

Social Media Marketing in Non-professional Rugby Clubs: A Qualitative Viewpoint Using the Technology Acceptance Model

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ABSTRACT

Social media has transformed the interactions among fans, clubs, and athletes, providing evidence of its increasing significance in sport. The growing professionalisation of sport has led to the increased adoption of business practices and marketing. However, not all sport organisations are considered professional, and many may lag in the adoption of such applications. Rugby's growth internationally demonstrates the sport's ability to inspire and engage a global audience in a professional rugby context. There are a limited number of studies that investigate social media marketing (SMM) by rugby teams, but several do focus on professional rugby. Hence, this study investigates Western Province Super League (WPSL) rugby clubs (amateur sport teams) SMM usage in terms of channels, external factors, determinants, behavioural intentions, and age by WPSL rugby determinants and behavioural intentions. The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) serves as the theoretical underpinning, which responds to the need for further research on non-professional sport organisations. The study used a qualitative approach via cross-sectional and multiple-case study design and utilised twelve semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection technique. The researchers adopted an inductive approach and utilised ATLAS.ti (a qualitative data analysis package) to formulate themes and codes for subsequent analysis. This study found that brand exposure and awareness, relationship building, sponsorship attractiveness, community participation/engagement, information sharing, and others were the primary drivers and advantages of SMM usage. Findings also revealed positive SMM behavioural intentions that included community relationships, greater reach, family feeling,

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player portfolio enhancement, an important contact point, and membership growth. The rugby clubs believed that employing SMM added substantial value to their marketing efforts. From a practical standpoint, rugby club social media coordinators could enhance fan engagement and relationship management by providing graphic updates (photos and video footage) about players and teams, creating blogs, organising competitions, establishing video channels, and overseeing community activities. From a theoretical perspective, the study adds to the limited qualitative research on the TAM, especially in a sport and digital marketing context. The study furthers knowledge of SMM, non-professional sport, and organisational behaviour in the context of WPSL rugby clubs in South Africa.

Keywords: Western Province Super League (WPSL) rugby clubs; South Africa; social media marketing (SMM); Technology Acceptance Model (TAM); qualitative research.

7.1 INTRODUCTION

The growing engagement in sport organisations from a fan and a professional standpoint, as well as the expansion in the number of people employed, have enabled the sport sector to grow in significance (Milovic & Vojvodic, 2021; Aboul-Dahab, 2022). Sport has been described as essential to national and global economies, especially in countries that host major athletic events and competitions (Belfiore et al., 2019; Lukinović et al., 2022; Küster Boluda et al., 2024). The globalisation of sport is evidenced by the fact that professional sport teams now prioritise the international market above the domestic market (Milovic & Vojvodic, 2021; Mendizabal Leñena et al., 2022; L'Abate et al., 2024). Statista (2024) reports that the sport industry had a global income of US\$403 billion in 2022 and is projected to reach US\$681 billion by 2028, primarily driven by the growth of professional sport. In recent years, sport has grown increasingly professionally and commercially oriented, with many sport bodies functioning as fully-fledged organisations as opposed to only being sport institutions (Moyo et al., 2020; Mendizabal Leñena et al., 2022). Sport contributes more than R50 billion to SA's gross domestic product per annum, and the sport sector provides around half a million jobs in the country, with further opportunities to increase economic growth and tourism while also promoting social inclusion and physical activity (Allie, 2023). Rugby holds a prominent position in South Africa (SA), with a dedicated following of around ten million individuals. The remarkable success of the Springboks (SA's national rugby team) may have boosted these numbers, as they were the Rugby World Cup champions in 2023, 2019, 2007, and 1995 (Ruck, 2023; SA Rugby, 2023). While assessing the degree of professionalism in sport is significant, the current research focuses on the amateur level at which the WPSL teams compete.

Social media is transforming the way sport personalities, clubs, and fans actively engage with each other, making the essential role of social media in sport inescapable. Social media has been accepted as an imperative medium of communication for both individual users and companies, particularly over the last

continuously experimenting with new strategies to promote their brands and interact with fans, and technological advancements are essential to these campaigns (Romero-Jara et al., 2024).

