

4S Mobile Marketing Theory: A Prospective Marketing Mix for the Ghana Premier League

Frank Appiah Kusi (fkusi@uhas.edu.gh), ORCID: 0000-0003-0801-2957

Assistant Lecturer, School of Sports and Exercise Medicine, University of Health and Allied Sciences, Ghana; & Ph.D. Scholar, Philippine Christian University, Manila, Philippines



Copyright: © 2022 by the authors. Licensee [The RCSAS \(ISSN: 2583-1380\)](http://www.thercsas.com). This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial 4.0 International License. (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>). **Crossref/DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.55454/rcsas.2.11.2022.001>

Abstract: *Sport marketing over the last two decades has gained much attention, and is a preferred choice among many organizations to advertising and promotion, as it creates a link with organizations while projecting brands' image to the large audience around a particular sporting event. Due to its lucrativeness and rapid growth within the sport circles, corporations would prefer to associate and or sponsor sporting event in exchange for other promotional benefits. The changing marketing environment coupled with advanced technology has changed the consumption of sport products from being physically present at stadium to online, and thus, the purpose of this scholarly commentary is to propose the 4S Mobile Marketing Theory to the Ghana Football Association as a prospective marketing mix founded on the assessment of 2015-2020 league seasons of the Ghana Premier League. I conclude that an empirical research is needed to underpin this commentary and the theory proposed.*

Keywords: Ghana Premier League, 4S Mobile Marketing Theory, Prospective Marketing Mix

Introduction

The 2015 Ghana Premier League (GPL) was the 56th season or edition of the top-tier soccer competition in Ghana, overseen in terms of its welfare by Ghana League Clubs Association (GHALCA) a subsidiary of the Ghana Football Association (GFA); the body responsible for soccer development, and owns the league in Ghana. The 2015 league season was known as First Capital Plus Bank Premier League for its sponsorship, an association or link created by a domestic bank- First Capital Plus Bank. This deal was hyped at a time when the GPL had Super Sport as a media partner, and enjoyed world-wide media coverage for the league. The domestic bank invested an amount of \$10 million dollars for five years beginning 2014 to secure the headline sponsor, and also as a way to create awareness of its products and services to the Ghanaian population (Joy Sports, 2014). The association of the financial institution with the league was due to the impression of the league and *fans* around the sport at the time of which Super Sport served as a media partner creating an international exposure not only for the league, but also for the stakeholders particularly the domestic bank (Joy Sports, 2014).

The word *fans* can be traced from the modern Latin word 'Fanaticus' which means 'as much as insanely but divinely inspired' (James, 1997). According to James (1997), fans are individual(s) attached to an event or product from the cradle to the grave. From James, these fans will go any mile and do anything such as paint their skins, shout, sing and use their monies to show their unconditional love for their favorite sport team/club. Sport marketing has evolved over the last decades just as marketing theories in an era of technology, smart devices and the internet (Hua, 2019). This has changed the consumption of sport products from physically being at the sport stadium to online (Mohammad Kazemi, 2015), and is in line with Hua (2019) who proposes a new marketing trend and theory known as 4S Mobile Marketing Theory in an era of mobile internet and social media accessibility. This theory is focused on giving consumers a new experience, comfort, convenience and ease of consumption in marketing which also falls in line with Kotler and Keller (2016) who state that, taking into account the new *consumer* capabilities presented before them, that is, smart mobile phones, smart televisions, smart tablets, and Personal Computers, consumers have resulted to online and or social media to consume products and services thus transcending into sport (Huang & Hsu, 2017).

Consumer according to Auger et al. (2003) is an individual or a group who has the intention to purchase, and or order goods and services to consume. The term has been used interchangeably with customer; it also means a recipient of products or services or an individual who purchase goods or services (Auger et al., 2003). It is on the basis of this new development in consumer behaviour in the internet era, being enhanced by the availability of smart devices, which has broken many existing concepts and theories in marketing, thus, requires rethinking in marketing concepts to reposition products and/or services to create the ease of consumption, convenience, experience and comfort as proposed in the 4S Mobile Marketing Theory (Hua,

2019). Therefore, I propose the need of using the 4S Mobile Marketing Theory to better inform decisions and the implementation of marketing strategies of the league in Ghana going forward.

