



YouTube, Fan Engagement, and Sports Marketing: An Analysis of Indoor Cricket in Bangladesh

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Master's thesis

May 2025

Master's Degree Program in Sport Business Management

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Jyväskylä: Jamk University of Applied Sciences, May 2025, 80 pages

Master's Degree Program in Sport Business Management. Master's thesis.

Permission for open access publication: Yes

Language of publication: English

Abstract

The pervasive influence of digital media has fundamentally reshaped sports marketing and fan engagement globally. YouTube, as a prominent video-sharing platform, offers significant opportunities for sports entities to connect with audiences, yet its strategic application for niche sports in developing economies remains underexplored. This research was undertaken to examine the strategic utilization of YouTube for enhancing fan engagement and advancing sports marketing objectives for indoor cricket, an emerging sport in Bangladesh. The primary objectives were to explore current perceptions and applications of YouTube by diverse stakeholders, identify the perceived benefits and challenges associated with its use, and propose actionable strategies for its effective deployment in this specific context.

A qualitative research approach, employing an instrumental case study design, was implemented. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, including officials involved in indoor cricket administration, marketing professionals, active YouTube content creators focusing on the sport, and engaged fans. The collected data were subjected to a rigorous thematic analysis to identify key patterns and insights.

The results indicated a general acknowledgment among stakeholders of YouTube's potential, but current utilization was found to be largely sporadic and under-strategized, primarily due to significant resource constraints and a lack of cohesive digital planning. Key perceived benefits of YouTube included enhanced visibility and audience reach, the potential for robust fan community building, opportunities for marketing and brand development, and its educational value in popularizing the sport. Conversely, major challenges identified encompassed severe resource limitations (financial, technical, human), difficulties in consistent high-quality content creation, struggles in audience growth and engagement, monetization hurdles, and the complexities of navigating platform dynamics. Stakeholders proposed various strategies for optimization, including content diversification, enhanced fan interaction, strategic partnerships, and collaborative approaches to overcome resource deficits.

It was concluded that YouTube represents a critical but significantly underutilized asset for indoor cricket in Bangladesh. A substantial gap exists between the recognized potential of the platform and current practices. Addressing this requires a strategic shift towards proactive, well-resourced digital initiatives and collaborative efforts among all involved parties to effectively harness YouTube for the sport's growth and sustainability.

Keywords/tags (subjects)

YouTube, Sports Marketing, Fan Engagement, Indoor Cricket, Niche Sports, Digital Media, Bangladesh

Table of Contents

1	Introduction.....	1
1.1	Background of the Study	2
1.2	Problem Statement, Research Questions, Objectives, and Significance of the Study.....	3
1.3	Scope and Delimitations of the Study	6
2	Literature Review	9
2.1	The Evolving Landscape of Sports Marketing.....	10
2.1.1	From Traditional to Digital: A Paradigm Shift	10
2.1.2	Key Digital Platforms in Modern Sports Marketing	11
2.1.3	The Role of Social Media in Cultivating Fan Loyalty and Interaction	11
2.2	Understanding Fan Engagement in the Digital Era	12
2.2.1	Defining Fan Engagement: Concepts and Dimensions	13
2.2.2	The Role of Social Media in Cultivating Fan Loyalty and Interaction	14
2.3	YouTube as a Strategic Platform for Sports Entities	15
2.3.1	Unique Features and Capabilities of YouTube for Sports Content	15
2.3.2	Opportunities and Challenges in Using YouTube for Sports Marketing	16
2.3.3	YouTube's Impact on Fan Experience and Community Building	17
2.4	Marketing and Engagement Strategies for Niche Sports	18
2.4.1	Distinctive Challenges in Promoting Emerging and Niche Sports	18
2.4.2	The Strategic Importance of Digital Platforms for Niche Sport Growth	19
2.5	Sports Fandom and Digital Media Consumption in Bangladesh.....	20
2.6	Theoretical Perspectives on Digital Engagement and Media Use.....	22
2.6.1	Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT).....	22
2.6.2	Social Identity Theory (SIT)	23
2.7	Conceptual Framework	24
3	Methodology.....	27
3.1	Research Philosophy	27
3.2	Research Approach	28
3.3	Research Design.....	29
3.4	Research Setting	30
3.5	Population and Sampling.....	31
3.6	Data Collection	33
3.7	Data Analysis	34

3.8	Ensuring Trustworthiness and Rigor	36
3.9	Ethical Considerations	38
3.10	Limitations of the Methodology	39
3.11	Chapter Summary	40
4	Analysis	41
4.1	Profile of Participants	42
4.2	Presentation and Analysis of Key Themes	43
4.2.1	Theme 1: Current Perceptions and Utilization of YouTube for Indoor Cricket in Bangladesh	43
4.2.2	Theme 2: Perceived Benefits of YouTube for Indoor Cricket	46
4.2.3	Theme 3: Key Challenges in Leveraging YouTube Effectively	48
4.2.4	Theme 4: Proposed Strategies for Optimized YouTube Utilization	50
4.3	Chapter Summary	53
5	Discussions	55
5.1	Overall Synthesis and Theoretical Implications	63
5.2	Conclusions	64
5.3	Recommendations	65
5.4	Limitations of the Study	67
5.5	Suggestions for Future Research	67
	References	69
	Appendices	78
	Appendix 1. Interview Questions	78

1 Introduction

The modern sports environment is profoundly connected to the expanding influence of digital media, a transformation that has fundamentally altered how sports organizations engage with their supporters and promote their activities (Berghe, 2023). Digital platforms have become central to sports communication strategies, offering innovative ways to reach global audiences and build lasting connections (Annamalai et al., 2021). Among these platforms, YouTube has solidified its position as a highly influential medium, presenting exceptional opportunities for sharing video content, fostering interactive communities, and enabling direct communication with fans (Trabelsi et al., 2022). Its extensive international user base, coupled with a flexible format supporting everything from highlight reels to live broadcasts and fan-generated content, makes it a compelling choice for sports organizations across the globe striving to enhance fan loyalty and realize broad marketing goals (Lee Ludvigsen & Petersen-Wagner, 2022). While major international sports and leagues have thoroughly integrated such digital platforms into their operational and marketing frameworks (Trabelsi et al., 2022), many niche sports, especially within developing sporting economies like Bangladesh, offer a distinct and less explored setting for investigating the strategic implementation of these powerful digital tools.

This research directs its attention towards such a context: the application of YouTube as a strategic resource for increasing fan engagement and advancing sports marketing objectives for indoor cricket in Bangladesh. Indoor cricket, known for its energetic and quick-paced gameplay, is progressively establishing its presence within the Bangladeshi sports culture (Nayar et al., 2024). Nevertheless, similar to many sports in their growth phase, its capacity for wider appeal and commercial success is considerably dependent on its success in captivating a larger audience base and securing marketing partnerships. The current digital environment suggests that many such sports may not be fully harnessing available online platforms to their advantage (Hull, 2021). YouTube, in this regard, presents a significant, yet often not fully realized, avenue for achieving these ambitions. It provides a dynamic stage for presenting the sport to new audiences, cultivating a committed community of followers, and generating tangible value for all parties involved, from players to administrators and sponsors (Sagin, 2021).