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), created by Davis et al. (1989), specifically describes how consumers adopt technology, and it is most commonly used to explain how technology is employed. Some studies have focused on how useful the TAM is for determining user activity in sporting environments (Goebert & Greenhalgh, 2020; Fajak & Karg, 2022), but a research gap exists on the qualitative employment of the TAM (Dos Santos, & Duffett, 2021; Duffett & Thomas, 2024). This research will extrapolate the rugby clubs' SMM usage based on the TAM's external variables, usage variables, behavioural intentions, and actual usage to develop a unique qualitative framework for the model. The study intends to consider the existing gap in research on non-professional sport teams and their use of SMM, both at a local and global level. Hence, the primary objectives of this inquiry are to investigate SMM channels, behavioural intentions, and primary drivers of actual SMM usage by WPSL rugby clubs, as well as the influence of perceived ease of use, usefulness, and external factors on their SMM usage.

7.2 LITERATURE REVIEW

7.2.1 Rugby Overview

The worldwide popularity of rugby demonstrates its ability to attract and engage an extensive number of spectators. Rugby remains a highly prominent sport globally and attracts an audience of approximately 500 million viewers. The World Rugby Union, which comprises 132 unions and maintains a player base of eight million individuals, serves as the governing body for the sport (World Rugby, 2024). Ruck (2023) asserts that SA has over 400 thousand rugby players registered, ranking only behind France. The players are integral to the school, club, university, provincial, and national bodies. Viljoen et al. (2017) report that the predominant segment of SA's rugby-playing demographic consists of amateur athletes participating in rugby clubs throughout the 14 unions. Furthermore, Coetzee (2016) suggests that SA club rugby is instrumental in developing players for eventual participation in higher levels, for example, provincial and national rugby. The present investigation centred on the rugby club framework, with a specific emphasis on the leagues of the Western Province Rugby Union. This union oversees the yearly club league tournaments throughout the Western Cape, encompassing more than 110 member clubs in the area. The rugby league is classified into two primary categories: regional leagues and super league clubs. It is further organised into several divisions, namely the Super League, which consists of the A, B, and C and fifteen teams per tier (WP Club Rugby, 2024). Rugby teams from SA compete in various international rugby forms, including women's and sevens rugby. In SA, club rugby plays a vital role, as semi-professional and professional provincial teams often recruit players from the club teams. Rugby unions in SA have emerged into substantial commercial enterprises by adopting business strategies that yield

significant, sustainable income and provide players with substantial salaries. So, many amateur rugby club players have the ambition to move from club level to provincial level and beyond. Hence, the present study concentrated on the amateur level due to its growing commercial value and with the aim of filling a gap in research on South African rugby club SMM.

7.2.2 Use of SMM by Sport Organisations

The widespread usage of social media by spectators, in addition to SMM usage by sport organisations, has heightened scholarly interest in the topic (Maderer et al., 2018; Machado et al., 2020; Romero-Jara et al., 2024). Social media has revolutionised the way fans engage with their teams, athletes, and clubs; many fans are active on social media, and this activity is vital in their lives (Popp & Woratschek, 2016; Achen et al., 2024). SMM's growth has led to clubs investing much time and money into finding their most active online supporters. Despite the challenges of interacting with stakeholders, supporters and fans online, a sport team should take advantage of these channels due to their various advantageous activities (Naraine, 2019; Seifi et al., 2019; Küster Boluda et al., 2024). The sport industry would not have the mainstream success that enables big earnings if it did not benefit from excellent promotion. As a result, promotion and communication are crucial in sport marketing (Belfiore et al., 2019; Pourzarnegar, 2022; Romero-Jara et al., 2024). The evolution of the social media environment over the last decade has had a dramatic impact on every aspect of contemporary life, and the sport sector is no exception (Barbu et al., 2019). Through SMM, sport clubs may reach their target audiences whenever and wherever they desire, and they can develop closer relationships with them. Furthermore, it has been shown that among the factors influencing fans' sport club SMM usage and engagement is perceived corporate credibility (Esen et al., 2021; Achen et al., 2024). Social media increases positive feelings, including credibility and trust, by making the distribution process more accessible. Faria et al. (2022) found that the majority of SMM efforts have a favourable impact on supporters' contentment and engagement. Strong brands are crucial for sport clubs because they define their relationship with their supporters (Florea et al., 2018; Pourzarnegar, 2022). In this study, SMM is examined to ascertain the usage, behavioural intentions, and factors promoting and hindering its usage by WPSL rugby clubs.