4S Mobile Marketing Theory

Service: Service is a new marketing element which replaces product in the old marketing mix. The service component of the theory propose that enterprises and to a large extent sport organizations as enterprise, should focus on delivering quality products or services that matches consumer needs, and be innovative in their products and services through research and development (Hua, 2019). In sport marketing, a sport product is defined as the particular sport of engagement enticed by fans (Bashford, 2017). From the explanation of sport product in the perspective of Bashford (2017), soccer can be classified as a sport product, similar to products like basketball, tennis, boxing, volley etc. Thus, this commentary proposes the need to improve the quality and innovative nature of the league and how the league satisfies or matches the needs of fans. The service component of the theory used modern sport stadium standards, quality pitch standard, ticketing standard, quality balls, and technology as key indicators (Hua, 2019; Kotler & Keller, 2016).

Substance: Substance is also a new Mobile Marketing Theory component replacing promotion in the old marketing mix (Hua, 2019). In the substance element Hua (2019) propose that enterprises, and to a larger extent sport organizations as an enterprise, should focus on the content of their products and or services as building emotions, experiences and trust. Juxtaposing this theory to the GPL, I propose the content of the league should aim at building emotions, experiences and trust to the sport fans. The substance component stresses on offering emotions, experiences and trust through the stadium, tickets, panaphenaria, technology, entertainment, convenience, safety and security in the league. The erection and maintenance of sport stadia, panaphenaria design, seats at the stadium, score board, lighting system etc., should factor in them substance to attract fans to the sport product (Hua 2019; Kotler & Keller, 2016).

Super User: Super user is another new Mobile Marketing component referring to people in the old marketing mix (Hua, 2019). The people are the sport fans who have gathered at the sport stadium and or streamed online to watch and enjoy the soccer league. This new element of the Mobile Marketing Theory propose that, enterprise should focus more on the people to understand their behaviours, consumption trends, likes, choices and preferences to be able to position products and or services to them. It is very crucial to understand the psychological consumption attitudes of the sport fans to better serve them well. This commentary monitored social media comments on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to better understand the consumption trends, likes, choices and preferences of Ghanaian sport fans relative to English Premier League consumption to arrive at this proposal on this component. There is the dire need for research and development to better understand the needs of the sport fans through participatory action research to gather empirical data.

Space: This is the last component of the new Mobile Marketing Theory replacing place or distribution in the old marketing mix (Hua, 2019). The onset and development of mobile applications has been described as “scene” according to Hua (2019) such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube etc., and has changed the place of consumption of products and services and evaded boundary theory. This element proposes a new retail in the internet era and an application of mobile marketing principle where ‘quality service’ is equal to offering quality product or service coupled with easy consumption, convenient and comfort to the people, that is Super User (Service= Product + Super User). Organizations should therefore be keen in adding service to their products and also to the users of their products. This is the ultimate in the new Mobile Marketing element of space to interact and build relationship with consumers online. Thus, I propose the GPL be streamed across major social media handles such as Facebook to better interact and engage sport fans as this is a preferred platform being enhanced by smart devices.

Assessment of the League Seasons of the Ghana Premier League

2015 League Season: The league featured sixteen (16) premier clubs with 240 matches played. Ashanti Gold Football Club emerged winner/ champion of the season, with Brong Ahafo Stars, Great Olympics and Hearts of Lions being relegated. The league saw an average of 507 goals scored with an average of 9000 fans consuming the sport with no online streaming. The league had First Capital Plus Bank as sponsor and Super Sport as media partner. Sport fans had to queue to purchase tickets in the entire season of the league. The

matches were all played in old traditional stadiums, and often security in the stadiums was a challenge to the sport fans. Many sport fans preferred to stream the English Premier League than to attend matches in the stadium for the GPL. The pitches in the stadium relative to quality standards were poor.

