

SUPSI

# The digital marketing strategies in football: the case study of the 10 teams of the Credit Suisse Super League



Figure 1 - Source: <https://www.sfl.ch>

---

Student

Matteo Cannova

Professor

Alessandro Siviero

---

Bachelor's degree

Bachelor of science in Leisure  
Management

Field of study

Thesis

---

Project

Thesis

Place and date of delivery

Manno, 11 September 2022

STUDENTSUPSI

## Thesis abstract

Digital marketing is a practice of promoting and advertising one's company through particularly innovative methods that exploit the digital trend and which is becoming increasingly influential and applied within the world of sport. More precisely, it can be defined as all those activities that promote a brand and market products and services through one or more digital channels.

This form of marketing is increasingly popular and applied in the sports world, especially in football, channels such as social media, esports and artificial intelligence are used to promote the sports club but also to considerably increase the club's engagement with the fans or fanbase.

This paper therefore intends to address this issue through an analysis of the various digital marketing strategies of the ten teams competing in the Swiss Credit Suisse Super League, in order to understand how they influence the club's interaction with fans, but also what role they play in the brand growth of the various teams.

The methodology that will be used to develop this analysis will initially involve the collection and analysis of secondary quantitative data (scientific texts regarding the topic and any data).

Qualitative secondary data was also collected for the remaining four clubs with whom an interview could not be conducted.

Then, the other methodology that will be used, is the production of primary qualitative data (interviews with six of the ten Swiss teams).

The intent and ultimate goal, therefore, is not only to understand how digital marketing is applied in the Swiss football world, but to understand concretely what role it plays in the growth of the teams' fan bases and the growth of the brand itself.

This made it possible to arrive at concrete conclusions and to understand precisely how digital marketing is viewed by Swiss clubs, but also how it allows them to manage relations with the various fan bases of football clubs and what role it plays in current and future brand growth.

## Summary

1	Introduction and scientific research question .....	4
2	General methodology .....	5
3	Theoretical framework .....	6
3.1	History "Credit Suisse Super League" .....	7
3.2	Digital marketing: definition and types of tactics .....	10
3.3	Digital marketing in sport and football .....	12
4	Interviews: methodology and analysis .....	13
4.1	Methodology .....	14
4.2	Discussion and analysis .....	15
4.2.1	FC Zürich .....	15
4.2.2	FC Basel 1893 .....	16
4.2.3	BSC Young Boys .....	16
4.2.4	FC Lugano .....	17
4.2.5	FC St. Gallen 1879 .....	20
4.2.6	Servette FC .....	21
4.2.7	FC Sion .....	22
4.2.8	Grasshopper Club Zürich .....	22
4.2.9	FC Luzern .....	24
4.2.10	FC Lausanne-Sport .....	26
5	Future reflections: strategic and operational elements .....	26
5.1	Brand growth .....	27
5.2	Interaction with the fanbase .....	28
5.3	Potential future scenarios .....	29
6	Conclusion .....	30
7	Bibliography .....	32
8	Index of the Figures .....	33
9	Attachments .....	33
9.1	Interviews .....	33
9.1.1	Interview with Ursula Strehler (FC Zürich) .....	33
9.1.2	Interview with Daniel Marti (BSC Young Boys) .....	34
9.1.3	Interview with Luca Pedroni (FC Lugano) .....	36
9.1.4	Interview with Troy Lüchinger (FC St. Gallen 1879) .....	40
9.1.5	Interview with Andreas Schmocker (Grasshopper Club Zürich) .....	42
9.1.6	Interview with Markus Krienbühl (FC Luzern) .....	44

# 1 Introduction and scientific research question

Digital marketing is the practice of promoting and advertising one's company through particularly innovative methods that exploit the digital trend and that is becoming increasingly influential and applied in the world of sport. More precisely, it can be defined as all those activities that promote a brand and market products and services through one or more digital channels.

This form of marketing is becoming increasingly influential and applied in the world of sport, particularly in football, where channels such as social media, esports and artificial intelligence are used to promote the sports club but also to significantly increase the club's engagement with the fans or fanbase. The intent and ultimate goal is therefore not only to understand how digital marketing is applied in the world of Swiss football, but to understand concretely what role it plays in the growth of club fans and the growth of the brand itself.

This paper therefore addresses this issue through an analysis of the various digital marketing strategies of the ten teams competing in the Credit Suisse Super League in Switzerland, in order to understand how they influence the club's interaction with fans, but also what role they play in the brand growth of the various teams.

The first steps that have been taken are to clarify the term digital marketing and its applications in the world of sport and football. This was achieved by reading and analysing scholarly and academic texts and materials, which enabled us to arrive at a definition of the term and presented some valid examples of application of the concept in the world of sport.

Sub-chapters have also been included within the theoretical framework, which deal with the history of the "Credit Suisse Super League" and give some examples of strategies adopted by the ten clubs currently competing in the top Swiss football league.

These last two sub-chapters are extremely useful in order to understand the reference context of the work, which deals precisely with digital marketing strategies within the Swiss football context.

Following this first, essentially theoretical part characterised by the collection and analysis of qualitative secondary data, a production and related analysis of qualitative primary data (interviews) was carried out.

Thanks to interviews conducted with six of the ten marketing managers of the "Credit Suisse Super League" clubs, it was possible to understand the clubs' current strategies regarding digital marketing, but also their future ideologies and how they observe the constant growth of the technological trend in the world of football.

For the remaining four clubs that unfortunately could not be interviewed, it was still useful to make a general analysis of the possible elements that could make up the digital marketing strategy of the

clubs, It is clear that the depth of the analysis is not comparable to those of the other clubs with which it was possible to conduct an interview.

Following the editing and analysis of the various interviews and analyses conducted, a discussion chapter was therefore included, where the various ideas and strategies reported by the marketing managers are discussed, in order to better understand their impact and role within the corporate strategy and how they concretely influence the respective fan bases of the clubs.

Finally, there is a chapter of future insights and conclusions, in which personal considerations regarding the work carried out and a possible forecast on how digital marketing practice in the Swiss football world will evolve in the coming years are included.

To conclude, I would like to thank Professor Alessandro Siviero, who his knowledge to guide me on how to set this type of I work correctly and also gave me important indications in several topics work during the entire period of thesis work.

I would also like to thank the six marketing directors who made themselves available for the interview (Daniel Marti, Ursula Strehler, Troy Lüchinger, Markus Krienbühl, Andreas Schmocker and Luca Pedroni) and that have transmitted to me their knowledge and told the digital marketing strategies of their clubs in a comprehensive and thorough way.

## 2 General methodology

This sub-chapter presents the various forms of research methodology implemented to arrive at the research request presented in the introduction of the document.

To try to achieve this goal with precision, the types of methodologies implemented were mainly two: production and analysis of qualitative primary data and research and analysis of secondary qualitative data.

These two main methodologies have been implemented with the initial aim of understanding the main concept on which the document is based, or digital marketing and its applications in the sports world and subsequently have been written interviews and not questionnaires to understand in detail the strategies and ideologies of digital marketing developed and introduced by the ten clubs of the "Credit Suisse Super League".

As already mentioned, to draft the theoretical introductory part on the concept of Digital Marketing and the applications of this term in the world of sport, was carried out a collection and analysis of secondary qualitative and quantitative data (texts, scientific and academic materials and data relating to the subject).

These first analyses were extremely useful and relevant to clarify the general concept of digital marketing and its related applications in the world of sports and football.

A further qualitative secondary data analysis was also carried out for the four remaining Credit Suisse Super League clubs with whom an interview could not be conducted.

This was useful to have at least a general overview of the possible guidelines of the digital marketing strategies of these clubs.

However, it is clear that the level of quality and depth of analysis is not at the same level as the remaining six clubs with whom an interview was conducted.

Subsequently, a primary qualitative analysis was conducted (interviews with six of ten of the marketing managers of the ten Credit Suisse Super League clubs) in order to better understand the digital marketing strategies implemented by the various Swiss football clubs and their impact on national fans.

There is also in this chapter a more detailed methodology, within chapter four, that deals with the methodology and the results obtained with the interviews and analyses carried out on the ten clubs of the "Credit Suisse Super League".

Thanks to the interviews and the analyses conducted, it was possible to understand specifically and in detail, the individual strategies of the clubs at the level of digital marketing and how companies intend to move in the near future always at the level of strategic and operational digital marketing.

Therefore, through these two main methodologies implemented, it was possible to arrive at the formulation of different results that were subsequently analysed and discussed in the document.

### 3 Theoretical framework

In this sub-chapter the main objective is to arrive at a specific and precise definition of the term "digital marketing" from the theoretical and practical point of view and to carry out a contextual analysis of the "Credit Suisse Super League".

Initially there is a subchapter inherent in the history and development in the years of the Swiss top league.

Next there is a definition part of the term of digital marketing and how they develop the various digital marketing tactics.

Finally there is the last subchapter that deals with how digital marketing tends to be applied in the world of sport and more specifically in football.

### **3.1 History “Credit Suisse Super League”**

The history of the top Swiss football league began in 1895 with the creation of the "Schweizerischer Fussballverband" (SFV), the Swiss Football Federation, which is responsible for organizing all Swiss football leagues (from professional to amateur). From there, the various leagues of different levels of football in Switzerland began to take shape. Initially, the championship was divided into several groups (depending on geographical location) and then fought for the championship.

Over the years, the championship has been organized in different formats, up to the current format of ten teams, created and implemented in 2003, to make the competition more competitive and fairer. The most successful clubs in the country are Grasshopper Club Zürich (27 titles), FC Basel 1893 (20 titles) and Servette FC (17 titles).

Since its founding, the Swiss football league has also undergone several changes in denomination, initially the name was "Swiss Serie A", then in 1933 until 2003 the denomination was "National Liga A" and in 2003 it became "Super League".

Currently, the top Swiss league is organized and managed by the "Swiss Football League" (SFL), which is responsible for the organization of the two professional football leagues in Switzerland, namely, the "Super League" and the "Challenge League". (SFL, s.d.)

An interesting element is the inclusion of a sponsor in the title of the championship since 2012, when the league changed its name to "Raiffeisen Super League", creating with the Swiss bank therefore an agreement of "naming rights" to give more visibility to the sponsor and introduce an innovative element within the Swiss Football League, as well as an additional revenue stream on entry. The league retained this naming agreement until the 2020-21 season, as from the current season the league has the name "Credit Suisse Super League". (Credit Suisse, 2020)

A further factor regarding the Swiss Football Championship, which is often criticized and questioned, is the presence on the stands at the stadium throughout the seasons. ((SFL), Swiss Football League, s.d.)