7.2.3 SMM and TAM in Sport

As previously mentioned, the TAM was created as a framework to explain how people react to new technologies (Davis et al., 1989). Two major determinants of new technology adoption were identified: perceived usefulness and ease of use. Academics studying the adoption and usage of social media by sport fans have accepted this model (Ojomo & Olomjobi, 2021; Uhrich, 2022; Marthinus et al., 2024). Due to the degree of perceived usefulness and ease of use in acquiring information about the sport team and its members, SMM may be considered by sport teams as an effective means of interacting with their audiences. This investigation aims to qualitatively establish a connection between the motivation

and behavioural intent to use SMM by rugby clubs and the TAM. Fenton et al. (2023) examine the social media role in cultivating community within sports, whereas Romero-Jara et al. (2024) investigate the impact of social media marketing across several sports leagues. Hahm and Yamashita (2024) consider fan involvement via social media within the TAM framework, while Uhrich (2021) applies TAM to analyse technology utilisation in sport. Hence, the findings of this study endeavour to add to the present foundation of TAM in SMM and sport contexts. As a result, there are several components to the current framework, including SMM perceived ease of use, usefulness, external factors, and behavioural intentions, all of which connect to variables that promote actual social media usage.

Hence, the main research questions of the study are as follows:

- What SMM channels do WPSL rugby clubs use?
- What influence do perceived ease of use, usefulness, and external factors have on SMM usage by WPSL rugby clubs?
- What are WPSL rugby clubs SMM behavioural intentions?
- What are the primary drivers of SMM usage by WPSL rugby clubs?

7.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopted an interpretivist approach, which incorporates the beliefs, reasons, attitudes, and perceptions of the subjects (Brown & Dueñas, 2020). The inductive interpretivist philosophy was selected for the study as the most appropriate approach to gain rich detail and perspectives from the participants and their relationship with sport and SMM. A qualitative research method is widely used as an inductive approach that entails categorising information according to themes and establishing associations among them. Therefore, it was critical for this investigation to acquire comprehensive and significant data from the expertise and experiences of participants with knowledge of their rugby club's use of SMM. Recent sport-related studies by Moyo et al. (2022c); Fenton et al. (2023); Fitri et al. (2023); and Lefebvre et al. (2024) also employed a qualitative research approach to determine their research findings. Exploratory research is a research technique that focuses on perplexing phenomena and lays the foundation for further descriptive or explanatory investigations (De Vos et al., 2011). Additionally, exploratory qualitative research produces extensive data that aid in addressing the research questions of the study. In qualitative cross-sectional research, themes are developed throughout a phase of data collection (Balmer et al., 2021). Multi-case study research is an exploratory design where the researcher examines several cases over a period of time by collecting extensive, in-depth data from multiple data sources (Duffett et al., 2009). This study employs a combination of cross-sectional and a multiple-case study design, which requires collecting information about a phenomenon from multiple cases. A cross-sectional design is appropriate for the present study, as data was extracted from various sources and multiple participants from the WPSL rugby clubs in Cape Town.

This study employed a non-probability sampling technique, and a judgmental (purposive) sampling approach was implemented to select the sample for the study. Judgmental sampling is best used to focus on characteristics of a population that are considered important and that are easily accessible. Judgmental sampling involves the researcher selecting the sample unit from the sample population based on the researcher's own knowledge and professional judgement. Moreover, judgmental sampling is frequently employed in qualitative research methods and in exploratory research designs (De Vos et al., 2011). Hence, applying judgmental sampling for this inquiry was appropriate, as the participants were purposefully selected because of their direct involvement with the rugby clubs' SMM. A data saturation method was employed in the study for the selection of the interviews based on the number of rugby clubs that were active on social media platforms. Data saturation allows new participants to be introduced into the study until the data shows replication (De Vos et al., 2011; Thomas & Duffett, 2024). In their study, Moyo et al. (2022c) examined the relationship between sport team marketing and corporate social responsibility in SA. The study conducted qualitative research using a sample size of six sport teams. In addition, multiple global studies examining different sport disciplines and social media platforms employed sample sizes ranging from six to twelve participants (Su et al., 2020; Sharifzadeh et al., 2021; Fitri et al., 2023; Oshimi & Yamaguchi, 2023). Therefore, twelve WPSL rugby club participants were considered suitable for this study, and data saturation was achieved within this number.

