Chapter 19
Social Media and Marketing:
The Evolution of Tottenham Hotspur Football Club

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ABSTRACT

Tottenham Hotspur ("Spurs") Football Club were once the most entrepreneurial of English football teams, including being the first to obtain a stock market flotation and to attempt to diversify into other areas beyond their core. However, like many football clubs, they were slow to embrace the Internet including more recently the use of social media for marketing. This chapter investigates the history of Spurs' embrace of the Internet and social media and asks why a club traditionally renowned for its flair and enterprise on the pitch has been so slow to embrace modernity in the digital world.

INTRODUCTION

Association Football (football) is probably the world's most popular sport. Although fans of different clubs can often have a hostile relationship, football is one sport which globally unites people from all nations. It is beloved by every nationality on Earth. At the time of writing the world (with the possible exception of England fans!) is savouring the delights of the 2014 World Cup, hosted by Brazil. Both in-attendance at matches and via television, viewers of the World Cup continue to exceed those for that other worldwide sporting spectacle, the Olympic Games. According to AT Kearney (May 2011) the worldwide market for major sports events was worth €45 billion

($64 billion) in 2009. This includes revenues from ticketing, media and marketing. Football has the largest share of this market with global revenues of €20 billion ($28 billion) *per annum*. This is almost as much as the €23 billion ($32 billion) for all US sports on aggregate. European football is estimated as being worth €16 billion ($22 billion), with the five biggest leagues (English Premier League, Germany's Bundesliga, Italy's Serie A, Spain's La Liga and France's Ligue 1) taking half that share. It has long been acknowledged that top football teams attract a global following. One of the most popular football leagues around the world is the English Premier League (EPL). Located in the historic home of football—the country in which the Laws of The

Game were first promulgated—the EPL boasts one of the most cosmopolitan groups of players in this increasingly globalised sport. In order to compete English football clubs must constantly find new ways to increase revenues so that they can continue to attract the best players and provide stadia worthy of the fans who pay to attend. With an increasingly global audience it makes sense for EPL teams to pursue a global marketing strategy, to market their teams and associated merchandise in an attempt to boost revenues. In the modern world such a strategy needs to make full use of all forms of digital media, including the various forms of the Internet (websites, e-mail) and the more contemporary social media in its various guises. In this chapter our focus is on Tottenham Hotspur Football Club. Although football clubs have only turned to use social media in the past two to three years, we consider their use for marketing and other purposes, and consider the degree to which it has boosted club revenues.

Founded in 1882, Tottenham Hotspur Football Club (hereafter Spurs or THFC) is a professional Association Football team in north London. They play their home matches at "White Hart Lane" stadium, which is actually on the High Road N17, around the corner from White Hart Lane (the road). The club was named by its founders in respect for Sir Harry Hotspur (Sir Henry Percy, 1364–1463) partly due to his fame as a chivalrous and brave swashbuckling fighter, and also to recognise the association between the Tottenham area and the Percy family who lived locally during the 14th century and whose descendants owned land in the area. Sir Henry Percy is one of Shakespeare's best-known characters, making a strong appearance in *Henry IV, Part I*. Since it's founding, the club has always been renowned for playing attractive football with flair, something it's current supporters still demand. As former captain, the late Danny Blanchflower (1926–1993) argued:

The game is about glory. It's about doing things in style, with a flourish, about going out and beating the other lot, not waiting for them to die of boredom.

Blanchflower was echoing both the traditional spirit of the club and its Latin Motto "*audere est facere*", "to dare is to do". Spurs' history is replete with a large number of "firsts": they won the FA Cup in 1901, the only non-League club to do so since the Football League was formed. They were the first team in the 20th century to achieve the League and Cup "double", something considered almost impossible at the time (1960–1961). In 1963 they were the first British club to win a European competition, the European Cup Winners' Cup. They were the inaugural winners of the UEFA Cup in 1972, the first British team to win two major European trophies. Winning the League Cup a further time in 2008 meant that Spurs had won a major trophy in each of the last six decades, something matched only by Manchester United.

Given their renown for flair and enterprise on the field of play, one might imagine it should be reflected similarly in managerial performance by the Board of Directors. At the very least, it would make good commercial sense for a football club enjoying success—which can often be fleeting—to cash in on that success by improved marketing efforts. This assumes that a football club would have in place a properly devised marketing strategy, increasingly global in its outlook. The history of Spurs does not reflect that as a reality, the Boardroom often being a conservative bulwark to the on-pitch flair and entertainment. The only real exception to this in Spurs' history occurs in 1983, when new chairman Irving Scholar floated the club on the London Stock Exchange, the first English club to gain a stock market listing. It was Scholar who boosted the club's marketing efforts with the appointment of Edward Freedman, and

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