Currently, the "Credit Suisse Super League" ranks 9th in Europe, in terms of average attendance throughout the season ((EPFL), 2017, p. 9).

Despite this, the average attendance was 11139 spectators in the pre-election race, down from previous seasons (-2.7%) ((EPFL), 2017, p. 69-70).

COUNTRY	COMPETITION	LEAGUE	AVERAGE STADIUM ATTENDANCE '10/'11- '16/'17	TREND '10/'11- '16/'17
GER-DFL	Bundesliga	Deutsche Fussball Liga GmbH	42388	-0,6%
ENG-PL	Premier League	Premier League	35870	0,5%
ESP-LL	Liga Santander	LaLiga   Liga De Fútbol Profesional	26247	1,2%
ITA-A	Serie A Tim	Lega Serie A	22830	-0,9%
FRA-LFP	Ligue 1 Conforama	Ligue de Football Professionnel	20499	2,0%
NED-ED	Eredivisie	Eredivisie CV	19287	-0,3%
RUS-PL	ROSGOSSTRAKH Russian Football Championship	Russian Football Premier League	11733	-2,6%
SCO-PFL	Ladbrokes Premiership	Scottish Professional Football League	11436	-2,8%
SUI-FL	Raiffeisen Super League	Swiss Football League	11139	-2,7%
POR-LP	Liga NOS	Liga Portugal	10546	1,8%
TUR-TUC	Sportoto	Turkish Union of Clubs	10028	-12,6%
BEL-PL	Jupiler Pro League	Belgium Pro League	9381	4,9%
POL-EK	LOTTO Ekstraklasa	Polish Professional Football League	8708	1,9%
UKR-PL	Liga Pari-Match	Ukrainian Premier League	8605	-13,6%
SWE-EF	Allsvenskan	Föreningen Svensk Elitfotboll	7844	5,9%
NOR-TF	Eliteserien	Norsk Toppfotball	7218	-2,9%
DEN-DF	Alka Superliga	Divisionforeningen	7004	-1,4%
AUT-BL	Tipico Bundesliga	Österreichische Fußball-Bundesliga	6872	-2,5%
ISR-PFL	Ligat Ha'Al	Israeli Professional Football Leagues	5583	13,7%
GRE-SL	Super League	Super League Greece	4487	-9,9%
KAZ-PFL	Premier League	Professional Football League of Kazakhstan	3950	-1,2%
ROU-LPF	Liga 1 Orange	Liga Profesionista de Fotbal	3702	-10,8%
SRB-SL	Super Liga	Serbian Super Liga	2824	-3,8%
FIN-VL	Veikkausliiga	Finnish Football League Association	2221	2,1%
AZE-PFL	Topaz Premier Liqası	Azerbaijan Professional Football League	1977	-1,1%

Figure 2 - Source: [https://europeanleagues.com/wp-content/uploads/FINAL-EPFL\\_FA\\_18-VERSION-2018.01.12.pdf](https://europeanleagues.com/wp-content/uploads/FINAL-EPFL_FA_18-VERSION-2018.01.12.pdf)



This may be due to the presence of a sport more followed in Switzerland than football, namely ice hockey. In fact, the National League A, the highest Swiss hockey championship, is the most followed in Europe in terms of spectators (average of 6139 spectators per game) and also has more modern facilities and a more competitive and attractive league format (playoff and playout system) (Anon, 2022).

Regular-Season average league attendance Europe		
1	Switzerland - National League	6,139
2	Sweden - Swedish Hockey League	4,738
3	Germany - Deutsche Eishockey Liga	3,059
4	Great Britain - Elite Ice Hockey League	2,885
5	Finland - Liiga	2,870
6	Czechia - Extraliga	2,803
7	Russia - Kontinental Hockey League	2,382
8	France - Ligue Magnus	1,706
9	Norway - Fjordkraft-ligaen	1,362
10	Austria - ICEHL	1,333

**Figure 3 - Source: <https://www.iihf.com/en/news/9527/european-attendance-ranking>**

In this sense, the Swiss Football League committee has taken an important decision in recent weeks in an attempt to make the Swiss football championship more attractive.

In fact, starting with the 2023-24 season, the league teams will go from ten to twelve and also, the championship, the access to European competitions and the relegations will be assigned in an alternative way instead of the classic position in the standings in which the team ends the championship.

Groups and matches will be created, in which the twelve teams will play for the objectives mentioned above.

This is in an attempt to increase the attendance of the public at the stadiums, but also more generally to make the championship more stimulating to watch and attract spectators ((SFL), Swiss Football League, 2022).

## **3.2 Digital marketing: definition and types of tactics**

The term "digital marketing" basically includes any advertising activity of your product, brand or company through the use of a digital device or advertising practices that include the use of technology.

Over the years this practice has acquired and is still gaining increasing importance within the company as it exploits the technological and digital trend that is now part of the daily life of the world's population.

The optimization of the use of search engines, the use of social media and mail, artificial intelligence, websites, represented all of the valid and effective tools through which companies have the opportunity to create, developing and updating strategic and operational digital marketing strategies (Desai, 2019, p. 196).

As already mentioned in the previous paragraphs, there are many digital marketing strategies that allow companies to achieve and achieve different goals in digital terms, Below are some examples of the most effective techniques used among companies:

- **Social media marketing**

This practice basically consists in exploiting social media to increase the visibility of the brand or some campaigns launched by the company. This strategy generally allows to increase the brand recall and awareness of the company, precisely because it guarantees vision through the use of different social channels.

The channels that are generally used to adopt this strategy are Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn or Pinterest. These applications enjoy millions of daily users and users that's why they are exploited in multiple ways by companies globally. (Timothy Newman, 2017, p. 13-18)

- **Email marketing**

Email marketing is generally used by companies with loyal customers of the company or who have already interacted with it, to send information, promotions, discounts or make them aware of new campaigns or information that the company wants to transmit.

Email marketing can therefore be used to send newsletters, emails with the possibility of "Call to Action" (CTA) for the customer, for example to crush to be reported in a purchase section.

It is therefore a direct method of communicating with the customer to communicate any information or even sell products. (Lammenett, Praxiwissen Online-Marketing, 2019, p. 117)

- **Search engine optimisation (SEO)**

The practice of search engine optimisation is substantially to raise considerably the visibility of the site or web page of the company within the search engines present in the network.

By increasing the graphic quality of the page and the published content, the website can scale the hierarchies within the network, ending precisely in the first positions when a user types the company name.

This strategy therefore allows you to receive more clicks and visits and significantly limits access to secondary websites or less important than the official channels of the company. (Desai, 2019, p. 197)

- **Content marketing**

This form of digital marketing consists essentially in the creation of digital ad hoc content to increase brand awareness and recall in the eyes of consumers and potential customers of the company that implements it.

In this type of strategies are often used figures called "influencers", that is famous people on the web and that operate on social media and often collaborate with companies to create special content (advertising, campaigns, awareness-raising messages) in collaboration with companies that pay them to enjoy these services.

This strategy also allows to increase the number of views in the network of your brand and also often allows consumers to associate famous figures on the internet to various international brands, increasing awareness in an extremely important way. (Baltes, 2015, p. 112-113)

- **Pay-per-click**

This tactic is mainly represented by a financial transition that the company performs against an advertising company, so that it subsequently places the company's advertisements in places with high visibility within web pages or social media. In this case, the company pays the advertising company every time the advertisement is clicked by a user who is browsing the net.

This tactic also enjoys wide visibility and therefore increases the visibility of the brand, at the same time but is expensive in financial terms for the company that uses it, as it pays for every click received. (Desai, 2019, p. 197-198)

- **Marketing automation**

This tactical strategy consists in practice in the use of an auxiliary software that allows to automate different business processes and to save time to the employees in carrying out certain actions in the company. For example, the creation of automatic response emails, or the pre-set newsletters or the automatic and constant updating of the various internal and external telephone directories available to the company.

Therefore, through an initial financial investment, the company allows its employees to better manage the timing and deal with the most important issues within the company in which they operate. (Desai, 2019, p. 197)

- **Affiliate marketing**

This other form of digital marketing consists of an always paid service, through which the company relies on external companies for content within its internet or social media pages, creating an affiliation with the other company that works to improve the image of the company and increase its visibility in the network.

Also in this case it is a fixed monthly/ annual cost that the company must constantly support to enjoy but' content created ad hoc on a regular basis. (Lammenett, Praxiwissen Online-Marketing, 2006, p. 25)

- **Native advertising**

The latter type of tactics reported, includes practically the types of advertising that are based on the content visited or searched by the user, therefore represent free advertising or precisely born from the interaction and preferences of the user on the web.

Some examples are the advertisements that are automatically found as soon as you open a search engine or the user accounts on the different social media in use (Desai, 2019, p. 197).

### ***3.3 Digital marketing in sport and football***

The application of different digital marketing tactics and practices within the world of sports and football is increasingly frequent and practiced. As it allows to take advantage of the technological trend and allows sports clubs to create new content of different types for their fanbases.

Before analysing some examples of how these tactics can be implemented and operated within the sporting world, we need to make a premise.

In the sports world the practice of digital marketing is extremely used and consolidated because it allows to increase the digital "fan engagement" of sports clubs with their fans and to offer new experiential elements, clearly in digital form.

Fan engagement within the sports world can therefore be defined as a state of involvement, absorption and total occupation of one's attention on a specific action and for an unknown period of time (Higgins, 2009, p. 6).

As a result, if an individual's engagement is high, the greater his attentions will be in the pursuit of a possible goal and his emotional reactions will be amplified further at the end of the experience, positive or negative.

Having therefore as main purpose, to increase the engagement between fanbase and society at the digital level and secondarily clearly try to improve the experience lived by the viewer and try to create new economic revenue, there are many examples of digital marketing strategies implemented in the world of sport and football.

Some applications of digital marketing strategies are obviously traceable to social media marketing. Especially football teams currently enjoy numerous users who follow their pages on various social channels, this allows to significantly raise the visibility and brand awareness of the club.

Sports clubs often refer their strategies to email marketing, through the use of newsletters or "Call to Action" actions that allow the fan or user to have a direct relationship with the sports club.