This study employed semi-structured interviews that consisted of open-ended questions, using an interview guide as a tool for collecting data. The adoption of this form of interview methodology for the collection of data enabled the researcher to actively participate in discourses that yielded useful information about the participants' attitudes and perspectives regarding SMM usage by the WPSL rugby clubs. The interview guide aided in the relevance and coherence of the questions, though in certain instances, questions were tailored or rephrased to aid the participant with an improved understanding of a particular question. While the researcher made use of the interview guide questions, further insights were obtained in some cases by employing clarification and elaboration probe-type questions such as "Could you expand on that point?" "Were there particular reasons why?" etc. The development of innovative video conferencing tools offers researchers new opportunities to gather qualitative data in real time. Video conferencing tools are commonly utilised to save money, acquire access to bigger and more varied audiences, and conduct interviews with more participants in less time by eliminating travel (Gray et al., 2020). Telephone interviews may be a useful first choice for data gathering, providing a greater number of people with a chance to share their experiences. Six of the twelve interviews with the WPSL rugby clubs were conducted using the Google Meets online video application. The remaining six interviews with the WPSL rugby clubs were conducted via telephone calls. A supplementary device was used to record the audio of the online and telephone interviews, allowing the researcher to repeatedly review the recordings for data validity and reliability, which are essential for transcription, analysis, and coding. ATLAS.ti allowed the

researchers to upload all the transcribed interviews for coding to present the results via direct quotes to provide interpretations, which are detailed in the results and discussion section.

7.4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

7.4.1 SMM Channel Usage

The study verified that every participant's rugby club had established a SMM. The results show that Twitter (also referred to as "X"), Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp emerged as the predominant SMM conduits. All twelve participants verified that they utilised both Instagram and Facebook. Four of them utilised Twitter, while only three of them reported using WhatsApp for SMM. Two participants utilised all four of the aforementioned social media platforms for strategic marketing purposes. Participant twelve stated that Facebook was the main focus, despite the fact that the club also utilised Instagram. Several international investigations confirm that Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, and Facebook are the predominant channels utilised by athletes and sport teams in diverse marketing contexts (Burgers et al., 2023; Krzyżowski & Strzelecki, 2023; Achen et al., 2024).

7.4.2 SMM Perceived Ease of Use, Usefulness, and External Factors

The following external factors of SMM were identified as themes: constant connection with the online community, consumer interaction and engagement increases, effective digital platform for information sharing and communication, a low-cost marketing medium, pervasive due to mobile devices, and rapid growth and continual innovation. The WPSL rugby club interviews also suggest support for the other components of the TAM based on their usage of SMM. For example, participant eight stated, "I do think that it is particularly important for us to have a social media platform to stay in touch with those guys." Several participants specified the perceived usefulness of SMM due to: high fan engagement, usefulness for internal communications, engagement with current and former members (players and stakeholders) and sharing information (history of current events). Participant six agreed: "I think it is the most effective and the most useful communication tool." Many participants felt that SMM was easy to use: easily accessible, makes inviting people to rugby clubs easy, facilitates easy and efficient information sharing, and it is easy for everyone to catch up on what is happening at the rugby club (e.g., fixtures, results, and events). Participant one reported: "Using social media has invited a lot of people to come to the club, and it is now much easier because the information is out there." Several other inquiries verify that the TAM's perceived ease of use, usefulness, and external factors are important elements of SMM (Ojomo & Olomojobi, 2021; Jeong & Chung, 2022; Uhrich, 2022; Duffett & Maraule, 2024; Hahm & Yamashita, 2024), especially among sport teams and clubs.

