism. On social media, the club disseminates content aligned with its core values, including anti-racism, the opposition to fascism, and support for refugees and displaced individuals. Additionally, they advocate for cultural and sexual diversity, as well as the integration of marginalised communities.

**Table 2.** Social Networks per club updated as of 11 March 2024.

| Club | Social Networking | Name or address on each social network | Followers |
|---|---|---|---|
| Celtic FC | X, previous Twitter | @CelticFC | 969.4 thousand |
| | Instagram | celticfc | 880 thousand |
| | TikTok | celticfc | 648.3 thousand |
| Rayo Vallecano of Madrid | X, previous Twitter | @RayoVallecano | 464.1 thousand |
| | Instagram | rayovallecano | 202 thousand |
| | TikTok | rayovallecano | 996.2 thousand |
| F.C. St. Pauli | X, previous Twitter | @fcstpauli | 244.3 thousand |
| | Instagram | fcstpauli | 336 thousand |
| | TikTok | fcstpauli | 37.9 thousand |

Source: Own elaboration based on X, Instagram and TikTok, 2024.

## 4.1. Activism in Football: From Local to Global

The domain of football activism encompasses a vast array of concerns, ranging from local issues such as club ownership and ticket prices to global issues such as racism, gender discrimination and labour exploitation in the sports industry. Social media has been a pivotal tool in amplifying these voices and mobilising fans around pivotal causes. For instance, campaigns such as #BlackLivesMatter and #KickItOut have leveraged platforms such as Twitter (Now X) and Instagram to raise awareness about racism in football and advocate for meaningful change.

The evolution of football activism has been remarkable, moving from a localised expression of specific concerns and causes to a global movement encompassing a wide range of social, political and

environmental issues. This shift reflects both the ability of sport to mobilise the masses and the growing awareness of actors within the football world of their influence and responsibility in society.

In the past, football activism was often linked to local or regional issues, such as the fight against racism in stadiums or protests against oppressive political regimes. However, with the advent of social media and the globalisation of sport, these initiatives have taken on an international dimension. Players, clubs and fans can now share their messages and causes with a global audience instantly, amplifying their impact and generating solidarity around the world.

The results demonstrate that clubs on social media address a diverse range of issues, including gender equality and climate justice. This reflects the diversity of concerns and aspirations in contemporary society. For instance, clubs such as Rayo Vallecano in Spain have run campaigns in support of women's rights and the inclusion of people with disabilities, demonstrating their commitment to local and global causes.

In the case of Rayo Vallecano, it can be said that it has been recognised for its firm commitment to social rights throughout its history. One of the areas in which Rayo Vallecano has excelled is in the defence of workers' rights. The club has demonstrated solidarity with trade unions and labour movements, participating in actions in support of striking workers and backing struggles for decent wages and fair working conditions. Furthermore, it has been an advocate for the rights of migrants and refugees. The team has promoted the inclusion and integration of these communities, organising events and activities to raise awareness of the challenges they face and supporting initiatives that seek to guarantee their fundamental rights. However, what stands out most with respect to the week analysed on social networks is gender equality. Nevertheless, Rayo Vallecano has been a pioneer in promoting female participation in football.

It can be observed that Celtic FC is a proponent of the rights of minority and marginalised communities, particularly in comparison to other European football giants. The club, a regular participant in European competitions, has endeavoured to create a welcoming and diverse atmosphere within its stadium and among its supporters, thereby encouraging the inclusion of individuals from all backgrounds and identities. Furthermore, Celtic FC supports community programmes and projects that seek to enhance the quality of life of the most vulnerable members of society. Another significant area of focus for Celtic FC is the battle against racism and discrimination. As evidenced by the analysis, the club has been engaged in initiatives aimed at increasing awareness of these issues and has taken a resolute stance against any form of hatred or intolerance. Furthermore, Celtic FC has collaborated closely with anti-racist organisations and has promoted education and awareness of cultural diversity.