The practice, which is considered to be more innovative, concerns the exploitation of the vision of sports matches through a multi-platform approach.

Basically, while the fan follows the game at the stadium, the club tries to make their fanbases interact through specific digital actions.

For example, the creation of blogs especially for matches, gives the opportunity to interact with social channels of the company, or to show advertising or give visibility to sponsors through VR readers or digital match day activities on the day of matches inside the stadium.

All this series of actions therefore allows to increase not only the interaction between the club and fanbase, but to offer at the same time more services to the fan on the day of the matches and also during the week, maintaining a more and more constant relationship between sports club and fans (Daniel C. Funk, 2016, p. 8-9).

## 4 Interviews: methodology and analysis

This sub-chapter contains interviews with six marketing managers of the "Credit Suisse Super League" teams. For the remaining four clubs, which unfortunately for several reasons that are reported later were not available to conduct an interview, we proceeded with an observation and a subsequent analysis of the various elements of digital marketing.

This is in order to better understand the strategies pursued by individual companies and their reflections on the future developments of digital marketing in the world of football.

Initially it was reported the methodology by which the interviews were created, developed and analysed. Then there is the motivation of the various people chosen to interview for the clubs and finally the discussion of the interviews conducted for each individual club currently competing in the top Swiss football league.

## **4.1 Methodology**

In order to fully understand the various digital marketing strategies implemented by the ten clubs of the highest Swiss football league, it was decided to interview the ten marketing directors, as they also deal with the ideation phase, definition and implementation also for the part of digital marketing. Following contact with the various clubs, it was possible to arrange and conduct six interviews with the marketing directors of the following clubs: FC Zürich, BSC Young Boys, FC Lugano, FC St. Gallen 1879, Grasshoppers Club Zürich and FC Luzern.

Five of the six interviews were conducted in German, while the one with FC Lugano in Italian.

The questions asked in the various interviews were nine, initially closed-ended, to have general data and information on the club's conduct strategy and how the digital marketing team of the club is composed.

Subsequently, more open questions were asked to understand the strategic and operational elements that make up the club's digital marketing strategy, but also to understand the ideas and future plans that the various directors had about digital marketing in the world of football and the role it would play in their clubs.

Surely the nine questions have brought information very useful to the achievement of the subsequent conclusions of the work, but also open interesting future ideas to be able to always integrate within the next chapter related to possible future developments related to the strategic and operational elements of digital marketing.

Of course, more open-ended questions could have been asked, and perhaps fewer closed-ended questions, for more information and opinions from club directors, but, despite this, it has been possible to obtain many useful information for the continuation of the thesis work.

For the remaining four clubs with which, unfortunately, it was not possible to conduct an interview, an attempt was made, as mentioned above, to carry out a secondary qualitative data collection and analysis, to have information about the possible digital marketing strategy that the club implements and any future ideas.

It is obvious that the data that emerged at the quantitative level, were much lower than those collected during the interviews, However, they helped to add further elements of reflection in the chapter that discusses possible future developments of digital marketing for various clubs.

## 4.2 Discussion and analysis

### 4.2.1 FC Zürich

As for the team that won the last “Credit Suisse Super League”, the interview was conducted with FC Zurich's marketing director Ursula Strehler.

The club was certainly not indifferent to the topic of digital marketing, in fact it is an element that it considers relevant and has gained importance over the years, as the director reports: *“Digital marketing definitely plays an important role, which has also increased over the years as it represents and will certainly represent a large part of the future of digital marketing. We try to manage digital marketing actions and tactics all the people working in our relationship, you have to consider in marketing we are 1.5 people, but nobody is employed only for digital marketing”* (Strehler, 2022).

What is perhaps most surprising, compared to other clubs, is that the company, as stated by Ms. Strehler, has a very small marketing department in terms of human resources, and therefore relies heavily on external actors when it comes to digital elements: *“We rely on multiple models or tactics at the digital marketing level. We have digital partners that allow us to appear in different formats in the eyes of the fanbase (e.g. blick.ch, Tagesanzeiger, Radio Zürisee etc.). In addition, we try to make full use of our social media and our website”* (Strehler, 2022).

Therefore, elements such as social media and the website are not central elements of the club's digital marketing strategy, since as just reported, the club mainly relies on external partners.

The main positive results that digital marketing activities have brought to the club, were recorded particularly in revenues from merchandising sales and activities related to ticketing and match pricing.

In the interview, it also emerged how the club intends to expand in digital terms; however, it will clearly depend on what budget the club has at its disposal, but elements such as the introduction of NFTs and trying to think of new ways to activate the fanbase, in order to attempt to increase it in numerical terms, were mentioned.

Furthermore, Director Strehler expressed her thoughts on a possible extinction of traditional marketing activities: *“I don't think it will disappear completely, but it is clear that its presence will decrease. Print costs and produces waste, it is also less measurable and difficult to analyse, these are just a few disadvantages... But it will not disappear altogether. Posters are already 'digitised' in most cities and a Sunday newspaper etc. will still exist for a long time...”* (Strehler, 2022).

#### **4.2.2 FC Basel 1893**

As far as FC Basel is concerned, it was not possible to conduct an interview with marketing director Dominique Hufschmid, as the digital marketing strategy is in the process of being defined and they did not want to make any statements on the matter.

Nevertheless, research was conducted on the club's main channels in order to understand possible strategies implemented by the club.

One element that seems clear and visible in the club's digital marketing strategy is the central presence and synergy between social media marketing and content marketing.

On its social channels, FC Basel regularly publishes content to promote its products with related storytelling and offers numerous opportunities for engagement with the fanbase (giveaways, challenges, etc.). (FC Basel 1893, 2022)

A confirmation that the club certainly relies heavily on content marketing is given by the presence of a 'Chief Content Officer' (Pasquale Stramandino) in the organisational chart who definitely takes care of this part of the company.

A further point noted that shows a strong connection to digital marketing is the club's newsletter and the unique login on the club website.

The fact that one has to log in to enter certain areas of the site, probably shows the club's desire to automate the sharing of certain content, such as the newsletter (high level of customisation) and perhaps other content that unfortunately without an interview could not be found.

Therefore, the club certainly shows a strong inclination towards digital marketing, having two areas such as marketing and content management in synergy, and furthermore, the fact that the digital marketing strategy is being redefined probably means that the club intends to focus more on digital marketing than traditional marketing. (FC Basel 1893, 2022)

#### **4.2.3 BSC Young Boys**

As far as BSC Young Boys is concerned, the interview was conducted with Head of Department Marketing Daniel Marti.

He reported how the football club from the Swiss capital has a great interest and intention towards digital marketing in the immediate but also in the near future.

The club essentially works on three levels of digital marketing strategy, as Director Marti explained:

*"We work on different levels of digital marketing strategies:*

*- Social media*

*We try to create engagement with our fans through our various social channels: Instagram (where we have noticed that we create the most engagement and interaction with our fans), Facebook,*



*Twitter, TikTok (where we have the most followers and where we have had exponential growth) and YouTube.*

*- Email marketing*

*We try to delineate multiple segments within our fanbase in order to create customised emails and newsletters to make our fans aware of the content they are most interested in.*

*- Video content creation*

*We also do a lot of digital content creation to entertain our fans. We try to create content to communicate important information, and YouTube plays an important role here, as we mainly publish our specially created digital content there” (Marti, 2022).*

Furthermore, as previously reported, the club is already working on future plans in terms of digital marketing strategy. Especially NFT, as a trading element within the VIP/Hospitality sector, but also to carry out economic transactions via the club's online shop.

As also mainly other clubs, the increased effectiveness of digital marketing actions brings benefits in economic terms mainly at the level of merchandising and matchday activities. According to Marti, it is more complicated at the level of ticketing and pricing to increase revenues, as it depends on the competition of the match, the time and the day of the week. Special pricing for children or families, however, the director reported, helps to permanently increase attendance at home games.

A further interesting aspect that emerged from the interview was his thoughts on the future of digital marketing in the football sector: *“I personally see more potential in B2B activities than in B2C activities.*

*Mainly because I notice that sponsors and companies in general are operating more and more digitally and will also be more interested in the future in working with us football clubs in this format. In B2C I find it more complicated, because currently there are still no clear and outlined strategies. Concepts such as NFTs or the Fan Token are only hypotheses for small and medium-sized clubs, but in the future maybe they will also play a more important role for us, difficult to say” (Marti, 2022).*

Finally, according to Marti, traditional marketing is not destined to disappear, but certainly to decline, because on a quality-price level it is often not as satisfying as digital marketing, but it is undoubtedly a type of marketing that has a greater effect on some segments than on others.

#### **4.2.4 FC Lugano**

Turning to the FC Lugano club, interesting facts and figures emerged with the director of the digital area (and digital marketing manager) Luca Pedroni.

The club, as the director explained, has very ambitious plans at the level of digital marketing in the coming years, however, the club is currently still planning the best strategy to adopt:” *Within 1-2 years but it will have a central role, because the club has planned to carry out marketing automation, operate a database to create a digital card of the fan to propose specific offers.*

*It is also expected to increase the production of digital content of the club, through the creation of a new team formed by a social media manager, video maker and potentially a multimedia journalist. In addition, we plan to be supported by external partners for important advertising campaigns within our digital actions.”* (Pedroni, 2022)

Regarding the strategies adopted by the company in the area of digital marketing, several were mentioned during the interview.

For example, the club uses a different language of communication with its fans (in newsletters and digital communications) depending on the sector in which the fan is a season ticket holder. This is because, according to director Pedroni, the ways of communicating, the needs and requirements of a fan in the curva, vary significantly compared to a fan in the tribune or VIP sector.

Another interesting element that emerged, is how the club relies heavily on the data collected on its fans, through purchases made on the shop, certain clicks on the site and other information to make the most of re-targeting through social channels.

Furthermore, the last point to mention concerns the use of software. FC Lugano adopts various software to speed up the digital content production process (e.g. Sproutsocial applications that monitor all social accounts and their publications and are useful for reporting and data analysis).

This strategy is undoubtedly also made possible by the budget that the new ownership has made available for the digital area, because as Luca Pedroni reports, the club aims to be among the sports clubs at the digital level and therefore, also at the digital marketing level.

However, as previously mentioned, they are not pinning their hopes on increasing human resources in the digital marketing field but maximising the use of software to create digital and marketing content to foster the club's development and create new revenue streams.

Nevertheless, the digital marketing strategies already adopted in the past have brought important results and tangible benefits to the club.

