

Conceptual Framework: Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivations in Football Club Marketing Engagement

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ABSTRACT

Social media has revolutionized how sports organisations engage with their audiences, making fan interaction an essential area of study in football club marketing. This conceptual paper examines the role of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in shaping fan engagement on Instagram, grounded in Self-Determination Theory (SDT). Intrinsic motivation, driven by psychological needs such as emotional connection, team identity, and a sense of belonging, fosters organic and long-term engagement. Fans who feel a deep connection to their favourite clubs are more likely to participate in discussions, share content, and actively follow club updates. On the other hand, extrinsic motivation, which includes incentives such as promotional rewards, exclusive content, and gamified experiences, plays a significant role in encouraging engagement. While these external motivators enhance short-term interactions, they can also contribute to sustained loyalty if strategically integrated with intrinsic engagement efforts. By integrating these motivational factors, this paper proposes a conceptual framework to understand how football clubs can optimize their social media marketing strategies to enhance fan participation and loyalty.

Keywords: Football club; Intrinsic motivations; Extrinsic motivations; Instagram; Self-Determination Theory.

How to Cite

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INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted how sports teams connect with their fans, making social media platforms, especially Instagram, essential tools for maintaining fan engagement. Instagram has become a vital component of sports marketing strategies, allowing teams to share real-time updates, behind-the-scenes content, and interactive features like polls, Q&A sessions, and live streaming. This shift has been particularly crucial during times when fans cannot physically attend matches, such as during the COVID-19 crisis (Clavio & Walsh, 2013; Sanderson, 2011). As Instagram's popularity continues to grow, it provides an opportunity for teams to interact with fans across the globe, with influencers playing a significant role in boosting engagement (Dixon, 2017; De Veirman et al., 2017). Undeniably, Instagram is one of the essential social media platforms for certain sports organizations to showcase their activities and to promote brands across the globe.

In Malaysian context, given that younger Malaysian audiences are more inclined to consume sports content digitally, Instagram has become a primary tool for clubs to interact with their fans. Social media strategies focusing on content vividness and interactivity are central to football marketing across Malaysia, with platforms like Instagram playing a key role in maintaining fan loyalty (Annamalai et al., 2021). In Malaysia, football clubs like Johor Darul Ta'zim (JDT) have used Instagram effectively to maintain and increase fan loyalty, with JDT being one of the fastest-growing football club Instagram accounts globally (JDT News, 2020). Similarly, UiTM United FC has been using Instagram to strengthen its connection with fans by offering regular updates and live streaming.

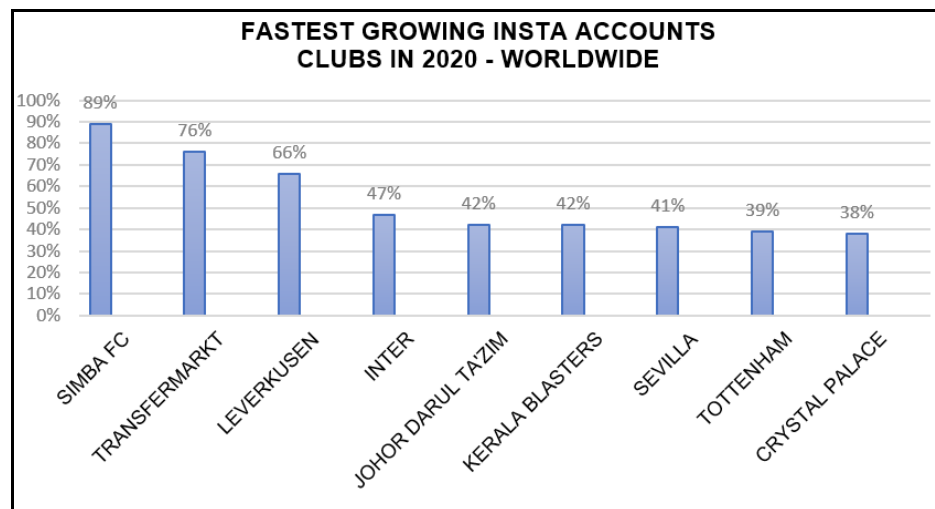


Figure 1: Fastest Growing Instagram Accounts for Football Clubs in 2020 Worldwide (News, 2020)

Intrinsic motivation involves internal factors such as emotional investment and community connection, while extrinsic motivation is driven by external rewards such as contests and giveaways (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Understanding the balance between these two motivations is crucial for enhancing long-term fan engagement and loyalty.