One club that is particularly active in the promotion of social and environmental rights and active on social media is F.C. St. Pauli. The club is distinguished by its pioneering commitment to social rights, environmental advocacy and activism on a wide range of issues. Over the years, the club has used its platform in the world of football to advocate for equality, inclusion and social justice in society. One area in which F.C. St. Pauli has demonstrated particular expertise is in advocating for the rights of the LGBTQ+ community. The club has consistently demonstrated its commitment to equal rights for all individuals, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity. It has organised a number of events and campaigns to promote inclusion and has provided a safe and welcoming space for the LGBTQ+ community in its stadium and in the wider community. Furthermore, F.C. St. Pauli has been an advocate for the rights of refugees and displaced persons. The club has collaborated closely with humanitarian organisations to provide support and assistance to those seeking refuge in Germany. The club has utilised its visibility to raise awareness of the refugee crisis and to advocate for more compassionate and caring policies. With regard to combating racism and discrimination, F.C. St. Pauli has taken a resolute and determined stance. The club has been involved in a number of initiatives and campaigns aimed at combating hatred and intolerance in all its forms. Furthermore, it has promoted diversity and inclusion in football and in society at large. The club has been an active advocate for education and awareness of racism, with the objective of creating a fairer and more equitable world for all. In summary, FC St. Pauli has demonstrated an unwavering commitment to social rights through its activism on issues such as LGBTQ+ equality, refugee rights and the fight against racism. The club's progressive approach and influence in the world of football have contributed to the promotion of justice and fairness in German society and beyond.

## 4.2. The Role of Fans in Digital Activism

In the three cases analysed, fans play a crucial role in digital activism related to football. Through the use of social media, fans have the ability to impact the media agenda, exert pressure on clubs and sports organizations, and establish a true community that promotes social values such as diversity and inclusion.

Platforms like X, Instagram, and TikTok provide Celtic, Rayo, and St. Pauli supporters with a window to express their passion, connect with other fans from around the world, and actively participate in football culture.

Firstly, it has been demonstrated that social media provides fans with a platform to share their passion for sport through online posts, comments and conversations. This enables them not only to express their opinions and emotions about matches, players or teams, but also to form virtual communities where they can interact with other fans who share their interests. Conversely, it can be observed that social media has also transformed the way clubs and sports organisations interact with their supporters. Through official social media profiles, teams communicate directly with their fan base, providing updates, promotions and exclusive content that strengthens the emotional bond between the club and its supporters. Furthermore, the profiles of the main fan activist groups stand out in football activism.

In the case of Celtic Football Club, the Green Brigade stands out as one of the main supporters' groups and the most active or activist. They are characterised by their passion and active commitment to various social and political causes. The group was formed in 2006 and has gained recognition for its unwavering support for the team and its involvement in community and activist activities. The Green Brigade is known for its support of Celtic Football Club on and off the pitch. As evidenced by the audio-visual analysis, the Green Brigade is a notable presence in the stadium during matches, creating a vibrant atmosphere with chants and banners supporting the team. In addition to their support for football, the Green Brigade is also involved in social initiatives, such as raising funds for local charities and participating in community outreach projects.

As has been noted, one of the most prominent aspects of the Green Brigade is its political activism. The group has expressed solidarity with various causes, including the fight against racism, discrimination and social injustice. They have participated in demonstrations and protests, and have used their platform to raise awareness of important issues and advocate for social change. However, the Green Brigade has also generated controversy in the past due to their involvement in behaviour considered inappropriate by some, such as the use of pyrotechnics in the stadium and the display of political banners during matches. Nevertheless, the group remains an integral part of the Celtic FC community and continues to be recognised for their passion and dedication to the team and the causes they support.