As reported by the director compared to four seasons ago, merchandising revenue has quadrupled and 65% of purchases are made through the online shop.

This, according to the director, is not only thanks to the strategies, but also thanks to the new form of communication adopted by the club and a strong focus on customer care:” *Let’s say that these results are also due because we have radically changed our online communication.*

*We tend, at the level of copywriting and texts, to implement a communication for dummies. It's a different approach, but we really noticed that it brings tangible results and facilitates the digital sales process, because customers have fewer questions, they waste less time, because we can answer almost any question, drastically reducing the risk of losing customer because they do not include certain elements of communication.*

*Finally, we have seen a positive result indirectly also in sponsorships, thanks to the language and strategy used on social networks, also because we focus a lot on customer care.*

*This is because I personally believe that without optimal customer service, digital marketing actions are useless, there must be essentially this functional mix. So while we want to digitize many business and marketing processes, we mustn't forget that the human side, however, plays an essential role in the digital growth of the company and the club." (Pedroni, 2022)*

All these various FC Lugano digital and digital marketing strategies are implemented by the director for a very specific reason.

Beyond the needs of the market and the changing needs of the fans, according to Luca Pedroni, the truth is that the football product itself is becoming increasingly difficult to sell, it is considered slow and with few services attached.

It will therefore need, according to him, future changes to increase its attractiveness and popularity again, given the latest declining figures.

This is why digital marketing plays a crucial role now in selling the product, because it meets the needs of fans and offers innovative ancillary elements beyond just watching the game.

Finally, commenting on the future of digital marketing and the role of classic marketing actions, Luca Pedroni comments on the possible future scenario as follows: "*In 10 years I expect new tools and new ways of doing marketing that will surpass digital.*

*I do not hide that the classic elements could disappear (e.g. printed paper, posters), because digital will probably reach a level that can overcome the classic on any level.*

*It will depend very much on the market then; the clubs will need to adapt to the needs and rules dictated by the market.*

*We will also focus much more on digital, I find for a question of price quality, because digital shares cost significantly less than classic marketing.*

*We personally have already tried to combine the two things (e.g. insert QR code on billboards) and we have seen that it works, so things if you want could also coexist, with a clearly digital prevalence because it basically allows you to collect data and continuously improve the offer.*

*A final element to consider will also be the financial access to digital means to do digital marketing. This is because to do digital marketing need important budgets, costs are increasing and will increase, I therefore foresee that not all clubs will be able to have access to digital marketing tools and therefore they will have to be good at creating a strategy of differentiation compared to other clubs.” (Pedroni, 2022)*

#### **4.2.5 FC St. Gallen 1879**

For FC St. Gallen 1879, the interview was conducted with Troy Lüchinger, the club's marketing director.

St. Gallen is certainly one of the most digitally oriented clubs already, as the director pointed out, currently 50 per cent of the employees working in the marketing department deal exclusively with the digital part.

Lüchinger reported how the club has created a new organisational structure dedicated exclusively to the strategic and operational part of digital marketing: *“We personally developed and adopted a new strategy and methodology exclusively for digital marketing three years ago. We updated all our digital marketing channels, such as the website, created 'FCSG TV' (the club's official TV channel), created and/or updated all social media.*

*We have also reviewed the organisation of the people involved in the digital development of the company (50% of the marketing team only deals with digital marketing), our strategy is very much geared towards young people, as they are a generation that is strongly digitally oriented, and it is imperative to take this into account.*

*Last but not least, in the development of our digital strategy we carried out multiple benchmarking activities (Bayern Munich, PSG and Liverpool) to define the best possible strategy” (Lüchinger, 2022).*

Another element considered vital by the director in view of the development of the digital marketing strategy is the collection of data on fan activities, especially on home matchdays: *“A concrete example I can give is the implementation of a plan to collect data from our fanbase on the day of home matches through 'Microsoft Dynamics'.*

*This system basically allows us to track any customer/fan data at the level of catering and F&B, ticketing and in general any economic transaction that takes place inside our stadium. It is clear that through all this data, we are able to understand the needs of the fanbase and constantly improve our offer to them” (Lüchinger, 2022).*

The club is certainly very digitally minded, because according to Lüchinger, the fanbase of the future will be very active on the digital side; therefore, a strategy should be in place now so as not to be unprepared in the future. Elements like NFT or Fan Token are clearly talk that will probably have to be realised sooner or later, it is clear, the director recalls, that it then always depends on market trends, which are often unpredictable.

The greatest benefits from this articulated strategy have been recorded precisely in social media (exponential increase in followers) and the actions created by the so-called 'Online content creations', but also by many Sponsoring activations at the digital level.

Finally, according to the director of the Swiss-German club, the future will not completely erase traditional marketing, mainly due to targeting issues, but it is clear that digital marketing will play an indispensable role in the growth of clubs and football in general.

#### **4.2.6 *Servette FC***

Unfortunately also in the case of Servette FC, it was not possible to conduct any interview with marketing director Sébastien Frachet, as he stated that he did not have enough time for an interview, in which to illustrate and explain the digital marketing strategy of the club.

Therefore, also in this case, we proceeded to a research and analysis of the possible digital marketing tools used and implemented by the club.

The first element on which the club is likely to focus most digitally, is social media marketing, this is probably also justified by the presence of a social media producer in the club (Maxime Reymond) which in all likelihood deals with both the conception and production of the content to be published. The interesting element appeared on social networks, is also in this case the difference in the content published on different channels and the language, which varies depending on the type of post published. (Servette FC, 2022)

Also in this case, the newsletter is personalized, which can be produced probably thanks to the registration of purchases on the online shop of the club, where a login is required to access, and this definitely allows the company to collect useful data on its fan base.

Therefore we notice in a minor part, the presence of email marketing (through the "Call To Action" numbers created on the newsletter) and also perhaps a part of content marketing, having a social media producer and not manager.

Therefore we can certainly see an interest and a propensity of the club towards digital elements and digital marketing, However, without the interview you cannot understand the actual current and future intentions and especially the role of classic marketing compared to digital. (Servette FC, 2022)

#### **4.2.7 FC Sion**

With FC Sion also unfortunately it was not possible to conduct an interview, as the person indicated Baptiste Coppey, did not show up on the agreed day to write the online interview and therefore it was not possible to conduct it.

Therefore, a general analysis of the possible elements forming a possible digital marketing strategy of the club of French-speaking Switzerland was also carried out in this case.

The elements of digital marketing have not been many, in fact it seems that the club is more focused on classic and traditional marketing than digital.

Moreover, it would seem that there is not even a strong marketing-oriented footprint, having no marketing director, but a communications and media manager (Baptiste Coppey), a shop and merchandising manager (Serse Pedretti) and a multimedia designer (Robin Meylan). (FC Sion, 2022)

Surely there is strong element related to social media marketing, related at the same time to content marketing. The club regularly publishes content of different kinds on various social channels with high engagement rate with their fanbase.

The most interesting element certainly concerns the introduction of the part of "web-tv" where the club publishes with their own graphics content of different kinds for their fans es. highlights of the workouts or reports on the various weekly workouts.

The two main emerged were only these two, even at the level of affiliate marketing or email marketing via newsletters were not observed particular innovative elements or singular.

On the other hand, there was a strong link to classic marketing, for example through the massive advertising of your physical shop compared to the online one, on certain occasions such as the recent purchase of striker Mario Balotelli, where the arrival of the attacker seems to have been advertised more through classic elements (physical shop and signage) than elements belonging to digital marketing. (FC Sion, 2022)

#### **4.2.8 Grasshopper Club Zürich**

Regarding the development of digital marketing within Grasshoppers Club Zürich, the club with the most Swiss championships won, the interview was with marketing and merchandising director Andreas Schmocker.

The impression gained during the interview is that the Zurich club will increase its actions in the digital field due to market requirements and to ensure the club's growth. According to the director, who firmly believes that classic marketing is still an indispensable element in creating effective marketing actions.

As previously mentioned, however, with the advent of the new Chinese ownership, director Schmocker confirmed the club's desire to invest funds and grow in digital marketing: *"The club's desire is to grow, also from the digital point of view, we need to adapt to the market that inevitably points towards digital."*

*One element, however, that should not be overlooked is not to overdo it with digital actions for a question mainly of cost."* (Schmocker, 2022)

With regard to the concrete actions implemented by the company in the field of digital marketing, the most important ones mentioned are social media marketing, which, as the director said, is the most effective element for creating engagement with the fanbase and launching initiatives. Next was the mention of e-mail marketing, which, as Schmocker reported, as a result of the creation of a database has grown year after year, allowing newsletters to be customised and highly personalised e-mails to be delivered to fans.

The last mentioned operational digital marketing element was the use of the website, which has a purely informational value, but has extremely high open rates and is therefore used for this type of strategic digital element.

Regarding the club's future growth in the area of digital marketing, director Schmocker confirmed that actions will increase and intensify and that the budget for digital marketing has increased compared to previous years.

At the same time, however, he reported that it will be crucial to find a balanced mix between digital and traditional marketing, as he personally can hardly see any growth potential without classic sponsoring or branding activations.

Finally, talking about the possible disappearance of classic marketing, Director Schmocker's thoughts are as follows: *"As mentioned before, I think that both strategies will remain, it is inevitable that classic marketing will decrease on a strategic and operational level, but it cannot disappear."*

*This is mainly because of targeting issues, I personally think it is complicated to be effective with digital actions alone for the whole fanbase, especially if we think of segments such as families or the elderly."*

*Another element to take into account is the unpredictability of the market, we cannot predict the future, new ways or tools of marketing may arise and we will have to be ready to adapt if necessary."* (Schmocker, 2022)

It is interesting here to note that the club probably sees digital marketing more as a necessity imposed by the market than a real growth potential for the club to create new revenue opportunities.

As classic marketing is seen as indispensable and of great importance to the club, so the goal will not be to grow purely digitally, but to co-exist with the two forms of marketing.

#### **4.2.9 FC Luzern**

As for FC Luzern, again the interview was conducted with the director of the club's marketing department, Markus Krienbühl. The club certainly showed strong growth from the digital marketing point of view, with a newly defined strategy and the idea with a future plan to strongly intensify digital strategies on the operational level in the B2C, but above all B2B sphere.