The core aim of this study is to examine how YouTube can be more effectively employed by the various groups associated with indoor cricket in Bangladesh. This includes the perspectives of officials guiding the sport, marketing professionals designing campaigns, independent YouTube content creators producing related material, and the dedicated fans who consume this content. The research attempts to understand current utilization patterns, identify the distinct advantages (such as increased visibility, stronger fan communities, and new revenue possibilities) and existing challenges (like resource constraints, the need for consistent quality content, and navigating audience preferences) within this particular national and sporting context. Furthermore, this study will explore potential strategies that could be developed or refined to ensure YouTube more successfully nurtures fan engagement and supports the sports marketing goals specific to indoor cricket in Bangladesh. Through a qualitative research design that deeply considers the insights of these diverse stakeholders, this research anticipates offering detailed perspectives on the practical use of a major global digital platform within a specific local sporting culture. Ultimately, it seeks to contribute valuable knowledge to the field of digital sports marketing, particularly in emerging markets and for sports seeking to expand their footprint.

1.1 Background of the Study

The landscape of sports marketing and fan engagement has undergone a seismic shift over the past two decades, largely driven by the widespread adoption of digital technologies and the internet (Bruhn & Rohlmann, 2023). Traditional marketing approaches, once reliant on broadcast media and print, now share prominence with, or are often superseded by, dynamic digital strategies that offer greater interactivity and targeted reach (Stegmann et al., 2021). This digital transformation has empowered sports organizations of all sizes to connect with global audiences, build brand loyalty, and create new revenue streams in ways previously unimaginable (Melton & MacCharles, 2021). Social media platforms, in particular, have become pivotal in this new era, fundamentally altering the channels through which fans consume sports content and interact with teams, athletes, and fellow supporters (Annamalai et al., 2021).

Among these social media platforms, YouTube has carved out a significant niche within the sports ecosystem. Its video-centric nature makes it exceptionally well-suited for showcasing the dynamism and emotion inherent in athletic competition (Lee Ludvigsen & Petersen-Wagner, 2022). Features such as live streaming of matches, on-demand access to highlights and full game replays, behind-the-scenes content, athlete vlogs, and interactive comment sections have transformed YouTube

into a comprehensive hub for sports enthusiasts (Sagin, 2021). For sports marketers, YouTube offers sophisticated analytics to understand audience preferences, targeted advertising capabilities, and opportunities for content monetization through various partnership programs (Jackson, 2021). Consequently, many sports entities are increasingly viewing YouTube not just as a content repository but as a critical strategic asset for building communities and enhancing brand value (Trabelsi et al., 2022).

In Bangladesh, the passion for sports, particularly cricket, is deeply embedded in the national culture (Sarma et al., 2021). While traditional forms of cricket command a large following, there is a growing interest in newer, faster-paced formats like indoor cricket. This modified version of the game, played in a confined space, offers exciting and accessible entertainment, with potential for grassroots development and broader participation (Christie et al., 2023). However, for emerging sports such as indoor cricket in Bangladesh to thrive and achieve sustainability, effective marketing and consistent fan engagement are crucial (Nahid & Abrar, 2023). This often requires leveraging cost-effective yet impactful digital platforms to build visibility and cultivate a dedicated following, especially when traditional media exposure might be limited (Bruhn & Rohlmann, 2023).

The strategic use of YouTube therefore presents a compelling opportunity for the growth of indoor cricket in Bangladesh. It provides a platform to showcase the unique appeal of the sport to a wider audience, engage with existing fans more deeply, and attract potential marketing partners (Trabelsi et al., 2022). Despite this potential, there is a general observation that the strategic utilization of digital platforms like YouTube for niche sports in developing countries often lags behind its application in more established sports markets (Lee Ludvigsen & Petersen-Wagner, 2022; Sagin, 2021). Understanding how YouTube can be effectively integrated into the fan engagement and marketing strategies for indoor cricket in Bangladesh is thus a pertinent area of inquiry, addressing a practical need for stakeholders within this specific sporting context.

1.2 Problem Statement, Research Questions, Objectives, and Significance of the Study

While the potential of YouTube as a dynamic platform for sports marketing and fan engagement is well-documented globally (Lee Ludvigsen & Petersen-Wagner, 2022; Sagin, 2021), there appears to be a significant gap in understanding and strategically leveraging this tool within the specific context of emerging sports in developing nations, such as indoor cricket in Bangladesh. Despite the growing popularity of indoor cricket and the widespread digital adoption in Bangladesh (Nahid & Abrar,

2023), there is limited empirical evidence or documented best practices detailing how YouTube is currently being utilized or could be more effectively utilized by stakeholders to foster fan engagement and achieve marketing objectives for this particular sport.

The primary issue is that without a clear understanding of current YouTube practices, associated benefits, challenges, and stakeholder perspectives, the potential of this platform for indoor cricket in Bangladesh may remain largely untapped. This can lead to missed opportunities for building a vibrant online fan community, enhancing the sport's visibility, attracting sponsorships, and ultimately contributing to its sustainable growth (Berghe, 2023). Furthermore, the unique cultural and socio-economic context of Bangladesh, along with the specific characteristics of indoor cricket, necessitates a tailored approach rather than a mere adoption of generic global strategies (Christie et al., 2023). Existing literature on sports marketing tends to focus on major international sports or developed economies (Bruhn & Rohlmann, 2023), leaving a knowledge deficit concerning effective digital strategies for niche sports like indoor cricket in regions such as Bangladesh.

Therefore, the central problem this study addresses is the lack of specific, contextually relevant knowledge and strategic insights regarding the effective utilization of YouTube for fan engagement and sports marketing for indoor cricket in Bangladesh. This research seeks to fill this void by exploring current practices, identifying key opportunities and challenges from the perspectives of diverse stakeholders, and ultimately aiming to provide actionable recommendations.

To address the identified problem, this study seeks to answer the following primary research questions:

RQ1: How do stakeholders (officials, marketing professionals, content creators, and fans) currently perceive and utilize YouTube for fan engagement and sports marketing in the context of indoor cricket in Bangladesh?

RQ2: What are the perceived benefits and challenges of using YouTube as a strategic tool for enhancing fan engagement and achieving sports marketing goals for indoor cricket in Bangladesh, according to key stakeholders?

RQ3: What strategies could be developed or optimized for YouTube to more effectively foster fan engagement and support sports marketing objectives for indoor cricket in Bangladesh, considering the perspectives of diverse stakeholders?

In alignment with the research questions, the primary objectives of this study are:

RO1: To explore the current perceptions and applications of YouTube among officials, marketing professionals, content creators, and fans for engaging with indoor cricket in Bangladesh and for its marketing.

RO2: To identify and analyze the perceived benefits (e.g., increased reach, community building, sponsorship opportunities) and challenges (e.g., resource limitations, content consistency, audience fragmentation) associated with leveraging YouTube for fan engagement and sports marketing of indoor cricket in Bangladesh.

RO3: To propose actionable strategies for the effective utilization of YouTube as a tool for enhancing fan engagement and achieving sports marketing outcomes for indoor cricket in Bangladesh, based on the insights gathered from stakeholders.