2016 League Season: The league season featured sixteen (16) premier clubs with 240 matches played. Overall, the league gathered 530 goals with Wa All Stars crowned the winner. Hasaacas, New Edubiase and Techiman City were relegated. This season was also known as the First Capital Plus Bank Premier League. Attendance at the stadium was at 10,000 recorded only in the matches between Asante Kotoko and Hearts of Oak, the rest of the matches recorded low attendances as compared to previous season, but there were no figures seen. The media partnership deal between the league and Super Sport had ended and not renewed for undisclosed reasons. Many of the indicators used hinged on Mobile Marketing theory were below average for the league.

2017 League Season: The league featured sixteen clubs with 240 matches played. Overall, the league bagged 530 goals with Aduana Stars crowned the winner/champion of the league. Tema Youth, Great Olympics and Bolga All Stars were relegated in the season. The league however was known as the First Capital Plus Bank Premier League. Attendance in the stadium had reduced but there were no figures to prove this fact from the GFA websites. The league secured a ten year deal media rights with Star Times worth \$17.9 million dollars (GFA, 2017). It is worth noting that the indicators to assess the marketing changes had not improved but stalled and in some instances worst.

2018 League Season: This league season was extraordinary with its engraved mark in the history of soccer in Ghana. The season was launched by the GFA and GHALCA to commence on February 11, 2018 but was postponed to March 4, 2018 by a high court injunction (Graphic, 2018). Later in the year, the season was announced to commence on March 17, 2018 which it did with a match between Inter-Allies and Bechem United in Tema. By June, 2018 the premier league was cancelled by government directives following an expose' by a renowned Journalist Anas Aremeyaw Anas due to corruption scandal in the GFA (BBC, 2018). Following from March to June, the matches played were 116 with 8 goals gathered in the truncated league. The season had no winner/ champion and that was the last year for the headline sponsor First Capital Plus Bank.

2019 League Season: The league featured eighteen (18) clubs, the highest so far in the history of the GPL, however due to the corruption scandal and the onset of Covid-19 in early 2020, it resulted in the declaration of the season null and void. Scanty information was gathered for this league season.

2020 League Season: The league featured eighteen (18) clubs with 306 matches played. The league bagged 694 goals with Accra Hearts of Oak crowned winner/champion. Ebusua Dwarfs, Liberty Professionals and Inter Allies were demoted. The GFA during this league introduced Prize Money for first, second and third place clubs as Ghc 250,000 plus GHC 10,000 worth of groceries, Ghc 150,000 and Ghc 80,000 respectively (GFA, 2021). Also, due to the Covid-19 restrictions there were testing for all players before the start of the season. This commentary envisaged to find out the changes in marketing trends of the league to give an input into marketing strategies and practices on the basis of mobile marketing theory.

Application of the 4S Mobile Marketing Theory to the League Seasons

Service: The GPL has had headline sponsor First Capital Plus Bank for a five year period from the 2014/15 season. This deal was not renewed after it ended and the league has had no headline sponsor until the 2022/23 league season. There had also not been any category of sponsorship as a way of changing marketing trend to attract corporate organization. The goals scored during the league stand at an average of 500 in a season. The Pitches and stadium used for the matches have not been the best in creating comfort and convenience for sport fans. The goal line technology and Virtual Assisted Referee (VAR) innovation from FIFA to ensure fairness in the game have not been adopted. Matches played at night have challenges with visibility for good coverage. The balls used for the league were the Mitre, Macron and Tempo balls of which its quality is subjective. In comparison to the English Premier League (EPL), Nike Ordem as the official ball has been used throughout the seasons of assessment and continue to be upgraded (EPL, 2021).

