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# **SOCIAL MEDIA AND PUBLIC RELATIONS IN FOOTBALL: THE USE OF TWITTER IN FOOTBALL TEAMS IN TURKEY**

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## **Abstract**

Public relations is an important tool for marketing of products. Its the cheapest and most practical way of marketing a product and informing the target about that product. Social media brings new challenges for public relations to all markets. Sport and Football is one of them. Football which is a mass communication product and takes the interest of millions is also using social media in marketing and public relations. With social media the communication of the football teams had changed. The supporters of the football teams can reach and communicate more easily with their teams and can have a two side communication with feedback. This paper made a research about how the three most popular football teams use Twitter as a public relation tool. The research used the method of observation of three Turkish most popular football teams Galatasaray, Fenerbahçe and Beşiktaş and three popular football teams of EU Countries. These football teams were the teams who had collected the biggest points according to UEFA in 2012-2013 session. Barcelona (Spain), Bayern Munchen (Germany), and Real Madrid (Spain). The Twitter accounts of these six football teams were followed between 01-31 of October 2013 and there is an examination an evaluation in accordance the frequency of using Twitter and its characteristics. In the research there is a determination of how the Turkish football teams use Twitter as a public relation tool and what their difference is from the EU countries football teams. A comparison is be done on the use of Twitter of Turkish and other three European teams.

**Key Words:** Social Media, Public Relations, Twitter, Football

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## **1. Concept of Social Media**

Social media which has come up as a new trend with the internet-based application as a necessity of our period had provided considerable popular environment and interaction between the users and the people who they inform about the users satisfaction. Social media which shows diversity consisting of complex formations intended for photograph, video, text and media is a human communication figure that the debate and sharing are basis without making limitation of time and place. (Vural, Bat, 2010:3351). Technology of internet and social interaction underlie of the social media. Social media is a common term for online tools and web sites which create mutual interaction with allowing to users for the sharing of knowledge, thought, interest and information. Via social media, people can share their ideas, opinions and relationships by way of internet (Yağmurlu, 2011: 5-6).

Social media is a channel where individuals satisfy their loneliness, they say 'count me in' with making difference and they can become popular. Communication in social media is provided with words, visuals, sound files and so on. Social media has a frame that people share their stories and experiences. Content in social media is constituted by the users completely and the users get in contact with themselves above these contents (Aydoğan andAkyüz, 2010: 36). Social media is a chain of internet applications which based on sharing and debate without making limitation of time and place. Users webify their contents which they produced in both internet and mobile environment quite easily. Users follow the contents and comments of other users. User is in the position that is both following and followed in social media applications. When contents are examined detailed, it is seen that they are informal and they can be transform to gossip chain between users in time (Mavnacıoğlu, 2009: 64).

In generally, dialogs and sharings that users make with one another on the internet constitute the social media. Therefore, it is possible to say that there is an interaction in social media. Social Networks and corporate groups exist in social media. Via social media, companies can make their corporate promotions, individuals can make friends. Since social media is an interactive environment, it is a place where the highest level of sharing happens and give a chance as s new product of online media and it is one of the newest idea and pioneer. The features of the social media are (Vural, Bat, 2010:3351):

- **Participants:** Social media is a channel that encourage the participants and get all kinds of feedback from them.
- **Preciseness:** The most apparentness service to feedbacks is social media services. Voting, comment and information sharing is on the forefront in these services.
- **Speaking:** While traditional media based on content transfer and information to the listener, briefly based on broadcasting, in social media individuals can speak via interaction way, can make comment and have a vote.
- **Society:** Social media can give a permission to communities on short notice for fast and effective formation.
- **Correlativity:** It is possible to carry out related process in social media. Users are able to supply spreading on short notice with sharing the links of the contents which they like.

Social media can be stated simply as collaborator and online content which made by user. Via social media, individuals can affect other individuals and groups easily. There are many dynamics which are efficient on the social media's today's status which is one of the most often-heard notion nowadays.

The channel which commonly used within the context of social media is social networks. In our day mankind's living in a kind of network society which organizational knowledge, personel creativeness and learning capacity are seen as a source of value; new communication technologies which comprise this network society and the people's going into the effort of a new kind of communication brought about social networks. Social networks are web based service that based on the creating a compulsory profile in a system to link up with the audience and sharing of this profile, and which provide to see each other who are in the system and added of participants who share a link and other users lists' to each other. Social networks are an environment which based on being in contact that based on the working and information exchange of a range of people or corporation and interacting to success desirable results via sharing way (Vural and Bat, 2010:3355). The most salient social networks nowadays are Facebook, Twitter, Myspace, Youtube and Wikipedia. Twitter which is one of the social media network that most rapidly - developing of the world is a micro blog site which enables the users write short blogs which composes of maximum 140 characters. Despite of its simple system, twitter can share the user informations with their followers and can give informations about their situations. Abundances of famous people who use twitter and converse with the famous people who they are admire of people via twitter are the factors which make twitter favorite.