This research holds significant value for both theoretical understanding and practical application within the realms of sports marketing, digital media, and sports development, particularly in the context of Bangladesh. The findings are anticipated to make several key contributions:

Firstly, from a theoretical perspective, this study will contribute to the growing body of literature on digital sports marketing by providing nuanced insights into the use of YouTube for a niche sport within a developing country context. Much of the existing research tends to focus on major global sports or saturated Western markets (Annamalai et al., 2021); therefore, this study will help to address a geographical and contextual gap, offering empirical data on digital fan engagement strategies in an emerging economy like Bangladesh. It will also enhance understanding of how stakeholder perceptions shape the adoption and effectiveness of social media tools in specific cultural settings. Secondly, the practical implications of this research are substantial for various stakeholders involved with indoor cricket in Bangladesh. For officials and governing bodies of Indoor Cricket Bangladesh, the findings can inform the development of evidence-based digital strategies to promote the sport, increase participation, and attract investment. Marketing professionals can gain insights into effective content creation, audience targeting, and engagement tactics tailored to the Bangladeshi YouTube environment. YouTube content creators focusing on sports can better understand the landscape and opportunities surrounding indoor cricket. Ultimately, enhanced strategic use of YouTube can lead to a more vibrant and engaged fan base, contributing to the overall growth and commercial viability of indoor cricket in the country (Lee Ludvigsen & Petersen-Wagner, 2022).

Thirdly, the study's findings may offer transferable insights for other niche sports in Bangladesh or similar developing countries that are seeking to leverage digital platforms for growth and visibility. The identified challenges and successful strategies could serve as a foundational guide for sports organizations facing similar resource constraints or market conditions.

This research is significant because it aims to provide actionable knowledge that can bridge the gap between the potential of YouTube and its current strategic application for fan engagement and sports marketing in the specific context of indoor cricket in Bangladesh. By illuminating current practices and stakeholder perspectives, the study seeks to empower relevant parties to harness digital tools more effectively for the betterment of the sport.

1.3 Scope and Delimitations of the Study

This research is specifically focused on analyzing how YouTube can be effectively utilized as a strategic tool for fan engagement and sports marketing within the distinct context of indoor cricket in Bangladesh. The scope encompasses several key dimensions:

- **Platform Focus:** The primary digital platform under investigation is YouTube. While other social media platforms may be acknowledged as part of the broader digital ecosystem, this study will concentrate on the unique features, applications, and perceptions related to YouTube.
- **Functional Focus:** The research will examine YouTube's role in two core functions: fostering fan engagement (e.g., building communities, interaction, loyalty) and supporting sports marketing initiatives (e.g., promotion, branding, sponsorship visibility, content monetization strategies).
- **Sporting Context:** The study is specific to indoor cricket, a distinct and emerging format of cricket. It will not extend to traditional outdoor cricket or other sports prevalent in Bangladesh unless for comparative contextual understanding expressed by participants.
- **Geographical Context:** The research is geographically anchored in Bangladesh. The findings and analyses will be interpreted within the socio-cultural, economic, and technological landscape of this specific country.

- **Stakeholder Perspectives:** The study will gather qualitative data primarily from key stakeholders involved with indoor cricket in Bangladesh. These include officials associated with the sport's administration, marketing professionals working with or for the sport, active YouTube content creators producing indoor cricket-related content, and fans who actively engage with such content.
- **Methodological Approach:** The research will employ a qualitative methodology to gain in-depth insights into the perceptions, experiences, and strategies of the identified stakeholders. This will involve methods such as interviews and potentially content analysis of relevant YouTube channels (Bryman & Bell, 2022).

To maintain a clear focus and ensure the feasibility of the research, the following delimitations are established:

- **Exclusion of In-depth Comparative Platform Analysis:** This study will not undertake a comprehensive comparative analysis of YouTube against other social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, TikTok). The focus remains on understanding the strategic use of YouTube itself.
- **Limited Scope of Fan Population:** While fans are key stakeholders, the study will focus on "engaged fans" who actively interact with indoor cricket content on YouTube. It will not attempt a large-scale survey to capture the views of all potential or casual indoor cricket viewers in Bangladesh.
- **Non-Quantitative Impact Assessment:** The research will explore perceived effectiveness and benefits qualitatively. It will not involve quantitative metrics to measure the direct return on investment (ROI) of specific YouTube campaigns or statistically correlate YouTube activity with outcomes like ticket sales or broad viewership figures.
- **Focus on Current Practices:** The study will primarily examine current and recent past utilization of YouTube. It is not intended to be a historical analysis of the evolution of sports marketing for indoor cricket over an extended period.

- **Exclusion of Deep Technical Analysis:** The research will focus on the strategic application and stakeholder perceptions of YouTube, rather than delving into the highly technical aspects of video production, search engine optimization (SEO) for YouTube, or algorithmic intricacies, unless these emerge as significant themes from the stakeholder data.
- **Context-Specific Generalizability:** As a qualitative study rooted in the specific context of indoor cricket in Bangladesh, the findings are intended to provide deep, context-rich understanding. Direct generalizability of the findings to other sports, platforms, or significantly different cultural contexts will be approached with caution, as is standard for such research designs (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

2 Literature Review

This chapter provides a comprehensive review of existing scholarly literature relevant to the central focus of this thesis: the strategic utilization of YouTube for fan engagement and sports marketing within the context of indoor cricket in Bangladesh. The primary purpose of this review is to establish a solid theoretical and empirical foundation for the current research, identify prevailing concepts, methodologies, and findings, and critically assess the existing knowledge base to pinpoint significant gaps that this study aims to address (Saunders et al., 2023). By examining previous research, this chapter contextualizes the present study within the broader academic discourse on digital sports marketing, fan studies, and new media.

The literature explored spans several interconnected domains. It begins by tracing the evolution of sports marketing, with a particular emphasis on the paradigm shift towards digital platforms. Subsequently, the review delves into the multifaceted concept of fan engagement, exploring its theoretical underpinnings and the practical ways social media, especially video-centric platforms like YouTube, are employed to cultivate and sustain fan relationships. Specific attention is given to YouTube's features and its dual role as both a marketing tool and a community-building space for sports entities. The unique challenges and opportunities associated with promoting niche sports are then considered, followed by a brief examination of the sports fandom and digital media landscape in Bangladesh to further ground the study. The chapter also explores pertinent theoretical perspectives that inform an understanding of digital media use and engagement and presents the conceptual framework guiding this research.

The review commences with an exploration of the broader shifts in sports marketing (Section 2.1), followed by an in-depth look at digital fan engagement (Section 2.2). The subsequent section (2.3) specifically analyzes YouTube's role as a strategic platform in sports. Then the chapter turns to the specific context of marketing niche sports (Section 2.4) and a brief overview of the Bangladeshi sports and digital media environment (Section 2.5). The chapter then discusses the theoretical concepts adopted for this study (Section 2.6) and outlines the study's conceptual framework (Section 2.7). Finally, this literature review concludes with the identification of the research gaps (Section 2.8) that this thesis attempts to fill.

2.1 The Evolving Landscape of Sports Marketing

The domain of sports marketing stands as a dynamic and continually transforming field, significantly influenced by technological advancements and shifts in consumer behaviour (Ghalenoiei et al., 2023). Historically rooted in more conventional promotional activities, the way sports entities connect with their audiences and commercial partners has undergone a fundamental restructuring in recent decades. As Alghizzawi et al. (2024) noted the journey from traditional to digital approaches represents not merely an evolution but a revolutionary change in how sports value is created, communicated, and captured. This section explores this critical transformation, examining the paradigm shift from longstanding traditional methods to the multifaceted digital strategies that characterize contemporary sports marketing, and subsequently identifies the key digital platforms central to this new era.