As the director initially reiterated, until a few years ago the club had no defined strategy, subsequently following the definition of the strategy and the inclusion of two figures in the digital marketing department, namely a digital manager, who takes care of the strategic part and the definition of the strategy and product conception, and a content manager, who is in charge of all the operational part and the production of digital marketing content, growth has been exponential.

It was realised that digital marketing has and will play an extremely relevant role in the future of football in Switzerland as well, and this new strategy, as reported by Krienbühl, has allowed the club to grow in terms of its fanbase, at the digital level, and to have a stable and important revenue exclusively from digital marketing (500,000 per year).

On the level of concrete digital marketing strategies operated by the club, not many were mentioned. One example mentioned was the use of different languages on social networks, e.g. on Twitter and Facebook, a more aggressive, somewhat fan-friendly language is used, while on Instagram, more emphasis is placed on the graphic quality of the published content and the website is used primarily for information purposes.

An interesting element of future strategy that emerged in the interview is the clubs' future intentions in the B2C area in terms of digital marketing: *“Over the next twelve months we plan to increase our digital marketing efforts. The idea is to create a massive digital proposal for sponsors, create new digital content suitable for the sale of B2B and clearly increase the revenue of the club. Secondly, we intend to increase digital fan engagement within the stadium, as we have seen that it has great potential and believe that it should be exploited.”* (Krienbühl, 2022)

Furthermore, in terms of budget, the club has clear ideas. Currently there is only a budget available for the marketing department but given the excellent results on the digital level and the enormous potential growth in the market, the director of the Lucerne club has already reported that in the short to medium term an active budget will be created exclusively for the area of digital marketing, so that it can be developed effectively and adequately.



Probably the most interesting element during the interview are the various improvements that the digital marketing strategy has brought about over the years: *“At the level of ticketing it is very difficult to say, because the variations to consider are too many (match day, opponent, type of competition). For the merchandising has brought concrete results, we have augmented the number of sales and receipts substantially. This is thanks to digital advertising, but also thanks to the creation of ad hoc products and sales days dedicated to our products. The digital advertising we have really noticed that leads to some unexpected results, especially links linked to digital content published, give more options to the fan and makes a lot of use of word of mouth and sharing at the digital level. To provide data, we have increased the sales of our online shop by 40 per cent thanks to this type of strategy.”* (Krienbühl, 2022)

As far as the future is concerned, it is clear that the club wants to focus strongly on the digital level. In fact, director Krienbühl confirmed that it is inevitable that classic marketing will decrease drastically, but not necessarily disappear.

According to Krienbühl, there are further new forms of digital marketing to be created and explored, such as digital interaction with fans through specially created App 2.0s, but also segmented benefit programmes to improve the offer to the fans, as well as the use of data, according to the director, the basis of future digital marketing will be data and digital products, but the football offer to the fanbase will be based on this.

Finally, the director's thoughts on the co-existence of the two forms of marketing for FC Luzern are also interesting: *“For our club will remain both methods of marketing, but it is clear that the classic part will play a marginal role and will have less investment than the digital part. This is because I believe that many elements currently classic (billboards, leaflets, paper ads) can be digitised, through applications and new digital tools. For example, one of our ideas is to carry out our advertising campaigns, through an application that will geocalize the positions of our fans in the city of Lucerne and that will offer them different content based on their location within the city.”* (Krienbühl, 2022)

It is clear, therefore, that the club intends to focus strongly on digital marketing and has been careful to adapt to the needs of the market.

The most interesting strategic element is that the club also already has clear ideas on how the market might develop in the future and is ready to adapt to possible new forms of digital marketing.

#### **4.2.10 FC Lausanne-Sport**

Finally, regarding the last club to participate in the 2021-22 Credit Suisse Super League, FC Lausanne-Sport, the idea would be to conduct an interview with the marketing & experience manager of the club Guillaume Katz, but unfortunately no reply was ever received to the various emails sent to the club and the person in question.

Therefore, as well as the other three clubs with which it was not possible to conduct an interview, we proceeded with an observation and analysis of the possible elements that could be part of the digital marketing strategy of the club.

In this case it must be said that the only element that emerged that can possibly be traced back to a possible digital marketing strategy, surely concerns social media marketing.

However, they seem to be used more for informational purposes than for engagement and interaction with their fanbase. (FC Lausanne-Sport, 2022)

It is possible that there is a form of email marketing linked to the newsletter of the club, which however does not seem to be particularly personalized and very general.

Therefore, the key element is that the club does not seem to be very digital-focused, and this is also difficult to understand and understand why the information available is really limited and the club is extremely difficult to contact, not having any contact email.

FC Lausanne-Sport therefore seems to be the only club not particularly interested in the digital field but above all interested in the interaction with its fans and fan base in general, at least from a purely digital point of view. (FC Lausanne-Sport, 2022)

## **5 Future reflections: strategic and operational elements**

Within this sub-chapter, following the discussion of the various interviews conducted with the marketing managers or officials of the ten Swiss football teams and also the various analyses conducted, Here are some personal notes and some possible future predictions about the role of digital marketing in the near future.

Initially there is a sort of summary of common points that emerged that will probably affect the growth of the club from the point of view of digital marketing and this is divided at the level of brand growth, interaction with the fanbase and finally any potential future scenarios of how digital marketing could influence the various clubs that will compete in the "Credit Suisse Super League" in the near future.

## 5.1 **Brand growth**

What emerged from the various interviews and analyses conducted is that digital marketing plays an important and central role in the brand growth of various clubs today, but also for the near future. One need only think of clubs such as FC Luzern, FC Lugano or FC St. Gallen 1879, which have recorded significant growth in revenue, generating new revenue, and finding ways to make people interact more with the club.

These growths were possible mainly for multiple reasons, one of which was certainly the need to define a strategy and have a team, or part of a marketing team, dedicated exclusively to digital marketing activities. Suffice it to say that many companies have a social media manager, digital manager, content producer, or even rely on external companies (creating affiliate marketing practices) to ensure constant content production and constant updating of the digital marketing strategy.

Another element, which has contributed and still contributes to the growth of the brand in terms of digital marketing development, is the available budget. In the various interviews, the need for significant financial funds to follow up on an effective and concrete digital marketing strategy emerged. As increasing the human capital working to refine and implement this strategy entails considerable costs, as does adopting software such as 'Sprout Social' or 'Microsoft Dynamics'. Therefore, to concretely contribute to brand growth through the development of digital marketing, it is necessary and important to have a budget exclusively for the digital marketing part.

Another important point, mentioned many times by various club marketing directors, to ensure alignment between strategy and brand growth, is the adaptation to the target market. In fact, according to many, a continuous modification of the strategy is not to be excluded, so as to always remain in line with the new needs of the fan base and any new technological products that might change the digital marketing techniques and strategies.

A further principle, which only relates to social media marketing and management but is crucial in the future impact for the growth of a football brand, is the language used in the posts on the clubs' various social accounts. Many clubs have explicitly stated that they adopt different language depending on the applications and postings made. This is mainly done to create more engagement with the fanbase, align the club's communication principles with the activities performed on social media (any hashtags or information the club wants to convey), and create different distinct offers for each social media outlet.

On the level of brand growth of the various clubs, it emerged that over the years and for the foreseeable future, it will be vital to focus on these main aspects, so that digital marketing can make a concrete contribution to the growth of the various clubs' brands.

## **5.2 Interaction with the fanbase**

Another element of interest in this paper was to understand, how clubs managed to influence the interaction with their fanbases through digital marketing.

Again, the elements that emerged during the interviews and analysis were many and varied.

Certainly a vital element, which was also mentioned earlier in the brand growth part, is the language used with the different digital channels the clubs have at their disposal. Some clubs such as FC Lugano, BSC Young Boys or Grasshoppers Club Zürich show differences in language in the various social accounts, which are more pronounced than in other clubs. This, as reported by the marketing directors of the various clubs, is basically done to satisfy the different fan segments within their own, who have different needs and ideologies and therefore expect a certain type of postings from the clubs.

Another central point that influences the interaction between clubs and the various fan bases is the personalisation of the digital content that is delivered to the fans. Certainly, to optimise this process, the role of data collection and analysis is essential. Some clubs, such as FC St. Gallen 1879, have already implemented this system not only online, but also on matchdays, essentially recording every activity the fan performs. This certainly allows from a digital marketing point of view to profile and create highly customised offers for different segments, increasing the likelihood of raising the conversion rate exponentially.

Another principle that plays a fundamental role in this section is the increase of the digital content offer itself. It is no coincidence that clubs are steadily increasing their digital content, elements such as club TVs, the opening of profiles on multiple social channels, the exponential increase in publications, and the inclusion of new digital offerings also in merchandising, ticketing, and even B2B and not just B2C activities. This is because the various sports clubs have understood the needs of the new fan segments, but they are also changing their needs and trying to meet them.

The last point that needs to be mentioned, in this part of the analysis, is certainly the management of digital marketing activities, along with marketing. To ensure complete interaction with their fan bases, some directors reported the need to maintain a classical marketing part, as some fan segments have different needs and different demographics (older age). Therefore, the various clubs

will need to be competent in handling both types of marketing in order to ensure comprehensive digital content coverage with their fan bases and to maintain a continuous and stable interaction.

### **5.3 Potential future scenarios**

On the other hand, the possible future developments related to digital marketing actions, of the ten 'Credit Suisse Super League' clubs, but also in general terms for the various football clubs, are certainly difficult to predict.

This is mainly because in the various interviews and analyses, it emerged that the digital marketing market is unpredictable and constantly developing. Therefore, the various clubs will first and foremost have to be careful to continuously adapt to the needs of the market, which is why many directors stated that they must continue to update their digital marketing strategy.

One strategy that can be expected is the exponential increase in marketing automation tactics, as it has emerged that clubs are focusing on seeking the help of external software to automate and speed up the process of various digital content. This will likely increase costs for the various clubs in no small way, but it will certainly, as mentioned above, facilitate the content production process and also allow for a high degree of customisation of content when combined with the data collected by clubs.

As in fact just mentioned, another crucial factor that is likely to be expected more frequently in the future is data collection. An automation of the various digital marketing processes, requires, as mentioned by some directors, a considerable amount of data; therefore, for the foreseeable future it will probably be necessary to record any actions performed by different fans, in different sections such as the online shop of the website, the amount, type and frequency of ticket purchases, but also all activities performed by fans on home matchdays.