## **2. Public Relations and Social Media**

Public relations are one of the basic factor which affecting the corporate image and prestige. In our day, for getting a positive image of any corporation, individuals or country, it is need to be perceived correctly in public opinion. Public relations are one of the important tool to be perceived in public opinion correct and clear. Public relations directors of companies are like a corporate director of photography in fact. Directors provide becoming integrated one to one with the audience via public relation way. They are corporate voice and corporate scene tools which reflected to public opinion. In public relations platforms, activities of public relation means one to one representative of the corporation. Every activity is a representative image which composes the image of the corporation and goes to corporate prestige in the end. Public relations events establish a common sharing area which enables of acceptance, understanding, collaboration, trust between public opinion and corporation in the way which recumbent corporation image and this common sharing area is the liveliest communication platform which establish with the audience in the sense of public relations (Gültekin, 2006:1).

Public relations is a strategy which operates with audience, it is premised on institution purposes, and its order of importance is sometimes consumers and sometimes employers. Public relations which is extremely comprehensive activity has not had only one definition. But when existing definitions are evaluated, it is possible to see that public relations is set of activities need expertise which is a management function that directly depends on senior management. It provides communication with organization and its environment. It takes notice of all desire and hopes of audience, and reflects them to communication programs (Bozkurt,2006:182) Public relations is more believable information source than prepaid, biased and partial activities. Public relations which is an institution's conception is a communication science that has a purpose to concept, impress with thought to behaviors and make a choice. Institutions which need to express their powerful sides provides to transport influentially their messages to different audience with public relations. Public relations means determining when and how we communicate with audience. It is aimed to have a deterministic and directive affective on human beings behavior, approaches and conception with determinate strategy. Practicing successfully public relations has a huge importance for all companies like local, national, international companies (Aydede,2007:13-14).

Public relations are that legal or illegal entity; association, private institution or public enterprise make an effort to improve themselves or work with the other groups. This effort needs use some various techniques and take some various tacks even if someone makes an effort himself or somebody who works for him makes effort. Technology and communication technology provide people to inform not only the events among their environments but also all world news via the source and time which they choice, when considered from this point of view. Providing to get information at will in an appropriate time helps to get beyond the local political, economic and social limits. So public relation experts have worked for communication with their audience in virtual environment (Özgen, 2010:88).Public relation which call us private institution , public enterprise's communication way have two functions: Recognition and Promotion. Function of Promotion includes one-way communication activities. The purpose is to promote organizational service and goods to public. And the second function, recognition includes that organization knows its audience and understand their desire and needs. These activities provide feedback to communication and communication happens two-way thanks to these activities. The fact is that internet is a good helper for the recognition and promotion functions of public relations. It improves practices of public relation, because social media's structure is especially appropriate for dialogue. Social media is important for public relations. Because (Yağmurlu,2011:7-8):

- It shows innovation and sincere
- For special and public organization, it makes definition activities.
- It comes out thoughts. Because social media has been popular recently.  
We can understand what people think about someone, something or organization
- It makes dialogue between people and organization.

Because of the internet which is the biggest invention of our century, the problems like impressing idea and behaviors, supporting market communication and getting over media which are the basic tasks of public relations, are solved. So, it is inevitable to use social media as a public relation tools. There are some advantages of this situation. These are (Onat, and Ali Kılıç 2007:1125):

- We can communicate with a lot of people in a short time
- We can learn in a short time whether the audience have satisfaction or dissatisfaction about the product, service or corporation
- We can learn about any use of product or service, it shows new improvements to audience.
- Social media helps businesses to communicate directly with their audience and provides them to get the right target.
- Because on the social media, especially social networks have a lot of huge opportunities about online advertisement, brands and their advises
- Business have an opportunity to spread their social responsibility projects to more huge audience.
- Applications which are made for social media users help companies to have their own products and services and by having their own networks they market their own products and services
- Social networks provide the opportunity of measure for the businesses
- Social networks provide marketing for the businesses

Networks come out as communication channels which are practiced and measured. When social networks spread, they take more apart in public relations. Nowadays it is impossible that we think that a public relations campaign is not separated from Facebook and Twitter. When campaigns decide to take part in social media, first step is to have a Facebook and Twitter accounts and then communicate with social media users on this page thanks to internet, people are not effected anymore. They become impressed so public relations experts and marketing experts are supposed to use social media for their new activities on the social media which has less irregular than traditional media, public relations activities cause positive results about becoming different. On social media, public relations practices cause to come out new aspects about ideas which are related with public. During this time, a lot of topics about public relations are made argument again, how social media affects these topics becomes important because these ideas directly impress public relations activities (Özgen, 2010:82-83).