7.4.3 SMM Behavioural Intentions

The study disclosed some positive behavioural intentions due to SMM, which included the following themes: community relationships, greater reach, family feeling, player portfolio enhancement, an important contact point, and membership growth. Many participants indicated that SMM helped the rugby clubs build relationships with the community and members. Participant two declared, "You want to engage with your community, because that influences the vibe, and it influences your takings." A couple of participants felt that SMM allowed the rugby club to reach Millennials (younger generations). Participant eight mentioned: "The only other means of communication to know what is happening with the millennials is on social media." Several participants revealed that SMM fosters a sense of family and community, which increases participation. Participant six stated: "The one dream, one team, one family—that is something that always sticks." A few participants affirmed that SMM built player portfolios (particularly via photos and videos). Participant five acknowledged: "I mean, I want to do videos of players running onto the pitch, that kind of thing." A number of participants agreed that social media was an essential marketing tool and key contact point for rugby clubs. Participant six professed: "We take an approach, whether to respond on social media or to contact the person individually." Many participants emphasised that SMM increased club membership. Participant four concluded: "I think it is, basically, players and their immediate friends and families, people who are there to support them, so we do tend to focus more on our membership base." Other international research studies verify that SMM can have a favourable effect on sport teams and clubs' behavioural intentions: it builds relationships with the community and members (Andreski, 2022; Achen et al., 2024), allows the sport clubs or teams to reach younger generations (Marthinus et al., 2014; Duffett, 2015a, 2015b, 2016; Duffett et al., 2019, Duffett, 2020; Edu et al., 2021; Yim et al., 2021; Duffett, 2022; Fitri et al., 2023; Ionescu et al., 2023; Duffett & Charles, 2024; Duffett et al., 2024; Küster Boluda et al., 2024), fosters a sense of family and community (Faria et al., 2022; McCarthy et al., 2022), builds player portfolios (Balliau et al., 2021; Andreski, 2022), is an important marketing tool and key contact point (Garat & Capitano, 2023; Romero-Jara et al., 2024), and increases club membership (Ong & Leng, 2022; McCarthy et al., 2022).

7.4.4 Primary Drivers of Actual SMM usage

The research identified the following themes: information sharing, relationship building, brand awareness, sponsor attractiveness, and player recruitment promotion, which were the primary drivers of actual SMM usage. A majority of them mentioned that SMM increased brand awareness for their rugby clubs.