The EPL also has had Barclays as headline sponsor from 1992 till date, goals scored during the league season of the EPL from the 2015-2020 stood at an average of 1,000 (EPL, 2021). The EPL has Sky Sport and

BT Sport owning broadcast rights worth £5.135billion (EPL, 2021). Sponsorship for the GPL has been a challenge and this has transcended to the club level which also lack endorsement and sponsorships. Broadcast rights with the GPL remains with only Star Times which has reduce the global reach of the league compared to when SuperSport was in the scene. The EPL has seen an increase in broadcast rights not only with Sky Sports and BT Sports, but also BBC Sports, EA Sports etc. given the EPL a more global audience with innovation. This is to imply that there has been little or no improvement or any positive change in service quality as a marketing element of the theory in the GPL.

Substance: The GPL has stalled in terms of its promotion of sport product mainly because the traditional stadia do not come with it any designs to offer shield and build emotions with sport fans. The corruption scandal of the GFA has negatively affected the league in giving trust to its stakeholders. Over the periods of assessment, the mode of ticketing has been the same with queuing at the stadium. Merchandise and panaphenaria have been scarce and its design not appealing to sport fans. Seats in the stadium are made of plastics and this has not given comfort and convenience to sport fans. The traditional nature of the stadia is limited in providing shade and has resulted in heat. There has been some maintenance in the lightning system at some stadia, this has not been to standard to give good coverage during night matches. During half times, there has not been any entertainment at the stadium to engage fans which has resulted in boredom and normal conversations between fans. Emotions, experience and trust has not been seen over the seasonal periods in attracting consumers to the sport product. The substance element of the new marketing theory has not seen any positive changes or improvement but stalled.

Super user: The GPL over the season periods has seen a decreased in fans with figures not readily available. From 2018 season when the corruption scandal hit the GFA, it has resulted in a massive decrease in fans around the league. Purchase of tickets and merchandise has seen a reduction. Fans are neither consuming the sport as it used to be at the stadium nor watching on TV as many Ghanaians prefer to watch the EPL to the GPL. The experiences, skills and reach of the EPL attract fans to the product than the GPL. The EPL creates excerpts of the matches online with skilled goals and drills on the pitch to bond with fans' emotions. The erection of modern stadium and the entertainment created in the stadium contributes to attracting fans to the EPL. Research and development has been limited in the GPL in understanding the psychological consumption of consumers. Thus, the GFA has coined a concept 'Bring Back The Love', and appealing to the Ghanaian society to support the sport, but without research to understand the consumers. The GPL has not seen any improvement or positive change in marketing trends in terms of its consumer behaviour to attract fans to the league.

Space: The GPL over the season periods have provided consumption of the product only at the stadium. The league matches have not been streamed online, neither does the league has a website to reach out to its fans. Merchandise and ticketing have not been placed online for easy purchasing. The GPL clubs also do not have websites to direct online sales or purchases. It is often difficult to see a physical space for the clubs to even drive sales of products, get match updates etc. However, recently, some of the clubs are making the attempt to erect a physical structure and building online platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. The reach of the league has been domestic other than global to create high audience. This could be a reason why many companies are unable to familiarize with the league via the internet and therefore lacks sponsorship. As stated earlier, the league has no website space and that of the clubs where many fans with smart devices can interact and engage with products and services. To wit, the GPL has not utilized its marketing space over the periods.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the GPL has not seen any positive changes in marketing trends contrasting with the 4S Mobile Marketing theory proposed by Hongbing Hua in the internet era. The indicators used have been the same and not changed positively with changing marketing trends in the internet era for the GPL. The attraction of consumers around the product has stalled and likely to fall. There is therefore the need for further consideration of the league in this evolution of marketing concepts and new consumer capabilities in the internet era.

Recommendations

Following from the application and the proposition of the new marketing theory, I recommend to the GFA, GHALCA, Ministry of Youth and Sports, and the National Sport Authority as follows:

- There is the need for Research and Development in the League.
- The marketing and sponsorship committee for the league should be given capacity building on current marketing trends.
- There is the need for evaluation of the league every season.
- The league and clubs should develop a website and factor online consumption as a channel.
- The stadia, pitches, balls, ticketing, safety, security, merchandise etc., need a consideration to foster the growth of the league.
- There is the need to develop good governance codes for the sport.
- There is the need to develop strategic marketing tactics for the league in the growing internet era.