In the case of Rayo Vallecano, *Bukaneros*, a group of fans known for their unconditional support for the team and their commitment to various social causes, stand out as one of the most active and passionate factions within the football world. Formed in the 1990s, *Bukaneros* has been an integral part of Rayo Vallecano's culture ever since. The analysis revealed that *Bukaneros* are distinguished by their ardent support for the team, manifested through chants, banners, and choreography during matches. In addition to their support for football, *Bukaneros* have also been involved in community and solidarity activities, such as organizing charity events and participating in community aid projects.

One of the hallmarks of *Bukaneros* is their dedication to defending social rights and combating injustice. Furthermore, they have participated in a multitude of initiatives and protests in support of various causes, including gender equality, workers' rights, and the inclusion of migrants and refugees. Additionally, they have leveraged their social media platforms to raise awareness about pivotal social and political issues, sparking discourse and advocating for change.

Finally, in the case of St. Pauli, the Pirates stand out as a group of fans distinguished by their passion for the team and their commitment to counter-cultural and social values. The St. Pauli Pirates have been noted for their global activism, including advocacy for minority rights and the promotion of inclusion and diversity. They have been involved in actions in defence of causes such as support for the LGTBI+ community, migrants' rights and the fight against racism and discrimination. However, in the case of F.C. St. Pauli, the number of fan groups on social media is less pronounced than in the other two cases. This is because the club itself has institutionally become an activist and counter-cultural entity.

## 5. Conclusions

The interconnection between football and social media activism is evident. Fans play a pivotal role in promoting collective identities and social values through digital platforms. As football continues to be a space for cultural expression and social mobilisation, it is crucial to recognise and support the transformative power of fans in building a more inclusive and equitable world.

The advent of the digital age has enabled a multitude of activist actors within the realm of football to amplify their voices, allowing for the dissemination of information and the formation of connections with individuals who share similar concerns and values. The utilisation of hashtags, online campaigns, signature petitions, and other forms of digital activism has facilitated the mobilisation of entire communities in support of various causes. Nevertheless, this new landscape also presents a number of challenges. The emergence of polarisation, misinformation and hate speech on social media represents a significant challenge to the advancement of football activism. Furthermore, the influence of commercial and political interests in the world of football can impede genuine efforts for social change.

The results demonstrate that fans play a pivotal role in football-related digital activism. Through posts, comments and coordinated actions, they can influence the media agenda, exert pressure on clubs and sports organisations, and establish an online social support community. Additionally, fans can leverage their influence to promote values such as inclusion, equality and social justice within and outside the sporting arena.

While social media activism by clubs and fans offers unprecedented opportunities for the promotion of social rights, it also poses significant challenges. In addition to the hate speech and misinformation already noted, online harassment can hinder efforts to promote positive change and create a safe and welcoming environment for all fans. It is therefore crucial that fans, sports organisations and social media platforms work together to address these issues and foster a culture of respect and responsibility online.

It is no longer necessary to be a famous figure or to have privileged access in order to have a voice in the football conversation. Anyone can become a football influencer simply by sharing interesting content or participating in debates. However, this relationship between fans and social media also has its contradictions. The rapid dissemination of information and opinions can lead to controversy and conflict among fans. In addition, there is a risk that social media can amplify negative behaviour such as harassment or violence among fans. The interaction between football fans and social media has transformed the way in which we experience and engage with the world's most popular sport. While it presents challenges, it also offers opportunities for greater participation, connection and expression within the global football community.

The three clubs and their main fan groups have demonstrated relevant activity on social media in favour of diversity and inclusion. However, the communication on the different digital platforms studied by F.C. St. Pauli stands out, exemplifying how alternative modes of consumption (and production) are encouraged, as well as communicating through its platforms ways of thinking and behaving that benefit the community instead of prioritising only economic aspects.

In conclusion, the convergence between activism and football in the digital age represents an exciting opportunity to drive change and positive transformation in society. By harnessing the power of social media and joining forces around common causes, fans can play an important role in building a more just, inclusive and caring world.

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