As of 3 December 2024, UiTM United FC has 8,177 Instagram followers. The followers are micro-influencers, with 1,000 to 100,000 followers. Deep ties with specific audiences allow micro-influencers to build trust and authenticity with their followers (Brown & Hayes, 2008). Despite this, the majority remains disengaged from the club's social media content. For instance, many of the club's posts receive minimal interaction, with only a few comments or likes, indicating a lack of active participation from followers. Therefore, this study aims to examine the proposed conceptual framework on the influence of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation on Instagram engagement among UiTM United FC fans. By identifying key motivators behind fan participation, this research seeks to provide insights that can help the club optimize its social media strategy, enhancing fan loyalty and interaction.

Research Objective

This conceptual paper aims to develop a conceptual framework explaining the role of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in shaping Instagram engagement among football club fans, with specific reference to UiTM United FC. Drawing on Self-Determination Theory (SDT), the paper seeks to:

1. Conceptualize the relationship between intrinsic motivation and Instagram engagement among football club fans.
2. Conceptualize the relationship between extrinsic motivation and Instagram engagement among football club fans.
3. Integrate intrinsic and extrinsic motivation within a proposed conceptual framework for understanding football fan engagement on Instagram.
4. Provide theoretical and practical propositions that can guide future empirical research and social media marketing strategies for football clubs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Intrinsic Motivation

Intrinsic motivation serves as a fundamental driver for individuals to achieve their goals, fostering sustained engagement and meaningful interactions. Deci and Ryan (2000) define intrinsic motivation as an internal drive that compels individuals to participate in activities for their enjoyment rather than for external rewards. This form of motivation is fueled by factors such as enjoyment, personal interest, and a sense of fulfillment, leading to long-term involvement and deeper emotional connections (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

In the context of sports fandom, many football clubs aim to cultivate fan engagement by leveraging intrinsic motivators such as team affiliation and emotional connection. Fans of UiTM United FC, for instance, may be driven by their passion for football, identification with the team, and enjoyment derived from engaging with team-related content on Instagram (Trkulja et al., 2024). These intrinsic factors can enhance fan loyalty and create a more interactive and engaged online community.

To understand fan behaviour, engagement occurs when individuals translate their emotions into actions. Those who are intrinsically motivated tend to develop a strong emotional connection with the content they consume, making them more likely to engage in self-expressive behaviours such as liking, commenting, and sharing posts (Funk & James, 2001). In the context of sports fandom, UiTM United FC fans, for example, may feel a deep attachment to their team due to a strong sense of identification and emotional connection. This bond encourages them to actively engage with the club on Instagram, not merely in response to promotional efforts but out of genuine passion for football and personal enjoyment of the content (Trkulja et al., 2024). Their engagement reflects their loyalty and emotional investment, reinforcing their connection to the team and enhancing their overall fan experience.

Concept of Extrinsic Motivation

Extrinsic motivation is an important concept in the study of fan engagement, especially on platforms like Instagram. Extrinsic motivation, defined as the desire to engage in a behaviour in exchange for external rewards, influences how fans interact with content from their favourite sports teams (Deci and Ryan, 2000). This type of motivation is distinct from intrinsic motivation, which is driven by internal satisfaction or passion (Vallerand et al., 1992). The distinction between these two types of motivation is crucial when examining how fans interact in online spaces, particularly in sports fandom, where social benefits are frequently the key motivators.

The fan behaviour driven by extrinsic motivation in Instagram engagement. Fans engage more with content when they receive likes, comments, or other forms of social validation (Hamari et al., 2014). For example, sports fans may be motivated to engage with content if they believe their participation will lead to incentives such as merchandise, discounts, and public recognition (Mollen & Wilson, 2010). These incentives establish a feedback process that engages fans, raising overall awareness and interest in the club or brand.

For UiTM United FC, extrinsic motivators can be utilized to enhance Instagram engagement by offering rewards that align with fan desires. Social media contests, giveaways, and exclusive access to team events are all effective ways to tap into extrinsic drive. According to (Hamari et al., 2014), fans are more likely to connect when they believe that their actions, such as commenting, sharing, or enjoying content, will result in a reward (Hamari et al., 2014). This method fosters greater engagement and builds a sense of community among fans. In summary, extrinsic motivation, arising from external rewards, significantly affects how sports fans interact with Instagram content and offers a key insight for developing a social media strategy (Vallerand et al., 1992).

Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

The Self-Determination Theory is a comprehensive explanatory framework for assessing motivation with an emphasis on inner and external factors. According to Deci and Ryan (2000), intrinsic motivation originates from the inherent satisfaction of an activity, while extrinsic motivation is shaped by external rewards or pressures. The dual aspect of motivation in online spaces necessitates a nuanced understanding of these underlying factors, as fans' motivations can evolve depending on the platform and context (Vallerand et al., 1992; Sheldon et al., 2001).