2.1.1 From Traditional to Digital: A Paradigm Shift

Traditional sports marketing, for many years, relied heavily on mass media channels such as television broadcasts, radio advertisements, and print media to reach broad, undifferentiated audiences (Alghizzawi et al., 2024). Communication was predominantly unidirectional, with sports organizations broadcasting messages to largely passive consumers (Kotler & Keller, 2020). Sponsorships, endorsements, and stadium advertising formed the cornerstone of revenue generation and brand visibility (Shekhar & Shah, 2023). While effective in their time, these methods offered limited avenues for direct fan interaction or personalized engagement. As Jenkins (2022, p. 45) argued, "the traditional model often treated fans as spectators rather than active participants in the brand narrative."

The advent of the internet and the subsequent explosion of digital technologies, however, triggered a shift in this domain (Sedky et al., 2020). Several factors accelerated this transition, including widespread internet access, the proliferation of social media platforms, the ubiquity of mobile devices, and a growing consumer demand for more interactive and personalized experiences (Morris, 2022). Sports organizations quickly recognized the immense potential of these new tools to engage fans on a deeper level. For example, Nemati et al. (2025) stated that the move to digital was also partly driven by the search for more measurable marketing outcomes and greater cost-efficiencies, particularly for smaller or niche sports organizations.

Digital sports marketing, in stark contrast to its traditional counterpart, is characterized by its interactivity, personalization, and content-driven nature (Alghizzawi et al., 2024). It facilitates two-way communication between sports entities and their fans, fostering a sense of community and belonging. Platforms now enable organizations to segment their audiences and deliver tailored content, enhancing relevance and engagement (Jenkins, 2022). Furthermore, the rich data generated through digital interactions provide invaluable insights into fan preferences and behaviours, allowing for continuous strategy refinement (Annamalai et al., 2021). This fundamental change, from a broadcast mentality to a conversational and data-informed approach, truly signifies a shift in the philosophy and practice of sports marketing (Berghe, 2023).

2.1.2 Key Digital Platforms in Modern Sports Marketing

The digital transformation has ushered in a diverse array of platforms that sports marketers now leverage to achieve their objectives. According to Mastromartino et al. (2023), a multi-platform approach is crucial for maximizing reach and engagement in the current fragmented media environment. While YouTube holds a specific interest for this thesis, it is important to acknowledge the broader ecosystem of digital tools.

2.1.3 The Role of Social Media in Cultivating Fan Loyalty and Interaction

Social media platforms have emerged as indispensable tools for sports organizations aiming to cultivate fan loyalty and enhance interaction (Alghizzawi et al., 2024). Their inherent characteristics such as immediacy, interactivity, and user-generated content capabilities, provide a fertile ground for building and maintaining strong fan relationships (Jenkins, 2022). According to Woods (2020), social media has effectively broken down the traditional barriers between sports entities and their fans, creating a more democratized and participatory environment.

Several key mechanisms explain how social media contributes to these outcomes:

- **Facilitating Two-Way Communication:** Unlike traditional media, social media enables direct and often real-time dialogue between fans and sports organizations, as well as among fans themselves (Hull, 2021). This interaction can make fans feel heard, valued, and more connected to the team or sport.
- **Building a Sense of Community:** Social media platforms allow fans to connect with like-minded individuals, share their passion, and form online communities centered around their

favorite teams or sports (Celiker & Gul, 2024). This sense of belonging can significantly strengthen affective loyalty. Lawrence et al. (2025) noted that these digital communities often extend to offline interactions and support networks.

- **Providing Exclusive and Behind-the-Scenes Content:** Sports organizations frequently use social media to offer content not available through traditional channels, such as player interviews, training footage, or interactive Q&A sessions (Voráček, 2019). This exclusivity can make fans feel like insiders, deepening their engagement and loyalty.
- **Encouraging User-Generated Content (UGC):** social media empowers fans to become active co-creators of content, sharing their own perspectives, experiences, and creative expressions related to the sport. When sports organizations acknowledge and amplify UGC, it can foster a stronger emotional bond and a sense of ownership among fans (Kuster et al., 2024).
- **Personalized Experiences:** Many platforms offer tools for delivering more personalized content and interactions, making fans feel individually recognized and catered to, which can enhance loyalty (Wang & Gao, 2025).

The effective use of social media to foster these interactions and build loyalty not only benefits fan relationships but also provides sports organizations with valuable data, increased brand visibility through organic sharing, and opportunities for targeted promotions (Annamalai et al., 2021). However, managing social media engagement also presents challenges, such as handling negative sentiment, ensuring content authenticity, and keeping pace with rapidly evolving platform features and user expectations (Jenkins, 2022).

Effective sports marketing in the digital age often involves an integrated strategy, where these various platforms work synergistically to create a cohesive and immersive brand experience for fans (Lawrence et al., 2025). The choice of platforms and the specific strategies employed typically depend on the target audience, the nature of the sport, and the organization's specific marketing goals (Jenkins, 2022).

2.2 Understanding Fan Engagement in the Digital Era

The transformation of the sports marketing landscape, accelerated by digital technologies, has brought the concept of fan engagement to the forefront of strategic considerations for sports organizations globally (Santos et al., 2019). No longer viewed as a passive audience, fans are increasingly recognized as active participants whose emotional investment and behavioral interactions are

critical to the co-creation of value and the long-term viability of sports entities (Westerbeek, 2025). This section of the literature review critically examines the multifaceted construct of fan engagement. It begins by exploring its core definitions and conceptual dimensions, particularly as they manifest in the digital domain, and subsequently analyzes the pivotal role of social media platforms in cultivating enduring fan loyalty and fostering dynamic interactions, setting a foundation for later discussion of specific platforms like YouTube.

2.2.1 Defining Fan Engagement: Concepts and Dimensions

Defining fan engagement precisely presents a challenge due to its dynamic and context-dependent nature, though a consensus exists that it signifies more than mere consumption or spectatorship (Boyle, 2021). Scholars such as Homrich and de Freitas (2024) have described it as "a state of being connected, often emotionally and psychologically, to a sports entity, which is expressed through various attitudes and behaviors." This connection is not static but rather a process nurtured through ongoing interactions and experiences. Early conceptualizations often focused on attendance and media consumption, but as Huettermann et al. (2019) argued, the digital era has necessitated a broader understanding that incorporates online interactions and user-generated contributions as key indicators of engagement.