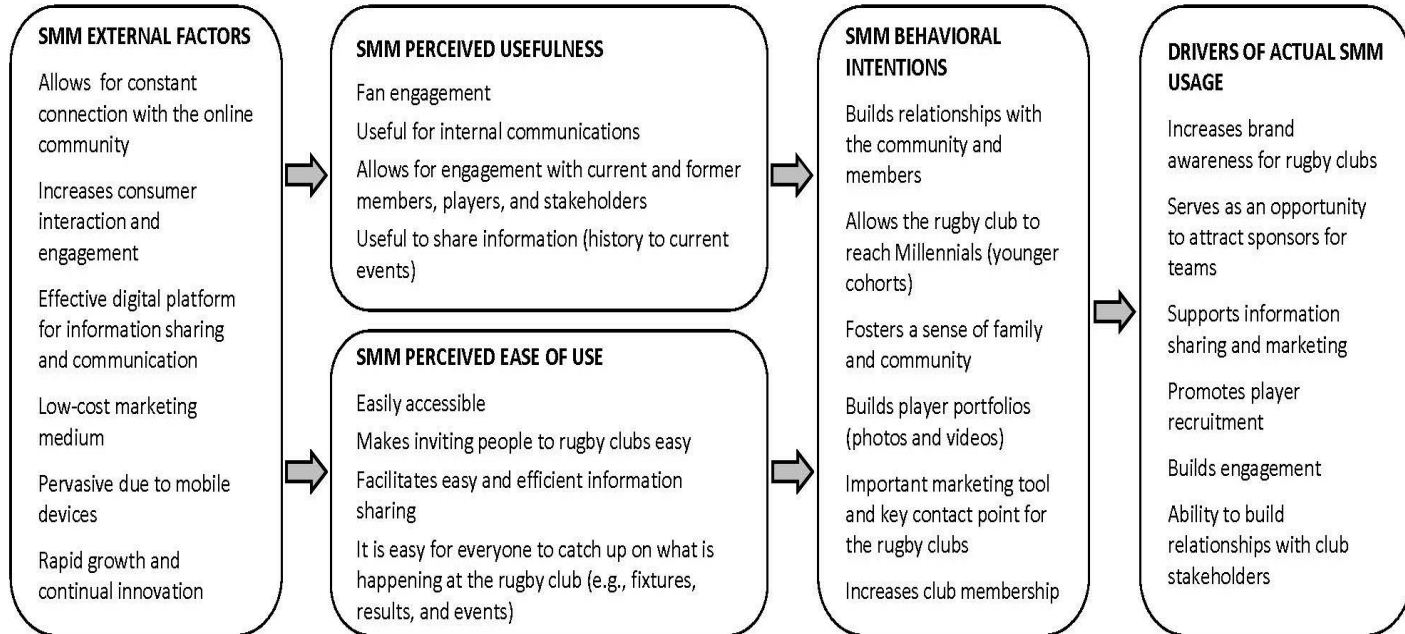


Fig. 7.1. WPSL rugby clubs' SMM usage based on the TAM

Participant five stated, "I think the more awareness you can create around the club, the more likely you are going to be able to recruit a player." Some respondents indicated that SMM serves as an opportunity to attract sponsors for teams. Participant four stated: "So naturally, for me, it was to link sponsors to it, to sell the brand more." Other participants said that SMM supports information sharing and marketing. Participant five stated: "When there are actual happenings, it is a way of keeping our followers up to date with what's happening at the club." Some participants revealed that SMM was important for promoting player recruitment. Participant one specifies: "Since we used social media, the club now gets a lot of people who are interested in playing for the club." Several participants felt that SMM built engagement with key stakeholders. Participant nine affirmed: "It was always more for the engagement aspect..." A number of participants indicated that SMM had the ability to build relationships with club stakeholders. For example, participant twelve proposed: "I think it is one of our key contact points with our audience and with our members." Various other international sport organisations have also examined various drivers of social media and confirmed that SMM increases brand awareness (Küster Boluda et al., 2024), serves as an opportunity to attract sponsors for teams (Garat & Capitanio, 2023; L'Abate et al., 2024), supports information sharing and marketing (Garat & Capitanio, 2023), promotes player recruitment (Prada, 2023; Bunch et al., 2024), builds engagement, and has the ability to build relationships with club stakeholders (Andreski, 2022; Achen et al., 2024).

Therefore, the inquiry qualitatively extrapolated the rugby clubs' SMM usage (as per the above results and discussion) in terms of perceived ease of use, usefulness, and external variables behavioural intentions, and actual SMM usage by the TAM, which is graphically displayed in Fig. 7.1.

7.5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The first research objective investigated the SMM channels used by WPSL rugby clubs. The study concluded that Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and WhatsApp were the main SMM channels. Consequently, other sport clubs and organisations should explore various social media conduits when interacting with their target groups, which will enable them to take advantage of the distinctive features of each social media channel.

This second research objective ascertained the influence of perceived usefulness, ease of use, and external factors on SMM usage by WPSL rugby clubs. The inquiry concluded that SMM was generally useful and easy to use and was also influenced by a number of external factors (e.g., consumer engagement, low cost, information sharing, mobile devices, and continual innovation). It is plausible to recommend that sport teams and rugby clubs utilise SMM media to offer frequent updates on the team and players, create blogs and video channels, and organise community initiatives as examples of new marketing approaches to increase engagement and information sharing. The rugby teams could use student-run agencies (Duffett & Cromhout, 2022a; 2022b; Duffett et al., 2023b) or integrated marketing communications service learning

programmes (Cromhout et al., 2021; Cromhout & Duffett, 2022; Duffett & Cromhout, 2022c; Duffett et al., 2023a) to assist where they lack the expertise or do not have sufficient time for such tasks as were indicated by many some participants.