A further point that it is reasonable to expect in the future, is the decrease of human staff dealing with the digital marketing part. Whilst it is true that there is currently a need for personnel dealing with the conception and production of marketing content, an eventual increase in marketing automation processes through software will inevitably lead to a decrease in personnel. This is mainly for two reasons, the first being not to overspend on the production of digital marketing tactics, but also because it would seem to be a desire of the clubs themselves. One only has to look at the various statements reported by the director of FC Lugano, but also of FC Luzern, or as could also be seen in the analysis of FC Sion, namely that clubs prefer to focus on the quality of high-performance software in the production of digital content, as opposed to elements created by human personnel.

Finally, there is certainly the point to be assessed, of the eventual extinction of so-called classic marketing. In this case, the various directors all seemed to be on the same wavelength regarding the future, i.e. that the actions of this type of marketing will probably decrease but cannot disappear. As they are indispensable in order to ensure coverage of the fan segments in which these actions have the greatest impact. Therefore, it is likely that classic marketing will remain in the future marketing strategies of clubs, probably until there is a complete and total demographic change of the various fanbases.

Of course, all these possible future scenarios mentioned represent eventualities that could occur. As there is no certainty as to how the digital marketing market will develop, and it is difficult to understand the needs of the fan bases of the future, as revealed in the various interviews conducted. These various scenarios, however, according to the directors of the different clubs, will most likely represent the development of future digital marketing within the Swiss football world and beyond.

## 6 Conclusion

Digital marketing certainly stands as a central element that will inevitably influence the world of sport and football. Although this paper focused on an analysis with only the Swiss context as a reference, it could be seen that the various clubs have already moved to ensure that their digital marketing strategies are developed appropriately and are ready to invest economic resources in the future to increase its future importance within their clubs.

The main objectives of this paper were to understand the role digital plays in the growth of clubs and how it influences the relationship between various fanbases and clubs.

These objectives, thanks to the various analyses and research conducted, were substantially achieved. Initially, thanks to research and analysis of qualitative secondary data, it was possible to define the term digital marketing and which main strategies it consists of, but above all, the role it plays within the world of sport and football and how it is applied in practice. It was also relevant to research the history of the "Credit Suisse Super League", in order to substantially understand the context in which the ten clubs operate today.

Next, the part that provided the most insight and information regarding the scientific research question were the interviews conducted with the various marketing directors of the clubs that made themselves available, thus the primary qualitative research. Through these various interviews, it was possible to understand the role that digital marketing plays in the growth of the various clubs, the

importance it has in terms of strategic definition, how it influences the relationship with the various fan bases, and the future role it could play in the development of the various football clubs.

Unfortunately, it was only possible to conduct these interviews with six marketing directors of the ten clubs of the Swiss top football league. For the remaining four clubs, a secondary qualitative analysis was therefore conducted. Undoubtedly, the points that emerged with these analyses were significantly lower than with the primary qualitative research carried out. Consequently, for possible future research, it would certainly be interesting to have as many opinions as possible on the subject, and therefore to conduct interviews with all the directors of the "Credit Suisse Super League", but possibly also with marketing directors of minor league teams, in order to have a total view of how digital marketing is applied in the Swiss football context.

It would certainly have been useful, also to carry out benchmarking activities, with some clubs from foreign leagues, although different analysis elements would certainly have emerged, as these are sports clubs with different mentalities and financial budgets that are significantly higher than those of Swiss clubs; instead, the objective of this document was to understand the role of digital marketing within the Swiss market.

As for future considerations, it could be interesting to understand again the role that digital marketing will play, it was certainly possible to make predictions thanks to the various data and elements collected, but there remains this part of unpredictability that does not allow us to have a complete vision of what the future of clubs will look like from a strategic and operational digital marketing point of view.

It was certainly very exciting and stimulating to deal with such a topic, as it allowed me to expand my knowledge in this area and also gave me an insight into how digital marketing is considered and applied in the world of Swiss football.

For this reason I would like to thank once again the six editors (Daniel Marti, Ursula Strehler, Troy Lüchinger, Markus Krienbühl, Andreas Schmockler and Luca Pedroni), who made themselves available for the interview, and Professor Alessandro Siviero for constantly supporting me in the drafting of this paper.

## 7 Bibliography

- (EPFL), A. o. (2017). *European Leagues Fan Attendance Report*. Nyon: EPFL Communication Department.
- (SFL), S. F. (2022, May 20). *Swiss Football League*. Retrieved from SFL.ch: <https://www.sfl.ch/news/news/artikel/12-klubs-und-neuer-modus-in-der-super-league/>
- (SFL), S. F. (n.d.). *Swiss Football League*. Retrieved from SFL.ch: <https://www.sfl.ch/sfl/geschichte/kurz-buendig/>
- Anon. (2022, May 7). *Blue news*. Retrieved from Bluewin.ch: <https://www.bluewin.ch/it/sport/hockey/hockey-svizzero-sempre-primato-in-europa-1205174.html#:~:text=La%20svizzera%20National%20League%20%2D%20una,spettatori%20di%20media%20a%20partita.>
- Baltes, L. P. (2015). *Content marketing - the fundamental tool of digital marketing*. Braşov: Transilvania University of Braşov.
- Credit Suisse. (2020, November 17). Retrieved from www.credit-suisse.com: <https://www.credit-suisse.com/about-us-news/en/articles/media-releases/credit-suisse-to-become-title-sponsor-of-the-super-league-202011.html>
- Daniel C. Funk, K. A. (2016). *Sport Consumer Behaviour*. New York, Oxon: Routledge.
- Desai, V. (2019). *Digital Marketing: A Review*. International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development.
- FC Basel 1893. (2022, August 23). Retrieved from www.fcb.ch: <https://www.fcb.ch/>
- FC Lausanne-Sport. (2022, August 19). Retrieved from www.lausanne-sport.ch: <https://www.lausanne-sport.ch>
- FC Sion. (2022, September 4). Retrieved from www.fcsion.ch: <https://www.fcsion.ch/fr>
- FC Sion. (2022, August 31). Retrieved from www.fcsion.ch: <https://www.fcsion.ch/fr/news/detail/2705/mario-balotelli-debarque-en-valais->
- Higgins, E. T. (2009). *Engaging the Consumer: The Science and Art of the Value Creation Process*. Journal of Consumer Psychology.
- Krienbühl, M. (2022, August 9). (M. Cannova, Interviewer)
- Lammenett, E. (2006). *Praxiwissen Online-Marketing*. Wiesbaden: Gabler.
- Lammenett, E. (2019). *Praxiwissen Online-Marketing*. Wiesbaden: Springer Gabler.
- Lüchinger, T. (2022, July 12). (M. Cannova, Interviewer)
- Marti, D. (2022, July 22). (M. Cannova, Interviewer)
- Pedroni, L. (2022, July 27). (M. Cannova, Interviewer)
- Schmocker, A. (2022, August 8). (M. Cannova, Interviewer)
- Servette FC. (2022, August 24). Retrieved from www.servettefc.ch: <https://www.servettefc.ch>
- SFL. (n.d.). Retrieved from www.sfl.ch: <https://www.sfl-org.ch/ueber-die-sfl/die-swiss-football-league/>
- Strehler, U. (2022, July 13). (M. Cannova, Interviewer)
- Timothy Newman, J. F. (2017). *Social media in Sport Marketing*. New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group.



## 8 Index of the Figures

Figure 1 - Cover image.....	1
Figure 2 - Ranking number of spectators in major European football leagues.....	8
Figure 3 - Ranking of spectator numbers in major European hockey leagues .....	9

## 9 Attachments

### 9.1 Interviews

#### 9.1.1 Interview with Ursula Strehler (FC Zürich)

##### **Within the marketing department of your club, what role does digital marketing play?**

Definitely an important role, which has also increased over the years as it represents and will certainly represent a large part of the future of digital marketing.

##### **Do you have specific people in charge of digital marketing (e.g. digital manager, social media manager, ...)?**

We try to manage digital marketing actions and tactics all the people working in our relationship, you have to consider in marketing we are 1.5 people, but nobody is employed only for digital marketing. Regarding the creation and development of digital content, we forward matters to our social media manager, and we also have the support of our social media marketer, as far as the rest is concerned, it is conceived and created by the entire marketing department.

##### **What kind of digital marketing tactics do you implement?**

We rely on multiple models or tactics at the digital marketing level. We have digital partners that allow us to appear in different formats in the eyes of the fanbase (e.g. blick.ch, Tagesanzeiger, Radio Zürisee etc.). In addition, we try to make full use of our social media and our website.

##### **Do your digital marketing tactics target a specific fan segment or the fanbase in general?**

We try in general terms to target the fan base in general, not particular segments.

##### **Do you plan to increase your digital marketing actions/tactics in the future?**

Not currently, but certainly in the future, the idea is to increase our digital marketing actions.

##### **Do you have a defined budget for digital marketing?**

No, there is no defined budget for digital marketing, every project of the marketing group needs to be financially approved by the Board of Directors.

**Have your digital marketing strategies brought tangible benefits to the club over the years (increased matchday revenue, increased merchandising revenue, ...)?**

Yes, and we have noticed this in a tangible and concrete way, especially on the level of ticketing and merchandising revenue.

**In your opinion, what role will digital marketing play in the future of football club marketing?**

Definitely an increasingly important role. It clearly depends on the budget and the financial resources the club has, but it is possible to gain more and more with different digital mechanisms such as the metaverse, NFT, digitised processes, fan activations in the stadium etc. to try to increase the number of fans.

**Will traditional marketing actions (print advertising, posters, ...) disappear to make way for digital marketing or will two complementary types of marketing remain for your club?**

I don't think it will disappear completely, but it is clear that its presence will decrease. Print costs and produces waste, it is also less measurable and difficult to analyse, these are just a few disadvantages... But it will not disappear altogether. Posters are already 'digitised' in most cities and a Sunday newspaper etc. will still exist for a long time...

**9.1.2 Interview with Daniel Marti (BSC Young Boys)**

**Within the marketing department of your club, what role does digital marketing play?**

It is certainly very important within our marketing activities.

We work on different levels of digital marketing strategies:

- Social media

We try to create engagement with our fans through our various social channels: Instagram (where we have noticed that we create the most engagement and interaction with our fans), Facebook, Twitter, TikTok (where we have the most followers and where we have had exponential growth) and YouTube.

- Email marketing

We try to delineate multiple segments within our fanbase in order to create customised emails and newsletters to make our fans aware of the content they are most interested in.