The scholarly literature commonly deconstructs fan engagement into several interrelated dimensions, typically categorized as cognitive, affective, and behavioral Fathy et al. (2021). Cognitive engagement involves the mental processes of the fan, including their level of knowledge, information seeking, and strategic thinking about the sport or team (Yoshida et al., 2023). For instance, a fan who actively follows team news, analyzes player performance, and discusses game strategy exhibits high cognitive engagement. Affective engagement, often considered the emotional core of fandom, encompasses the feelings, moods, and emotional attachments fans develop towards a sports entity, including sentiments like passion, loyalty, identification, and a sense of belonging (Yun et al., 2020). This dimension is particularly powerful in driving sustained support even in the face of poor team performance. Behavioral engagement then represents the tangible actions and participations of fans, which can range from traditional behaviors like attending matches and purchasing merchandise to a wide spectrum of digital activities such as liking posts, commenting, sharing content, creating fan edits, or participating in online forums (Stander & Beer, 2016). It is the interplay between these cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions, often amplified and made more visible by digital platforms, that provides a comprehensive picture of a fan's level and type of engagement

(Pradhan et al., 2019). Understanding this interplay is vital, as engagement strategies should ideally seek to stimulate all three dimensions to foster holistic and resilient fan relationships.

2.2.2 The Role of Social Media in Cultivating Fan Loyalty and Interaction

Social media platforms have fundamentally reconfigured the channels through which sports organizations can cultivate fan loyalty and foster interaction, moving beyond a one-way dissemination of information to a more dialogic and participatory model (Munnukka et al., 2017). These platforms serve as critical touchpoints where the cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions of engagement can be actively nurtured. As Girsang (2022) noted, social media offers sports entities an unparalleled opportunity to "humanize their brand, build authentic connections, and cultivate a sense of shared identity among diverse fan segments."

The cultivation of fan loyalty through social media is achieved via several interconnected mechanisms. Firstly, these platforms facilitate sustained, two-way communication, allowing fans to interact directly with teams, athletes, and fellow supporters, which can foster a sense of being valued and recognized Thompson et al. (2018). Secondly, social media is instrumental in building and sustaining virtual communities where fans can share experiences, express their passion, and reinforce their collective identity, thereby strengthening affective ties and loyalty (Annamalai et al., 2021). The strategic dissemination of exclusive behind-the-scenes content, personalized messages, and interactive elements like polls or Q&A sessions can further enhance this sense of insider status and emotional connection (Pradhan et al., 2019). Furthermore, by encouraging and showcasing user-generated content, sports organizations can empower fans as co-creators of the brand narrative, leading to deeper emotional investment and organic advocacy (Fathy et al., 2021).

In terms of interaction, social media dramatically expands the scope and immediacy of fan participation. Fans are no longer limited to discussions in physical spaces but can engage in real-time conversations during live events, share immediate reactions, and contribute to a global dialogue surrounding their sport (Munnukka et al., 2017). This heightened interactivity not only enriches the fan experience but also provides sports organizations with continuous, direct feedback and valuable insights into fan sentiment and preferences (Fathy et al., 2021). However, while the potential for positive engagement is immense, organizations must also navigate challenges such as managing negative interactions, maintaining content authenticity, and ensuring that digital interactions translate into meaningful, long-term loyalty rather than superficial engagement (Antunovic , 2021). The

effective strategic use of social media, therefore, involves a delicate balance of fostering open interaction while guiding the narrative and reinforcing the core values that underpin fan loyalty.

2.3 YouTube as a Strategic Platform for Sports Entities

Among the array of digital platforms available to sports organizations, YouTube, with its massive global user base and video-centric design, has emerged as a uniquely powerful and strategic asset (Mahoney et al., 2013). While the previous section discussed the general role of social media in fostering fan loyalty and interaction, this section narrows the focus to YouTube, examining its distinct features and capabilities tailored for sports content. It further explores the specific opportunities and challenges that sports entities encounter when leveraging YouTube for marketing and engagement and considers the platform's impact on the fan experience and community building within the sports domain. As Mahoney et al. (2013) asserted, YouTube is no longer just a repository for highlights; it is a dynamic ecosystem for storytelling, community engagement, and brand development in sports.

2.3.1 Unique Features and Capabilities of YouTube for Sports Content

YouTube's architecture and feature set offer a compelling toolkit for sports organizations aiming to connect with fans and disseminate diverse forms of content. Its primary strength lies in its capacity to host and distribute video, a medium exceptionally suited to capturing the excitement, narratives, and visual appeal inherent in sports (Sagin, 2021). A core capability is its robust Video-on-Demand (VOD) service, which allows sports entities to create extensive libraries of content, including full match replays where rights permit, highlights, documentaries, player profiles, coaching tutorials, and historical footage, enabling fans to access content at their convenience (Lee Ludvigsen & Petersen-Wagner, 2022). Complementing VOD, the platform's live streaming functionality is invaluable for broadcasting events such as matches, press conferences, signing announcements, or interactive Q&A sessions in real-time, fostering shared experiences for a global audience (Trabelsi et al., 2022).

Fan engagement is further facilitated through channel subscriptions, which help build a dedicated audience base that can receive notifications for new uploads or live streams, thereby encouraging loyalty and consistent viewership (Kim & Jeong, 2024). Content organization is enhanced by the ability to create playlists, making it easier for users to navigate and find specific types of content,

such as "Match Highlights Season 2024" or "Player Interviews" (Moon & Oh, 2024). Beyond video, YouTube's Community tab allows channels to interact with subscribers through text posts, polls, images, and GIFs, extending engagement, while the comments section under each video serves as a primary forum for fan discussion and feedback (Cellestine R, 2018). According to Oh (2023), these interactive elements are crucial for building a sense of belonging. Moreover, YouTube offers various monetization avenues, including advertising revenue, channel memberships for exclusive perks, and merchandise shelves, which can be vital for the financial sustainability of sports content creators and organizations (Moon & Oh, 2024). Crucially, YouTube Analytics provides channel owners with detailed data on viewership patterns, audience demographics, traffic sources, and engagement metrics, enabling data-driven content strategy and optimization (Kim & Jeong, 2024). This suite of features, coupled with YouTube's unparalleled global reach and accessibility across multiple devices (Kim & Jeong, 2024), empowers sports organizations to not only broadcast their content but also to build a branded presence, interact directly with fans, and understand audience preferences more deeply (Sagin, 2021).

2.3.2 Opportunities and Challenges in Using YouTube for Sports Marketing

Strategically leveraging YouTube presents sports organizations with a multitude of opportunities for marketing and engagement, though these are often accompanied by notable challenges that require careful consideration and management (Trabelsi et al., 2022). Success on the platform demands a coherent strategy and consistent effort, moving beyond sporadic video uploads.

The opportunities afforded by YouTube are significant. Foremost among them is the capacity for enhanced brand storytelling, as the platform provides a rich canvas for narratives that showcase a team's history, values, culture, and athlete personalities, extending engagement beyond simple game day coverage (López-Carril et al., 2020). This can lead to global audience development, enabling organizations, particularly those in niche sports, to transcend geographical boundaries and cultivate international fanbases (Sagin, 2021). YouTube also supports diverse content streams; beyond game highlights, organizations can offer behind-the-scenes access, tutorials, fan-generated content showcases, documentaries, and educational content about the sport, thereby catering to varied fan interests (Tafesse, 2020). Furthermore, the platform offers creative avenues for sponsorship activation and integration, such as branded content series, product placements, or sponsored segments, providing measurable value to commercial partners ((Petersen-Wagner & Lee Ludvigsen,

2023). Direct and indirect revenue generation is another key opportunity, through inbuilt monetization features and by driving traffic to other revenue-generating platforms like e-commerce sites for merchandise or ticket sales portals (Morgan, 2024). Finally, YouTube channels can serve as a valuable, easily accessible digital archive of a sport's memorable moments and history (Cellestine R, 2018).