### 3. Football and Social Media

Football industry which is the one of the improving fast industries is impressed by technology. Football adopts every new technology. Because of the discovery of radio, football news and match become auditory. Football start to be visual with the discovery of TV. Because of computer technology, football takes part in computer monitor and games. Because of the discovery of internet football is on mobile phones. Because of web 2.0 technology discovery, social media help people who are interested in football to meet faster. Because of the social media, football moves people mobile phone and computer from stadium. Social media impresses football institution actors differently. Social media helps football clubs to communicate with fanatics directly, less expensive and easier. EstavaCladza who had been the major of FC Barcelona Club’s marketing group for 5 years, explains social media advantages and disadvantages on football on table 1:

Social Media Platform	Advantages	Disadvantages
YouTube	Audience	Content of third person
	Lowexpense	No advertising outcome
	Directlycommunication	One-way
Facebook	Directlycommunication	Content of third person
	İnteractivity	No advertising outcome
	Lowexpense	Imitations
	Open messages	
Twitter	Directlycommunication	Content of third person
	İnteractivity	No advertising outcome
	Lowexpense	Limited with 140 characters
	Open messages	Imitations

**Table 1. The effect of the social media on the football industry as a public relation tool(Calzada:2013):**

According to Akın (2010); fanatic groups who use the discoveries of internet successfully and fast use social media like Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, so this means that they create their own media. This process is seemed as an independent and subjective sport media by fanatics on football media. Fanatics have a chance to create their own individual media except for media. Football media helps fanatics to have a different idea opposite to their clubs’ official ideas (Akın: 2010:198). Social media gives a chance footballer to communicate with their fans fast and easily. Thanks to social media fans learn about footballers’ private life changes, whispers of transfer or their disabled facilities and footballers have a star image (Talimciler, 2013:39)

HTC, legal sponsor of UEFA Champions league and Europe league made a research to determine interaction between social media and football institution in 2013. It is called as social media on Football. In the research, sharing about match is made by fanatics who watch the football at the stadium. According to research they write more tweets than fanatics who watch the football on TV. Sharings which are made during the match are supported with videos or photographs (Marketing Türkiye:2013:74). Fanatics make their news about the match by themselves and every fanatic behaves like football journalist. All these sharings create a football media for football institution thanks to twitter which causes to come out more critical media gives opportunities to show themselves to their fans football teams start to improve public relations strategies to communicate with their fans directly.

### 4. The Aim and Method of Research

In this research, content analyze was made about Twitter use styles of 6 football teams which are the most popular teams in Turkey and Europe. The purpose of the research is to determine how much Turkish and Europe teams use twitter as a public relations tool. The chosen football teams are Fenerbahçe, Beşiktaş and Galatasaray which are the most successful football teams in Turkey. In Europe, during 2012-2013 seasons, the teams which were the most successful teams for UEFA are chosen. They are Barcelona FC, Bayern Munchen and Real Madrid (<http://www.macadogru.com/5923/Uefa-acikladi-en-iyi-50-takim-listede-2-turk-takimi-var/3/>). In the research, these 6 football teams’ Twitter accounts are researched during 01-31-october, 2013 and twits which are observed in every day are recorded grouped and data are analyzed by SPSS 21.0 software.