- Video content creation

We also do a lot of digital content creation to entertain our fans. We try to create content to communicate important information, and YouTube plays an important role here, as we mainly publish our specially created digital content there.

**Do you have specific people in charge of digital marketing (e.g. digital manager, social media manager, ...)?**

Yes, there are people who let's say are mainly in charge of the operational part of digital marketing. We have a digital designer, who works on the conception and creation of digital content, we have more than one person who manages social media (marketing and communication department in this case cooperate together) and an intern who is more focused on digital marketing activities.

**What kind of digital marketing tactics do you implement?**

I think I have already presented the main marketing tactics previously.

However, I can add a future project we are currently working on, which is the creation and use of NFT.

Let's say we see it as a possible new way of interacting with our fans in the near future, especially when it comes to buying products from our shop and trying to create new trading actions through this model also in the VIP/Hospitality sector.

**Do your digital marketing tactics target a specific fan segment or the fanbase in general?**

Currently the general fanbase, it is clear, however, that in the future it will be difficult to do traditional marketing, so perhaps we will try to direct our actions towards new specific target segments.

**Do you plan to increase your digital marketing actions/tactics in the future?**

It is very likely. As mentioned above, doing traditional marketing in the near future will be very complicated and expensive in financial terms. We will most likely focus our strategies and actions on the digital level.

However, it is also true that events and matches will remain physical events and not digital, the 'Live' sector will not disappear, so it will be important to develop the right strategy that allows the two elements to coexist.

**Do you have a defined budget for digital marketing?**

Let's say we have a budget for marketing activities in general.

Then internally we have tried to create a part that is just for digital marketing activities.

**Have your digital marketing strategies brought tangible benefits to the club over the years (increased matchday revenue, increased merchandising revenue, ...)?**

Yes, mainly with regard to merchandising. We have noticed that through various specially created actions in social media and newsletters we have significantly increased merchandising revenue.

As far as ticketing is concerned, I find it very difficult on the other hand, it depends on the type of match and the day and time on which the match takes place.

However, we have seen interesting results through some pricing strategies, we have created 'Kids days' with special prices for children and also days where the price for families was reduced, and we have seen significant results for the future.

**In your opinion, what role will digital marketing play in the future of football club marketing?**

Very relevant, it already is now and will be even more so in the future.

I personally see more potential in B2B activities than in B2C activities.

Mainly because I notice that sponsors and companies in general are operating more and more digitally and will also be more interested in the future in working with us football clubs in this format. In B2C I find it more complicated, because currently there are still no clear and outlined strategies. Concepts such as NFTs or the Fan Token are only hypotheses for small and medium-sized clubs, but in the future maybe they will also play a more important role for us, difficult to say.

**Will traditional marketing actions (print advertising, posters, ...) disappear to make way for digital marketing or will two complementary types of marketing remain for your club?**

No, disappear completely I don't think so. Traditional marketing actions will certainly decrease but not to the point of disappearing.

They will decrease mainly due to the fact that the price-quality ratio currently leans towards digital marketing, traditional marketing activities have higher costs and are not always as effective as digital ones.

**9.1.3 Interview with Luca Pedroni (FC Lugano)**

**Within the marketing department of your club, what role does digital marketing play?**

Let's say that currently does not play a central role in our marketing department, despite the fact that the company intends to create and carry out actions within the digital marketing branch.

All the communication to the fans but we managed to transfer it to digital, following a strategy.

Within 1-2 years but it will have a central role, because the club has planned to carry out marketing automation, operate a database to create a digital card of the fan to propose specific offers.

It is also expected to increase the production of digital content of the club, through the creation of a new team formed by a social media manager, video maker and potentially a multimedia journalist.

In addition, we plan to be supported by external partners for important advertising campaigns within our digital actions.

**Do you have specific people in charge of digital marketing (e.g. digital manager, social media manager, ...)?**

I am currently the head of the department as Chief Technology Officer (CTO), with the intention of integrating the three people mentioned above, adding us also clearly external partners for large digital operations.

Currently, for example, we rely on photo partner agencies, and we do not have our own photographer for a matter of cost.

Then, as mentioned, even advertising or digital marketing operations with a certain weight, need help from outside.

**What kind of digital marketing tactics do you implement?**

There are several examples that I can cite of strategies that we use.

For example, we use a different language depending on the sector of where our fans have a subscription (communicating to a fan of the curve is different from one of the grandstands, because they have different needs).

We also have differentiated communication based on the data collected by e-commerce for each customer, also taking advantage of a later re-targeting on social media (using elements such as Facebook advertising or Google advertising).

As for social media, we rely on statistics, this year we adopted a new strategy to use social media in matchdays and engagement has increased dramatically.

At the beginning of the season we equipped ourselves with a software (Sprout social) that facilitates the creation and publication of content, but it is also important from the point of view of reporting.

Thanks to this tool we can also look at the data of any of our competitors (e.g. HCL and HCAP) and compare it with ours.

In addition to social media, we clearly have the newsletter, which remains the element that we create the greatest conversion (average rates of opening around 50%, very high) of purchase because it is particularly targeted accurately.

A further example, in recent months we have worked a lot on the individual elements that make up our online shop (button colour, position of the various sections), to understand what creates greater engagement.

**Do your digital marketing tactics target a specific fan segment or the fanbase in general?**

I would say both.

Certain elements clearly affect the fanbase entirely (e.g. ticket sales for matches).

Also for merchandising, items such as special sales days or the release of new products are also aimed at all fans.

Then there is the more specific and segmented communication, for example advertising the products that the customer purchased the year before also for the following season.

Now we are currently testing a software that records every action from the fan within our site, to activate it later in the process of digital marketing and sales.

The digital ecosystem of FC Lugano will work through a single login, to record every single action carried out by the fan, so as to no longer carry out segmentation but create a personalized and automated marketing according to the needs and actions of the customer.

### **Do you plan to increase your digital marketing actions/tactics in the future?**

As I said before, the answer is yes.

The ambition is to get to be a leader at the national level, as we have an important budget available and the desire to do so by the company.

It will also be a type of marketing, focused on the reduction of human resources and the maximum exploitation of digital software to facilitate automation.

It will also be all based on data, and we will therefore be able to guide business choices based on real-time data collected for each individual sector that makes up the club, as the system will also be able to make predictions for each individual match (e.g. number of tickets sold, drinks and food consumed, ...).

### **Do you have a defined budget for digital marketing?**

We have a budget for the digital area itself, not just for digital marketing.

This is because the company is developing quickly and intends to focus a lot on digital, so digital marketing falls under the digital area in general.

### **Have your digital marketing strategies brought tangible benefits to the club over the years (increased matchday revenue, increased merchandising revenue, ...)?**

Over the years we have achieved overall positive results.

At ticketing level, I can say that we have managed to reverse the negative trend of recent years.

Subscribers are increasing from year to year, especially because we have focused a lot on the category under 18, which was previously non-existent.

We must think that this segment will be the future fanbase of the club and therefore cannot be neglected, a segment that also clearly favours the digital growth of the club, because it is a segment that lives substantially for the digital elements.

In merchandising is definitely where we got the most satisfactory results. At the end of the 2021-2022 season, I can say that revenues have quadrupled compared to the 2017-18 season, despite the declining audience.

It should also be said that the promotion of merchandising, is exclusively digital, so really digital marketing can bring tangible economic results to the club.

We noticed that currently 65% of our products are sold online, so the traditional shop is really losing importance and the digital element is becoming more and more important.

Let's say that these results are also due because we have radically changed our online communication.

We tend, at the level of copywriting and texts, to implement a communication for dummies. It's a different approach, but we really noticed that it brings tangible results and facilitates the digital sales process, because customers have fewer questions, they waste less time, because we can answer almost any question, drastically reducing the risk of losing customer because they do not include certain elements of communication.

Finally, we have seen a positive result indirectly also in sponsorships, thanks to the language and strategy used on social networks, also because we focus a lot on customer care.

This is because I personally believe that without optimal customer service, digital marketing actions are useless, there must be essentially this functional mix.

So while we want to digitize many business and marketing processes, we mustn't forget that the human side, however, plays an essential role in the digital growth of the company and the club.

**In your opinion, what role will digital marketing play in the future of football club marketing?**

It will play a very important role; the market currently directs us at least towards digital marketing.

Development could be further facilitated by financial support, as I see it, from institutions such as FIFA or UEFA, to ensure access to smaller clubs.

In addition, in my opinion, speaking of the football product, there is a big problem, football is a sport too slow, and you play too many games on different dates.

The risk of losing fans and future fans is high, the product I think will need to be modified, to make the football match a different event and not as monotonous as it is at present.

I say this because I really see that currently we have to constantly invent new things, digitally, to bring fans to the stadium and in the coming years it will become more and more' complicated, in fact the problems related to the product.

I also do not see personally that the future is linked to esports, because it cannot replace the football sport, will necessarily change the football product itself.

It will therefore be necessary to think about football no longer as a sport, but as entertainment and think of digital marketing elements attached to create more interactive football (e.g. watching the game from the perspective of a player, VR readers, introduction of AI in football).

**Will traditional marketing actions (print advertising, posters, ...) disappear to make way for digital marketing or will two complementary types of marketing remain for your club?**

Let's say that the basic rules of marketing cannot change, are those and must be followed, will change the tools of marketing.

In 10 years I expect new tools and new ways of doing marketing that will surpass digital.

I do not hide that the classic elements could disappear (e.g. printed paper, posters), because digital will probably reach a level that can overcome the classic on any level.

It will depend very much on the market then; the clubs will need to adapt to the needs and rules dictated by the market.

We will also focus much more on digital, I find for a question of price quality, because digital shares cost significantly less than classic marketing.

We personally have already tried to combine the two things (e.g. insert QR code on billboards) and we have seen that it works, so things if you want could also coexist, with a clearly digital prevalence because it basically allows you to collect data and continuously improve the offer.

A final element to consider will also be the financial access to digital means to do digital marketing. This is because to do digital marketing need important budgets, costs are increasing and will increase, I therefore foresee that not all clubs will be able to have access to digital marketing tools and therefore they will have to be good at creating a strategy of differentiation compared to other clubs.

#### **9.1.4 Interview with Troy Lüchinger (FC St. Gallen 1879)**

**Within the marketing department of your club, what role does digital marketing play?**

A very important role, but I would say not only for our club but in the football world in general.