However, capitalizing on these opportunities necessitates navigating several challenges. The demand for high content creation standards is prominent; producing engaging, high-quality video content consistently requires significant investment in time, skills, and often financial resources (Kim & Jeong, 2024). For broadcasting game footage, the complexity of rights management, involving often expensive media rights agreements, can be a major hurdle, especially for smaller leagues or those with existing exclusive broadcast deals (Lee Ludvigsen & Petersen-Wagner, 2022). Building a substantial subscriber base and ensuring content visibility also poses difficulties, given the vast competition on the platform and the need to understand and adapt to evolving platform algorithms and SEO for YouTube (Davies & Palmer, 2023). While interaction is an opportunity, community management, particularly fostering positive discussion in comment sections and dealing with negativity or spam, can be resource-intensive (Mahoney et al., 2013). Lastly, measuring the return on investment (ROI) by quantifying the direct impact of YouTube activities on broader marketing objectives or revenue can be challenging, often requiring sophisticated tracking and analytics (Petersen-Wagner & Lee Ludvigsen, 2023). Successfully navigating these challenges is key to unlocking the full marketing potential of YouTube for sports entities (Trabelsi et al., 2022).

2.3.3 YouTube's Impact on Fan Experience and Community Building

YouTube has profoundly influenced how fans experience sports and connect with one another, facilitating a shift from passive viewership to more active and personalized consumption patterns (Wymer et al., 2021). The platform empowers fans to curate their own sports content diet, providing on-demand access to highlights of games they missed, classic moments, or deep-dive analyses into niche aspects of their favorite sport through specialized channels (Trabelsi et al., 2022). This unrestricted availability significantly enhances convenience and allows for a deeper, more immersive engagement with the sport (Tafesse, 2020). As Bell Rookwood (2021) argued, YouTube offers fans a level of access and control over their sports media consumption that was previously unimaginable, thus personalizing and enriching their overall experience.

Beyond individual consumption, YouTube plays a significant role in fostering a sense of community among fans. The comment sections beneath videos, despite the potential for negativity, often transform into vibrant spaces for discussion, debate, and the shared expression of celebration or commiseration among supporters (Kim & Jeong, 2024). Similarly, live stream chats during games or special events can create a powerful collective viewing experience, uniting fans who are geographically dispersed (Lee Ludvigsen & Petersen-Wagner, 2022). The proliferation of fan-created channels, which frequently produce unique analyses, creative compilations, or personal fan vlogs, further contributes to this community fabric, illustrating a co-creation of the sports narrative and culture (Moon & Oh, 2024). Such interactions and shared content experiences strengthen fans' identification with the sport and their specific fan groups, cultivating a sense of belonging (Moon & Oh, 2024). The emergence of sports "YouTubers" or influencers introduces another dynamic, as these personalities often cultivate their own dedicated communities around their unique perspectives and content styles related to sports (Sagin, 2021).

2.4 Marketing and Engagement Strategies for Niche Sports

While the preceding discussions on digital marketing, fan engagement, and the utility of platforms like YouTube are applicable across the sports spectrum, emerging and niche sports often face a distinct set of circumstances that necessitate tailored strategic approaches (Fujak et al., 2024). Unlike mainstream sports that command significant media attention and boast large, established fan bases, niche sports typically operate with fewer resources and lower public visibility. Consequently, as Cohen et al. (2012) argued, the strategic adoption of digital platforms is not merely an option but a critical lifeline for their growth and sustainability. This section examines the distinctive challenges inherent in promoting such sports and subsequently explores the strategic importance of digital platforms, particularly in fostering their development and expanding their reach.

2.4.1 Distinctive Challenges in Promoting Emerging and Niche Sports

The pathway to prominence for emerging and niche sports is often fraught with a unique array of obstacles that can impede their growth and widespread acceptance. A primary hurdle, as highlighted by Rufer (2018), is typically limited media exposure. Mainstream media outlets tend to prioritize sports with large existing audiences, leaving niche sports with minimal coverage and, consequently, lower public awareness and understanding (Kucharski, 2015). This directly contributes to

smaller initial fan bases and often lower participation rates compared to more established sporting disciplines (Weedon & Jordan, 2022).

Resource constraints present another significant challenge. Niche sports organizations frequently operate with considerably smaller budgets for marketing initiatives, staffing, and infrastructural development than their mainstream counterparts (Eungoo & Kim, 2023). This financial limitation directly impacts their ability to compete for attention in a crowded sports entertainment market, where major sports leagues and events often dominate consumer interest and media spend (Warren & Brownlee, 2013). Attracting substantial sponsorships, selling lucrative broadcast rights, or generating significant revenue from merchandise can also prove more difficult when brand recognition and audience numbers are still developing (Boehmer, 2025). Furthermore, as Stewart and Bindal & Nulkar (2022) observed, niche sports often bear the additional burden of educating potential audiences about their rules, history, and unique appeal, which requires sustained marketing communication efforts. Building a distinct brand identity and cultivating a loyal following from a relatively small base is a gradual process that demands strategic patience and innovation (Fujak et al., 2024).

2.4.2 The Strategic Importance of Digital Platforms for Niche Sport Growth

In light of the challenges outlined above, digital platforms have emerged as exceptionally vital tools for the growth and promotion of niche sports. These platforms offer a suite of capabilities that can help level the playing field and overcome some of the traditional barriers to market entry and expansion (Harju, 2023). One of the most significant advantages is cost-effectiveness. Digital marketing channels, including social media and content platforms like YouTube, can often be more affordable than traditional mass media advertising, providing a better return on investment for organizations with limited budgets (Ghalenoei et al., 2023). This allows niche sports to execute promotional activities that might otherwise be financially prohibitive.

Moreover, digital platforms enable highly targeted reach. As Antunovic and Schultz (2022) explained, niche sports can leverage data analytics and platform algorithms to identify and connect with specific interest groups and potential fans globally, effectively overcoming geographical limitations and reaching dispersed communities of enthusiasts. This direct fan engagement is crucial, as it allows niche sports to build relationships, foster a sense of community, and gather immediate feedback without relying on traditional media intermediaries (Ghalenoei et al., 2023). Platforms like

YouTube are particularly powerful for content creation and storytelling, empowering niche sports to directly showcase their unique appeal, explain complex rules through engaging video content, and humanize their athletes, thereby educating and captivating new audiences (Antunovic, 2021). According to Wang and Gao (2025), this ability to control the narrative is paramount for sports that are not yet widely understood or appreciated.

The community-building aspect of digital platforms is also of immense strategic importance for niche sports. Dedicated online spaces, such as YouTube channels, Facebook groups, or specialized forums, allow fans to connect, share their passion, and feel a sense of belonging, which is vital for cultivating a loyal and active fan base from the ground up (Harju, 2023). Such platforms also increase the visibility and discoverability of niche sports; effective use of search engine optimization and platform-specific content strategies can help new audiences find and engage with the sport organically (Morris, 2022). The data analytics provided by these platforms offer invaluable insights into audience preferences, content performance, and engagement patterns, enabling niche sports to continuously refine their growth strategies and tailor their offerings (Mastromartino et al., 2023). Finally, digital platforms can open up alternative revenue streams, such as crowdfunding for specific projects, direct subscriptions for exclusive content, online merchandise sales, or attracting digital-native sponsors who are keen to align with growing, engaged online communities (Moon & Oh, 2024). Thus, for niche sports striving for recognition and sustainability, a well-crafted digital strategy is not just beneficial but often essential for their long-term success (Petersen-Wagner & Lee Ludvigsen, 2023).