An important component of SDT involves the three innate psychological needs, such as autonomy, competence, and relatedness, as a function of motivation and engagement (Deci & Ryan, 2000). These are particularly related to the involvement of UiTM United FC fans on Instagram, as meeting their needs would increase their engagement and interaction with the content. Fans motivated intrinsically may engage with the content for its inherent value, whereas those motivated extrinsically may engage for external rewards, such as likes, comments, or social recognition (Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001; Vallerand et al., 1992). This provides reason to understand how the different motivational drivers variably drive online behavioral engagement among fans, since on Instagram, engagement is both intrinsically driven by enjoyment and extrinsically rewarded.

SDT illuminates the process of internalization, wherein individuals increasingly internalize external motivations into the value system of the acting individual, thereby integrating motivation to align values and personal goals (Deci & Ryan, 2000). For example, a fan who begins engaging with content for the sake of winning a prize or receiving social approval may develop personal meaning from their interactions and thus become more intrinsically motivated. Research has shown that the internalization of external motivation makes engagement more consistent and enduring, which could be the case for fans of UiTM United FC (Sheldon et al., 2001). The internalization of motivation is important for explaining the long-term dynamics of fan engagement on digital networks such as Instagram.

Finally, SDT can explain Instagram fan engagement and intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. SDT studies how internalization and psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness affect fan behaviour. Knowing fan behaviour could help marketers and content suppliers connect online.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORKS

Figure 2:
Theoretical Framework SDT by Deci & Ryan (1985)

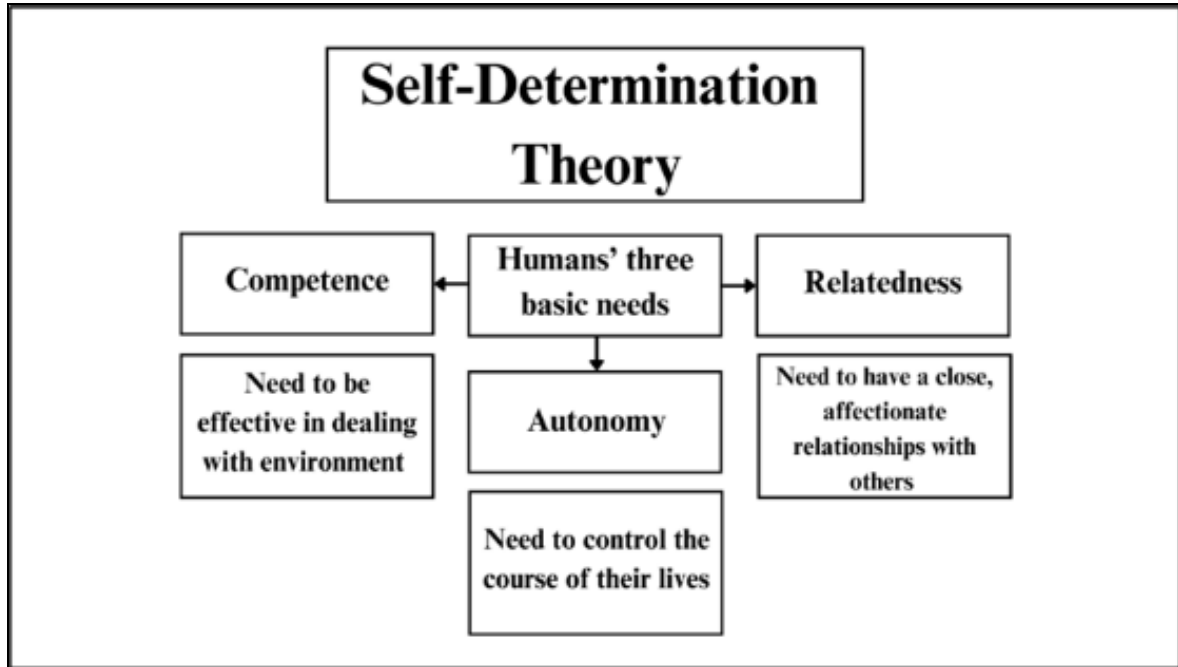
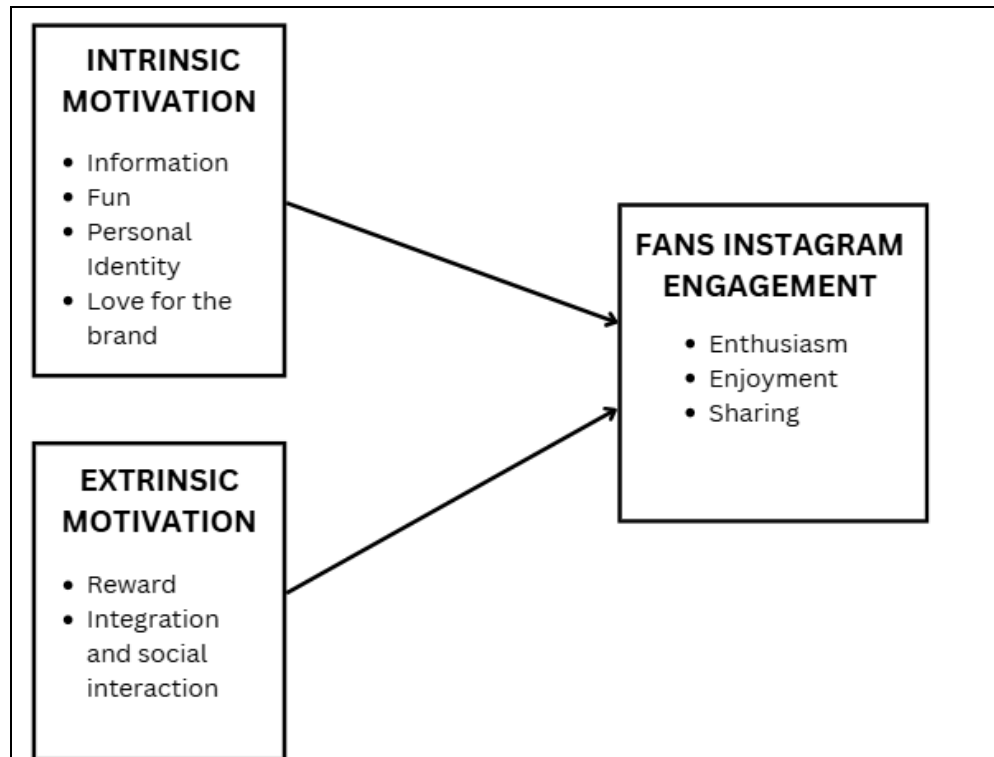