References

Auger, P., Burke, P., Louviere J., J & Devinney, T. (2003). What Will Consumers Pay for Social Product Features? *Journal of Business Ethics*. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1022212816261>

Bashford, S. (2017). What you need to know about sports marketing in 2017 and beyond. [Online] Campaignlive.co.uk. Available via: <http://www.campaignlive.co.uk/article/needknow-sports-marketing-2017-beyond/1424873> [Retrieved 2017-03-29].

British Broadcasting Corporation. (2018, June 8). Ghana dissolves football association after cash gifts scandal. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-44406535>

English Premier League (2021). Seasons. <https://www.premierleague.com/history/season-reviews>

Ghana Football Association. (2015, n.d). Preview: First Capital Plus Premier League Enters. From <https://www.ghanafa.org/preview-first-capital-plus-premier-league-enters> . Retrieved October 29, 2022.

Ghana Football Association. (2017, n.d). StarTimes Acquire Ghana Premier League Media Rights. <https://www.ghanafa.org/startimes-acquire-ghana-premier-league-media-rights>. Retrieved October 31, 2022.

Ghana Football Association. (2021, n.d). GFA Announces Prize Money for Premier League Winner and Runner Up. <https://www.ghanafa.org/gfa-announces-prize-money-for-premier-league-winner-and-runners-up> Retrieved October 31, 2022.

Graphic. (2018, March 01). Start of 2017/2018 Ghana Premier League Postponed Again. <https://www.graphic.com.gh/sports/sports-news/start-of-2017-2018-ghana-premier-league-postponed-again.html>

Hua, H. (2019). *Mobile Marketing Management: Case Studies from Successful Practices*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Huang, Y., & Hsu, J.H. (2017). The application of social media in sports marketing. *Physical Education Journal*, 50 (12), 1-18.

James, J. (1997). The Psychology of Social Sports Fans: What Makes Them So Crazy. Retrieved from: The Psychology of Social Sports Fans: What Makes Them So Crazy? Sports Networker

JoySports. (2014, January 14). Report: First Capital Plus bank to splash \$10m Sponsorship on Ghana Premier League. [https://Report:FirstCapitalPlusbanktosplash\\$10msponsorshiponGhanaPremierLeague-MyJoyOnline.com](https://Report:FirstCapitalPlusbanktosplash$10msponsorshiponGhanaPremierLeague-MyJoyOnline.com)

JoyOnline. (2015, November 11). First Capital Plus Bank Suspends Premier League Sponsorship. <https://www.myjoyonline.com/first-capital-plus-bank-suspends-premier-league-sponsorship/>

Kotler, P., & Keller, L. (2016). *Marketing Management*, (15th ed.). Pearson Education Inc.

Mohammadkazemi, R. (2015). Handbook of Research on Integrating Social Media into Strategic Marketing. [Ch. 20], Newcastle University Business School. <https://doi.org/10.4018/978-1-4666-8353-2-ch020>.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I give God Almighty the thanks for His strength and life to be able to put this piece of work together. I acknowledge the contribution of Professor Emmanuel Santiaguel for his immense guidance and support. I acknowledge the support and efforts of Dr. Mohammed Sumaila in writing this paper. I appreciate Dr. James Antwi's efforts and advice. I thank my dear wife, Evelyn for her support.

ABOUT AUTHOR

Frank APPIAH KUSI is an Assistant Lecturer in Sport Management at the School of Sports and Exercise Medicine of University of Health and Allied Sciences, Ho, Ghana. Appiah Kusi is also a Ph.D. Student at Philippine Christian University, Manila with research focus in Sport Marketing and Sponsorship.

Email: frankappiahkusi@gmail.com

Tel: +233246811010