2.5 Sports Fandom and Digital Media Consumption in Bangladesh

Understanding the landscape of sports fandom and the patterns of digital media consumption within Bangladesh is crucial for contextualizing the strategic use of YouTube for indoor cricket. Bangladesh possesses a vibrant sports culture, with cricket holding a preeminent position, often described as a national passion that unites diverse segments of the population (Sturm, 2020). Football also commands a significant following, alongside growing interest in various other traditional and emerging sports (Westerbeek, 2025). This deep-seated enthusiasm for sports provides a fertile ground for fan engagement initiatives. As Vale and Fernandes (2018) noted, the emotional investment of Bangladeshi fans in their favored sports, particularly cricket, is remarkably high, often translating into fervent support and active following.

Concurrently, Bangladesh has experienced a significant digital transformation over the past decade. There has been a rapid increase in internet penetration, primarily driven by the proliferation of affordable smartphones and the expansion of mobile data services across the country (BTRC, 2024). This digital surge has led to a substantial uptake of social media platforms, with services like Facebook, Messenger, and notably YouTube becoming integral to the daily communication and information consumption habits of a large portion of the populace, especially among the youth (Bindal & Nulkar, 2022). This digital immersion has inevitably reshaped how Bangladeshis interact with sports content.

The consumption of sports via digital channels in Bangladesh is a rapidly growing trend. While traditional television broadcasts remain important, an increasing number of fans, particularly younger demographics, are turning to online platforms for live updates, match highlights, sports news, and interactive discussions (Munnukka et al., 2017). Platforms offering video content have seen particular growth in this domain. For instance, research by Hassan et al. (2021) indicated that Bangladeshi sports enthusiasts frequently use YouTube and Facebook to watch highlights, player interviews, and analytical sports shows. The convenience of accessing content on mobile devices at any time has been a significant driver of this shift (Shefali, 2021). The interactive nature of these platforms also allows fans to participate in discussions, share opinions, and feel a greater sense of connection to sports communities, which Annamalai et al. (2021) suggests is a key motivator for online engagement among Bangladeshi youth.

Despite the evident passion for sports and the widespread adoption of digital media, including YouTube, there remains a noticeable gap in scholarly literature specifically addressing how niche sports, such as indoor cricket, are leveraging these platforms for fan engagement and marketing within the Bangladeshi context. While general trends in digital sports consumption can be inferred, detailed empirical studies focusing on the strategic utilization of YouTube by specific emerging sports entities in Bangladesh, and the perceptions of stakeholders involved, are scarce (Sarma et al., 2021). Most existing local research tends to focus on mainstream cricket or broader digital media usage patterns without a specific lens on the strategic marketing or fan engagement dynamics for less established sports (Khan et al., 2021). This underscores the importance of the current study in contributing context-specific insights into how a global platform like YouTube can be effectively harnessed for the development and promotion of a niche sport like indoor cricket in a passionate yet under-researched market such as Bangladesh.

2.6 Theoretical Perspectives on Digital Engagement and Media Use

To provide a robust analytical lens for understanding the dynamics of fan engagement with indoor cricket content on YouTube in Bangladesh, this study draws upon established theoretical frameworks from media studies and social psychology. These theories help to elucidate the motivations behind media consumption, the nature of online interactions, and the formation of group identities within digital fan communities. While various theories could offer insights, this review focuses on Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) and Social Identity Theory (SIT) due to their particular relevance in explaining active audience engagement with specific media content and the development of fan communities in online spaces.

2.6.1 Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT)

Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) offers a valuable framework for understanding why individuals actively choose and use specific media to satisfy their felt needs and desires (Katz et al., 1973; Ruggiero, 2000). Departing from traditional media effects models that view audiences as passive, UGT posits an active audience that selectively engages with media content to achieve certain gratifications (Blumler & Katz, 1974). As Fiske (2010) elaborated, the core tenet is that people bend media to their own purposes rather than being passively shaped by it. This perspective is particularly pertinent in the contemporary digital environment, where users have unprecedented control over their media consumption choices (Sundar & Limperos, 2013).

Key gratifications commonly identified within UGT literature include cognitive needs (seeking information, knowledge, understanding), affective needs (seeking emotional experiences, pleasure, aesthetic enjoyment), personal identity needs (reinforcing personal values, gaining insight into oneself), and social integrative needs (connecting with family, friends, and society, enhancing social interaction) (Moon et al., 2022). In the context of sports fandom, UGT has been employed to explain why fans follow sports through various media. For instance, Whiting and Williams (2013) found that social interaction, entertainment, and information seeking were primary gratifications for social media use. Applied to YouTube and indoor cricket in Bangladesh, UGT can help to explore the specific motivations driving fans to seek out and engage with such content. Fans might watch YouTube videos of indoor cricket to learn more about the sport (cognitive), experience the excitement of matches (affective), reinforce their identity as a sports enthusiast or a supporter of a niche sport (personal

identity), or connect and discuss with other fans in comment sections or live chats (social integrative) (Bindal & Nulkar, 2022). Understanding these gratifications sought by indoor cricket fans on YouTube can provide crucial insights for content creators and marketers aiming to meet audience needs more effectively (Reddy et al., 2023).

2.6.2 Social Identity Theory (SIT)

Social Identity Theory (SIT), originating from the work of Tajfel and Turner (1986), provides a compelling framework for understanding group membership and intergroup relations, which is highly applicable to sports fandom. SIT proposes that individuals categorize themselves and others into social groups, and a significant part of an individual's self-concept (their social identity) is derived from these group memberships (Hogg & Abrams, 1988). People strive to achieve or maintain a positive social identity, and this is often accomplished by favorably comparing their in-group (the group to which they belong) with relevant out-groups (Ellemers et al., 2002).

In the realm of sports, fans often strongly identify with a particular team, sport, or fan community, and this identification contributes significantly to their sense of self and belonging (Wann & Branscombe, 1993; Heere et al., 2011). Being a fan is not just about watching a game; it is about being part of something larger than oneself. This identification can lead to various behaviors, such as displaying team symbols, engaging in group rituals, and exhibiting in-group favoritism and out-group derogation (Cialdini et al., 1976). As Jenkinson and Collins (2022) argued, the emotional highs and lows experienced through team performance are often deeply intertwined with a fan's self-esteem.

Digital platforms like YouTube have created new arenas for the expression and reinforcement of social identities related to sports. Online fan communities allow individuals, regardless of geographical location, to connect with fellow supporters, share experiences, and affirm their collective identity (Lock & Filo, 2020). For a niche sport like indoor cricket in Bangladesh, YouTube can serve as a crucial space where fans connect, validate their interest in a less mainstream sport, and build a collective identity as "indoor cricket enthusiasts" or supporters of specific local teams or creators (Christie et al., 2023). Engagement behaviors on YouTube, such as participating in discussions, creating or sharing fan videos, and collectively supporting content creators, can strengthen these social bonds and reinforce the positive distinctiveness of their in-group, thereby fulfilling the motivations outlined by SIT. Understanding these identity-related processes is key to appreciating the depth of fan commitment and the role of digital platforms in nurturing it.