4.1 Findings

DATE		GALATASARAY SPORTS CLUB			FENERBAHCE SPORTS CLUB			BESİKTAS FOOTBALL CLUB		
		NUMBER OF TWEET	NUMBER OF FOLLOWERS	FOLLOWED	NUMBER OF TWEET	NUMBER OF FOLLOWERS	FOLLOWED	NUMBER OF TWEET	NUMBER OF FOLLOWERS	FOLLOWED
1ST WEEK	1-6.10.2013	27.914	3.164.483	4	13.974	2.436.281	36	10.184	550.045	8
2ND WEEK	7-13.10.2013	28.005	3.182.957	4	14.083	2.448.719	38	10.269	552.815	8
3RD WEEK	14-20.10.2013	28.117	3.200.498	4	14.232	2.461.975	39	10.320	555.892	8
4TH WEEK	21-27.10.2013	28.332	3.221.821	4	14.415	2.476.839	39	10.418	558.679	8
5TH WEEK	28-31.10.2013	28.397	3.231.217	4	14.432	2.483.840	39	10.465	560.232	8
DATE		FC BARCELONA			REAL MADRID FC			FC BAYERN		
		NUMBER OF TWEET	NUMBER OF FOLLOWERS	FOLLOWED	NUMBER OF TWEET	NUMBER OF FOLLOWERS	FOLLOWED	NUMBER OF TWEET	NUMBER OF FOLLOWERS	FOLLOWED
1ST WEEK	1-6.10.2013	32.565	5.339.647	35	36.370	9.038.397	31	7.363	673.221	18
2ND WEEK	7-13.10.2013	32.661	5.401.582	36	36.403	9.095.975	31	7.402	680.285	19
3RD WEEK	14-20.10.2013	32.811	5.506.846	36	36.498	9.162.421	31	7.506	695.608	19
4TH WEEK	21-27.10.2013	33.106	5.550.117	36	36.642	9.244.584	31	7.665	702.735	21
5TH WEEK	28-31.10.2013	33.220	5.588.125	36	36.733	9.292.458	31	7.695	710.130	21

Table 2. Twitter usage in football teams which joined the study

Monthly Change (%)	TWEET (%)	FOLLOWERS (%)	FOLLOWED (%)
Galatasaray	2,50	2,58	-
Fenerbahce	4,01	2,44	8,33
Besiktas	3,39	2,28	-
<b>Turkish Teams</b>	3,08	2,50	6,25
FC Barcelona	2,40	5,86	12,50
Real Madrid CF	1,20	2,96	6,90
FC BayernMunchen	5,38	5,93	16,67
<b>European Teams</b>	2,11	4,12	11,39

Table 3. Monthly twitter usage of the football teams which joined the study

At the end of this research, the findings about the use of Twitter of football teams. At the beginning of the research, the tweets of Galatasaray’s official Twitter were 27.705. At the end of the research, these were 28.397. There was a 2.5 % increase at the beginning of the research. There were 3.149.997 followers at the beginning of the research. At the end of the research, this was 3.231.217 with a 2.58 % increase. The tweets of the Fenerbahçe’s official twitter were 13.876. At the end of the research, this was 14.432. There was a 4.1 % increase. There was 2.424.719 at the beginning of the research. At the end, this was 2.483.840 with a 2.44 % increase. At the beginning, the tweets of Beşiktaş’s official twitter were 10.122. At the end, this was 10.465 with a 3.39 % increase. There were 547.736 followers at the beginning. At the end, this was 560.232 with a 2.28 % increase. When we looked at this data, at the beginning of the research, 51.703 tweets were in all national teams’ twitter. At the end, this was 53.294 with a 3.08 % increase. There were 6.122.452 followers at the beginning. At the end, this was 6.275.289 with a 2.5 % increase.

At the beginning of the research, the tweets of Barcelona’s official twitter were 32.442. At the end, this was 33.220 with a 2.4 % increase. There were 5.278.556 followers at the beginning. At the end, this was 5.588.125 with a 5.86 % increase. At the beginning, the tweets of Real Madrid CF’s official twitter were 36.298. At the end, this was 36.733 with a 1.2 % increase. There were 9.024.882 followers at the beginning but at the end, this was 9.292.458 with a %2.96 increase. At the beginning, the tweets of FC Bayern’s official twitter were 7302. At the end, it has raised to 7695 with a 5.38 % increase. There were 670.372 followers at the beginning. At the end, it has raised to 710.130 with a 5.93 % increase. At the beginning, 76.042 tweets were in all national teams’ twitter. At the end, it has raised to 77.648 with a 2.11 % increase. There were 14.973.810 followers at the beginning but at the end, it was 15.590.713 with a 4.12 % increase.

	RETWEET	HASHTAG
GALATASARAY	4	75
FENERBAHÇE	87	257
BESİKTAS	1	2
<b>Turkish Teams Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>334</b>
BARCELONA	22	349
REAL MADRİD	19	586
BAYERN MÜNİH	34	549
European Total	<b>75</b>	<b>1484</b>
<b>General Total</b>	<b>167</b>	<b>1818</b>

**Table 4. Retweet and Hashtag Usage in Football Teams**

In the football teams, Beşiktaş SK in Turkey and Bayern Munchen in Europe have had retweet. Hashtag is used very much by Fenerbahçe SK in Turkey and Real Madrid in Europe. It is seemed that Europe Clubs used retweet and hashtag much more.

In the research, the recorded tweets were grouped according to their content and at the end, the tweet analyze was made. The results of analyze on Table 5.