This study's third research objective was to determine the influence of SMM on the WPSL rugby club's behavioural intentions. The study concluded positive SMM behavioural intentions such as enhanced community relationships, greater reach, family feeling, player portfolio enhancement, vital contact points, and membership growth. Based on the above conclusion, the investigation suggests that sport clubs develop and execute relevant measures to track social media alignment with overall marketing goals to reap the advantages of digital marketing and promotion. The emergence of digital and SMM platforms not only permits sport clubs to diversify their existing market but also to find new fans.

The fourth and final objective was to ascertain the primary drivers of SMM usage by WPSL rugby clubs. The study concluded that the primary drivers of SMM usage were information sharing, relationship building, brand awareness, sponsor attractiveness, and engagement by the WPSL rugby clubs. Sport organisations need to utilise social media to find appropriate sponsors, as it enhances resources and encourages community engagement. WPSL rugby clubs could offer sponsors a particular amount of social media channel posts while mentioning or tagging sponsors, in addition to adding their sponsor logos on the teams' profiles, which would increase brand awareness and foster relationships.

From a managerial and practical perspective, the study's results might be valuable for managers or marketers in various sport teams and organisations as they explore the role of SMM and how to use it in marketing strategy. The findings, in particular, provide important strategic insights for team marketers looking to use an online brand community on SMM to attract sponsors, identify the most effective platforms, enhance brand awareness, develop relationships with current fans, or connect with future fans. Another component of this research is that it gives direction for South African rugby clubs in developing strategic use of SMM strategies based on best practice measurements and approaches. Furthermore, rugby clubs should regularly evaluate the content provided as well as the involvement of their followers to assess the efficiency of different content features. Moreover, the instant diffusion of information and communication through social media (Wang & Zhou, 2015; Annamalai et al., 2021; Jacobs et al., 2022) encourages social media marketers of rugby clubs to benefit from including constant visual (image and video) updates of the team and players, generating blogs, giveaways, video channels, and coordinating community projects to enhance fan engagement and relationship management.

From a theoretical perspective, the outcomes from this study add to the current basis of TAM in SMM and sport contexts. The study presented a number of positive connotations between external factors, perceived ease of use, and usefulness and on their SMM usage, as well as behavioural intentions towards promoting actual SMM usage. These discoveries verify and add to the TAM

theory that using SMM media positively benefits rugby clubs. This investigation has yielded substantial new insights into a relatively new issue, particularly in an African developing country setting, which will assist sport organisations that use or intend to employ SMM, and researchers who are scholars of the evolution of the TAM, especially from a qualitative viewpoint.

Therefore, it can be concluded that SMM does have a great deal of potential for amateur rugby clubs. The inquiry's principal results show that information communication and sharing, relationship building, sponsor attractiveness, brand awareness, and community participation/engagement were the main drivers of SMM usage. Furthermore, it can be concluded that WPSL rugby clubs use SMM. The level to which they do so is impacted by external variables that have positive effects on the various TAM factors (perceived ease of use, usefulness, and behavioural intentions) that promote actual usage.

7.6 LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

The widespread global appeal of the selected sport presents fresh avenues for exploration. For instance, it can be beneficial to analyse and contrast the levels of fan engagement across various nations. The study also recognises the geographical constraint that solely focuses on the Western Cape; thus, further inquiry should focus on studying SMM usage by amateur teams in other countries to gain a broader geographical viewpoint. The investigation exclusively examined one specific sport, thereby restricting the generality of the findings to a single sector, so future research could aim to investigate various individual or team sport disciplines. Furthermore, the inquiry solely focused on rugby clubs and did not examine women's, sevens, school, or professional rugby teams. Hence, future research endeavours may concentrate on diverse variations and divisions of rugby in order to evaluate the utilisation of SMM. This study used self-reported qualitative data to assess the participants' views of WPSL rugby clubs' SMM usage, which may result in bias, especially due to the small sample size. Further research should implement quantitative data collection methods and use larger sample sizes to reduce bias and increase the possibility of generalising the results.

CONFERENCE DISCLAIMER

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DISCLAIMER (ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE)

The authors declare that they used QuillBot Premium to identify and correct language, grammar, and spelling errors in the manuscript. The authors also used Turnitin to assess the originality of the manuscript and found it to be at a satisfactory level.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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