We personally developed and adopted a new strategy and methodology exclusively for digital marketing three years ago. We updated all our digital marketing channels, such as the website, created 'FCSG TV' (the club's official TV channel), created and/or updated all social media.

We have also reviewed the organisation of the people involved in the digital development of the company (50% of the marketing team only deals with digital marketing), our strategy is very much geared towards young people, as they are a generation that is strongly digitally oriented, and it is imperative to take this into account.



Last but not least, in the development of our digital strategy we carried out multiple benchmarking activities (Bayern Munich, PSG and Liverpool) to define the best possible strategy.

**Do you have specific people in charge of digital marketing (e.g. digital manager, social media manager, ...)?**

Yes, following the definition of the digital strategy, we also defined a team of people to work exclusively for this.

We have a digital director, two social media managers, a digital video producer, two people who work for the club radio 'FCSG.FM', and we also have many volunteers for matchday activities on the digital level.

**What kind of digital marketing tactics do you implement?**

A concrete example I can give is the implementation of a plan to collect data from our fanbase on the day of home matches through 'Microsoft Dynamics'.

This system basically allows us to track any customer/fan data at the level of catering and F&B, ticketing and in general any economic transaction that takes place inside our stadium. It is clear that through all this data, we are able to understand the needs of the fanbase and constantly improve our offer to them.

**Do your digital marketing tactics target a specific fan segment or the fanbase in general?**

Of course our target group is segmented, but we try as far as possible to target the fanbase in general. Then it is clear that we notice the greatest effectiveness within young people.

**Do you plan to increase your digital marketing actions/tactics in the future?**

Let's say we will follow the trends we observe in the market. It has to be understood which direction the future will go in; most likely it will go towards digital and therefore in this it is natural that we will intensify our presence in the digital market (e.g. NFT or Fan Token).

**Do you have a defined budget for digital marketing?**

Yes, we have a budget that is used exclusively for our digital marketing and is part of the marketing budget.

**Have your digital marketing strategies brought tangible benefits to the club over the years (increased matchday revenue, increased merchandising revenue, ...)?**

They have brought extremely tangible results, especially in the post-pandemic period.

Our social media and 'FCSG TV' have increased followers and views have increased significantly. All actions resulting from the so-called 'Online content creation' also brought new forms of revenue to the club.

In addition, one must not forget all the various 'Sponsoring activations' on the digital level that bring additional revenue to the club.

**In your opinion, what role will digital marketing play in the future of football club marketing?**

An essential role I would say. In my opinion 50% of the revenues from sponsors will be created digitally. Then as mentioned before the market is unpredictable and we need to understand where it will direct us, but it is likely that many marketing actions will turn to digital.

**Will traditional marketing actions (print advertising, posters, ...) disappear to make way for digital marketing or will two complementary types of marketing remain for your club?**

Both will remain and will have to be complementary, mainly due to targeting issues. We need to satisfy every type of fan and it is evident that for some segments we find that traditional marketing works better.

So I do believe that both modes of marketing will remain and develop steadily in the future.

**9.1.5 Interview with Andreas Schmocker (Grasshopper Club Zürich)**

**Within the marketing department of your club, what role does digital marketing play?**

I would say an important role and one that will become more relevant as the years go by.

The club's desire is to grow, also from the digital point of view, we need to adapt to the market that inevitably points towards digital.

One element, however, that should not be overlooked is not to overdo it with digital actions for a question mainly of cost.

**Do you have specific people in charge of digital marketing (e.g. digital manager, social media manager, ...)?**

Yes, there are people who work mainly for our marketing and digital content actions.

We have two people working part-time on the development of our social channels at the content and production level.

As for the actual production of digital content for all our media channels, we have one full-time employee.

In addition, clearly the people involved in marketing and sponsoring actively participate in the development and updating of the strategic part of our digital marketing strategy.

It is clear that we will need more people in the near future if we want to increase our digital marketing efforts significantly.

**What kind of digital marketing tactics do you implement?**

The types of strategies and operational elements we adopt from a digital perspective are many, but I can give some practical examples:

- Social media

The content that is published on our social networks varies between the various applications, mainly for reasons of engagement but also more simply because certain content needs to be publicised or published on specific channels (e.g. our kids camp is publicised with a newsletter and website, because families use social networks less than young people).

- E-mail marketing

We have a database for sending newsletters and emails to our fans. In this way we can easily customise newsletters for our fan base and bring back to them content potentially of interest to them.

- Website

Our website, on the other hand, we have noticed that it is only more effective from an information point of view. We therefore publish more informative content on this channel than elements that are e.g. aimed at creating engagement between the club and the fanbase.

**Do your digital marketing tactics target a specific fan segment or the fanbase in general?**

It is clear that a differentiation of content means that some published elements are aimed at specific fan segments (e.g. as mentioned before kids camps are aimed at families), but we generally try to engage the fanbase in general.

**Do you plan to increase your digital marketing actions/tactics in the future?**

As mentioned before, we plan to increase our resources and actions in digital marketing.

However, we always have to follow the market and the time in which we live, and this is basically unpredictable.

I also think, however, that without marketing, branding and classic sponsorship activations it will be difficult to progress, and I believe it will be vital to find a mix between the various ways of marketing.

**Do you have a defined budget for digital marketing?**

Yes, we have a budget that is exclusively dedicated to digital marketing actions and strategies, the thing I can also say is that the financial resources of this budget have increased compared to previous years.

**Have your digital marketing strategies brought tangible benefits to the club over the years (increased matchday revenue, increased merchandising revenue, ...)?**

On the merchandising level, we noticed small improvements. As far as ticketing is concerned, it is difficult to make calculations because it depends on the matches and sports results.

One notable improvement we have noticed compared to previous years is the revenue from season tickets, which this year have been publicised through a digital strategy created specifically for sales.

**In your opinion, what role will digital marketing play in the future of football club marketing?**

I would say fundamental, football teams will not be able to do marketing without digital elements.

Classic marketing as mentioned I don't think will disappear, but elements such as social media and digital innovations will be fundamental especially for the growth of the future generation of the various fan bases of football clubs.

**Will traditional marketing actions (print advertising, posters, ...) disappear to make way for digital marketing or will two complementary types of marketing remain for your club?**

As mentioned before, I think that both strategies will remain, it is inevitable that classic marketing will decrease on a strategic and operational level, but it cannot disappear.

This is mainly because of targeting issues, I personally think it is complicated to be effective with digital actions alone for the whole fanbase, especially if we think of segments such as families or the elderly.

Another element to take into account is the unpredictability of the market, we cannot predict the future, new ways or tools of marketing may arise and we will have to be ready to adapt if necessary.

**9.1.6 Interview with Markus Krienbühl (FC Luzern)**

**Within the marketing department of your club, what role does digital marketing play?**

Digital marketing plays a very important role in our marketing department.

Initially we only had accounts on various social media, but no definite strategy.

Now instead we have developed a clear strategy to pursue, and digital marketing plays a central role and is considered a very important element for the communication of the club.

Both for our fans, but also for our sponsors or potential sponsors, for example, they have the opportunity to buy from us concrete digital elements of sponsorship, such as spaces on social channels, in the digital broadcasts of the club, but also statistics regarding specific matches or club data.

This new strategy has basically allowed us to have a stable financial income from digital marketing, currently 500000 francs enter from our new digital shares.

**Do you have specific people in charge of digital marketing (e.g. digital manager, social media manager, ...)?**

We have two people working full-time for digital marketing in our team.

A digital manager, who deals with the creation of new strategies and the conception and development of new digital products.

The other person, on the other hand, is a content manager, who basically manages the digital operating part, which is to create the products that the digital manager has designed.

Clearly every marketing person is involved in some elements of digital marketing, but mainly we rely on these two figures for digital marketing.

### **What kind of digital marketing tactics do you implement?**

Let's say that for each channel we publish different content.

The content that is created is often targeted at certain segments of fans and is therefore published on different channels.

For example, info or actions regarding merchandising involve practically all channels, while for example Facebook and Twitter for us are two applications through which to create engagement with our fanbase.

### **Do your digital marketing tactics target a specific fan segment or the fanbase in general?**

Mainly we try to address all the fan base, clearly based on the published content we try to use a different language, to make more attention to the potentially involved segments (e.g. the language used on Instagram posts is different from the one used on Facebook or Twitter).

### **Do you plan to increase your digital marketing actions/tactics in the future?**

Over the next twelve months we plan to increase our digital marketing efforts.

The idea is to create a massive digital proposal for sponsors, create new digital content suitable for the sale of B2B and clearly increase the revenue of the club.

Secondly, we intend to increase digital fan engagement within the stadium, as we have seen that it has great potential and believe that it should be exploited.

### **Do you have a defined budget for digital marketing?**

Currently the budget is only for the marketing department but, given the increasing importance of the digital opening we decided in the medium term to create two different budgets and invest important financial resources in digital marketing.

### **Have your digital marketing strategies brought tangible benefits to the club over the years (increased matchday revenue, increased merchandising revenue, ...)?**

At the level of ticketing it is very difficult to say, because the variations to consider are too many (match day, opponent, type of competition).

For the merchandising has brought concrete results, we have augmented the number of sales and receipts substantially.

This is thanks to digital advertising, but also thanks to the creation of ad hoc products and sales days dedicated to our products.

The digital advertising we have really noticed that leads to some unexpected results, especially links linked to digital content published, give more options to the fan and makes a lot of use of word of mouth and sharing at the digital level.

To provide data, we have increased the sales of our online shop by 40% thanks to this type of strategy.

**In your opinion, what role will digital marketing play in the future of football club marketing?**

It will have a central role in my opinion, classic marketing will inevitably decrease its presence (for target issues, future generations have needs and interests different from the current one).

With increased digital marketing actions I mean not only the use of social media or email marketing, but also the creation and interaction of app 2.0, segmented benefit programs and especially data will play a fundamental role, products will be created on the basis of data, so it will be very relevant for clubs to collect as much data as possible about their fans or club customers.

**Will traditional marketing actions (print advertising, posters, ...) disappear to make way for digital marketing or will two complementary types of marketing remain for your club?**

For our club will remain both methods of marketing, but it is clear that the classic part will play a marginal role and will have less investment than the digital part.

This is because I believe that many elements currently classic (billboards, leaflets, paper ads) can be digitized, through applications and new digital tools.

For example, one of our ideas is to carry out our advertising campaigns, through an application that will geocalize the positions of our fans in the city of Lucerne and that will offer them different content based on their location within the city.