Content (Group)	GALATASARAY	FENERBAHÇE	BESİKTAS	Turkish Teams Total
EXPLANATION	57	51	20	128
TRAINING PHOTOS	36	22	31	89
BASKETBALL NEWS	130	189	102	421
OTHER BRANCH OF SPORTS	13	44	27	84
ACTIVITY NEWS	12	37	13	62
FOOTBALL NEWS	158	86	60	304
CLUB NEWS	28	82	29	139
MATCH PHOTOS	10	4	2	16
MATCH SCORE	40	12	11	63
SELLING NEWS	72	75	36	183
VOLLEYBALL NEWS	47	78	10	135
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>603</b>	<b>680</b>	<b>341</b>	<b>1624</b>
	BARCELONA	REAL MADRİD	BAYERN MUNCHEN	EuropeanTeams TOTAL
EXPLANATION	165	65	68	298
TRAINING PHOTOS	49	21	36	106
BASKETBALL NEWS	0	2	1	3
OTHER BRANCH OF SPORTS	19	9	10	38
ACTIVITY NEWS	9	9	16	34
FOOTBALL NEWS	302	219	154	675
CLUB NEWS	76	22	16	114
MATCH PHOTOS	26	8	20	54
MATCH SCORE	116	72	78	266
SELLING NEWS	34	21	7	62
VOLLEYBALL NEWS	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>796</b>	<b>448</b>	<b>406</b>	<b>1650</b>
<b>GENERAL TOTAL</b>	<b>1399</b>	<b>1128</b>	<b>747</b>	<b>3274</b>

**Table 5. Content analysis of the tweets which football teams shared**

When tweets which were written during the research are analyzed, it is seemed that both of Turkish and European teams share basketball news. In the research, Fenerbahçe is more active in twitter than Real Madrid and Bayern Munchen and it is the most active football team on Twitter in Turkey. European teams share more photographs or video on Twitter than Turkish teams during the games. Turkish teams share online sell news more than foreign teams. Turkish football teams share news for selling uniforms and other merchandising products.

Fenerbahçe SK shares news about all sports. Generally, the news have link of the official website of sport club. Galatasaray SK often shares football, volleyball, basketball news and it does not share something about the other sports. Real Madrid shares football news much more than the others and it uses hashtag in almost every sharing. Bayern Munchen shares news about its footballer. It is important for it. Barcelona, like Fenerbahçe, shares news and links to their own website via twitter. Another conspicuous point about using Twitter in Turkey and foreign clubs in Europe is sharing more training photographs than Turkish clubs. When we look at the research results, European sport clubs use Twitter continuously and share tweets regularly. Using twitter for Turkey and Europe teams increases on match days, this increase is much more in Turkish teams.

## 5. Conclusion

Public relations which is made with different style in traditional media wins a different dimension with social media. Feedback and individuality have increased with social media and it helps a new media to come out. Everyone creates his own media thanks to social media and sends the messages directly. This function of social media impresses football industry like all industries. Football clubs understand that they need to use social media more actively to communicate with their fans whom football clubs seem them as customers. Public relations have had an importance role in football industry which is one of the most improving industries in the world when social media increases its popularity. Football clubs start to communicate with their fans who are everywhere in the world and they start to use actively social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook and YouTube. EsteveCladza who had managed marketing of Barcelona that is one of the biggest clubs in the world for 5 years says that football clubs have special relationships with their fans via social media. Cladza advises football clubs to get more messages and activities via social media. ‘Directly communication with fans function of Twitter that is the most improving social media platform in the world provides use as a public relations tool. In the scope, in this research conducted for this paper, it is seemed that football clubs use social media as a public relations tool. The clubs that are interested in volleyball, basketball share their activities via Twitter. It is seemed that the tweets of Real Madrid, Barcelona, Bayern Munchen which have the biggest economy in UEFA, Galatasaray, Fenerbahçe, Beşiktaş that have had big success in Turkey share news about goods, tickets sell, training information and videos. Football clubs communicate with their fans directly thanks to this information shared on Twitter. They get feedbacks and examine these via Twitter. They have learned what public and fans think. Football clubs have two important strategies thanks to Twitter. There are two directly advantages for football teams use of Twitter and social media. One of them is promotion via twitter without spending money. The other is that sport clubs create their own media. Football teams have created their own media where they share news directly thanks to Twitter. Although football clubs share the news on TV, radio, newspaper in traditional media, Twitter in social media stands out because it is more objective, faster. It threatens traditional media. As a public relations tool, social media and twitter are very important for football clubs because of their advantages and Twitter makes public relations activities more effective because it has a directly connection between customer (fans) and internet.

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