Figure 2:
Proposed Conceptual Framework of the Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivations in Football Club Marketing Engagement



The proposed conceptual framework (Figure 2) illustrates the relationship between motivation (intrinsic and extrinsic) and fan engagement on Instagram, grounded in Self-Determination Theory (Figure 1). It posits that fans' engagement behaviors, namely enthusiasm, enjoyment, and sharing are influenced by their intrinsic and extrinsic motivations. Intrinsic motivation is driven by factors such as information-seeking, fun, personal identity, and love for the brand, which encourages fans to engage with content due to personal fulfillment and emotional attachment. Meanwhile, extrinsic motivation, which includes rewards and social integration, influences engagement through external incentives such as promotions, contests, and social validation.

The framework suggests that both motivational dimensions contribute to how fans interact with Instagram content, either through self-expressive behaviors (liking, commenting, and sharing) or passive consumption (viewing and following). By integrating these motivational perspectives, this framework provides a structured approach to understanding digital fan engagement, offering insights for sports organizations to design content strategies that cater to both intrinsic passion and extrinsic incentives. Future empirical research can validate these relationships to optimize digital marketing efforts in sports fandom.

CONCLUSION

This conceptual paper highlights the critical role of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations in driving fan engagement on Instagram for UiTM United FC. Intrinsic motivations, such as emotional connection, identity, and personal enjoyment, foster deeper, more sustained engagement, underscoring the importance of creating meaningful, relatable content. On the other hand, extrinsic motivations, including incentives such as contests, giveaways, and social recognition, serve as powerful triggers for initial engagement and broader participation.

Using Self-Determination Theory as a framework, this paper demonstrates how intrinsic and extrinsic motivations interact to shape fan behavior. When external rewards are internalized, they can transform into lasting engagement, enhancing loyalty and creating a vibrant fan community. For UiTM United FC, leveraging this understanding can lead to optimized social media strategies that balance these motivational drivers, fostering a stronger connection with fans and ensuring their continued support.

Future studies should further explore these dynamics through empirical research to provide deeper insights into how motivation affects digital fan engagement, particularly in sports marketing contexts.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in the paper.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Author 1 contributed to the conceptualization, research design, and writing of the original draft.

Author 2 was responsible for data collection, analysis, and validation of the results.

Author 3 provided supervision, critical review, and editing of the final manuscript.

All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

ETHICS STATEMENT

This research was conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of University Teknologi MARA and adhered to the principles outlined in the Declaration of Helsinki. Ethical approval was obtained from the Review Board under reference number [Approval Number, if applicable]. All participants were informed about the purpose of the study and provided written informed consent prior to participation. Participants' privacy and confidentiality were strictly maintained, and data collected were used solely for academic purposes.

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