2.7 Conceptual Framework

To effectively guide this qualitative inquiry into the strategic utilization of YouTube for fan engagement and sports marketing of indoor cricket in Bangladesh, a conceptual framework is proposed. This framework, informed by the preceding literature review and the study's research questions, outlines the key variables and concepts, their presumed interconnections, and the contextual boundaries of the investigation (Mcburney & White, 2021). It serves not as a rigid model to be tested, but rather as an adaptable guide for data collection and analysis, helping to organize and interpret the rich qualitative data anticipated from diverse stakeholders (Mcburney & White, 2021).

The proposed conceptual framework for this study (which could be visualized as an interconnected diagram) revolves around several core components:

Key Stakeholders and Their Roles: At the center of the framework are the diverse stakeholders involved with indoor cricket in Bangladesh. These include officials (administrators, governing body representatives), marketing professionals (those responsible for promoting the sport), YouTube content creators (both official and independent), and engaged fans. The framework posits that each stakeholder group possesses unique perspectives, objectives, and strategies regarding the use of YouTube. Their actions, such as content production, strategic communication, platform management (by officials, marketers, creators), and content consumption and interaction (by fans), are central to the ecosystem.

YouTube Platform Strategies and Content: This component focuses on the specific ways YouTube is, or could be, strategically employed. It encompasses the types of content produced and shared (e.g., match highlights, full games, behind-the-scenes footage, player interviews, fan-generated content, tutorials), the utilization of YouTube's specific features (e.g., live streaming, VOD, community tab, analytics, monetization tools), and the overarching marketing and engagement strategies pursued by the stakeholders.

Fan Engagement Dynamics (Informed by UGT and SIT): The framework examines how the aforementioned YouTube strategies and content influence various dimensions of fan engagement – cognitive (knowledge, awareness), affective (emotions, loyalty, identity), and behavioral (views, likes, comments, shares, community participation).

- Drawing from **Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT)**, the framework suggests that fans actively select and engage with indoor cricket content on YouTube to satisfy specific needs (e.g., information, entertainment, social interaction, personal identity reinforcement). The strategies employed by content providers are thus assessed in terms of their ability to meet these gratifications.
- **Social Identity Theory (SIT)** informs the framework by highlighting how YouTube can foster a sense of community and collective identity among indoor cricket fans. Engagement on the platform—through discussions, shared experiences, and identification with the sport or specific fan groups facilitated by YouTube content—is seen as contributing to the fans' social identity.

Sports Marketing and Developmental Outcomes: The framework considers the intended or actual outcomes resulting from the strategic use of YouTube. These outcomes can include increased visibility and awareness for indoor cricket, enhanced brand image for the sport and associated entities, growth of the fan base, improved fan loyalty, potential for sponsorship and commercialization, and ultimately, the contribution to the overall development and sustainability of indoor cricket in Bangladesh.

Contextual Factors: Indoor Cricket in Bangladesh: All these interactions and processes are embedded within, and influenced by, the specific context of indoor cricket in Bangladesh. This includes the sport's current status as a niche sport, the existing sports culture, the digital media penetration and consumption habits within Bangladesh (as discussed in Section 2.5), and any relevant socio-economic or regulatory factors. These contextual elements are presumed to moderate the effectiveness of YouTube strategies and the nature of fan engagement.

Interrelationships within the Framework:

The framework posits a dynamic interplay between these components: Stakeholders develop and implement YouTube strategies (content and platform use). These strategies, when consumed by fans, lead to various forms of engagement, driven by motivations outlined by UGT and fostering identities as per SIT. This engagement, in turn, can lead to desired sports marketing and developmental outcomes. Feedback loops are also implied; for instance, fan engagement metrics and qualitative feedback can influence future content strategies. The overarching Bangladeshi context shapes every aspect of this process.

This conceptual framework will guide the formulation of interview questions for stakeholders and provide a structure for analyzing the qualitative data, allowing for an exploration of how these elements interact in practice to shape the role of YouTube in the ecosystem of indoor cricket in Bangladesh. The qualitative nature of the study means that this framework may also be refined or elaborated upon as emergent themes arise from the data.

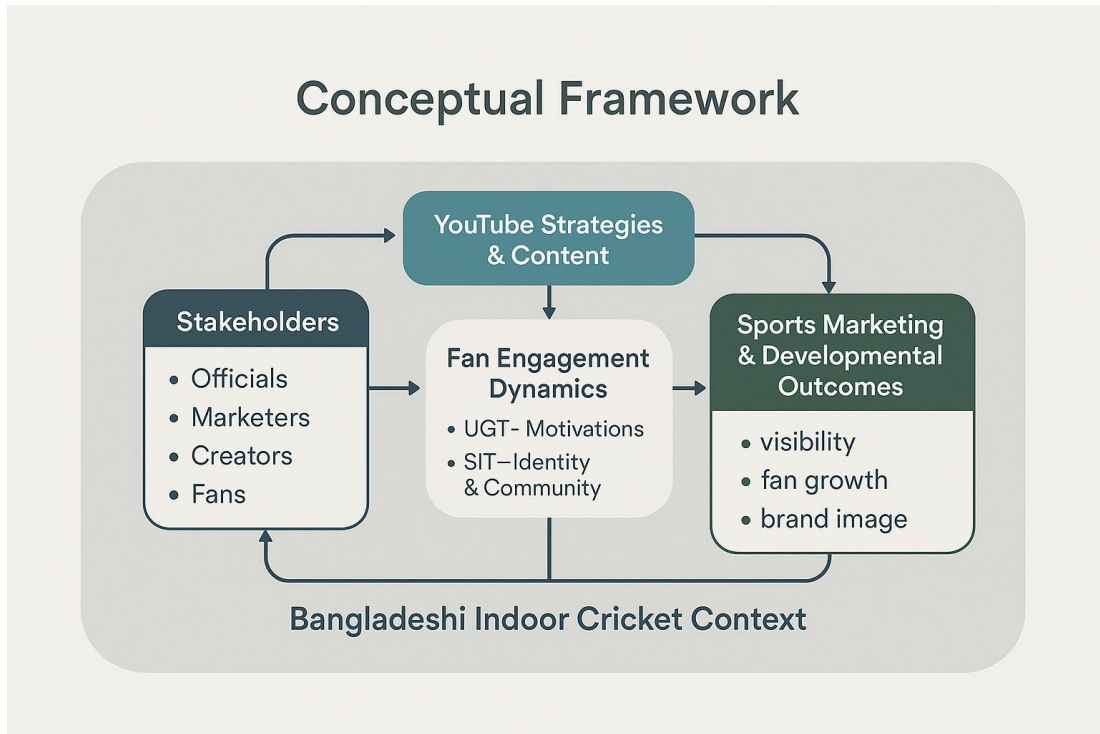


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework

3 Methodology

This chapter details the methodological framework underpinning this qualitative study, which investigates the strategic utilization of YouTube for fan engagement and sports marketing within the context of indoor cricket in Bangladesh. It meticulously outlines the systematic procedures undertaken to address the research questions and achieve the research objectives articulated in Chapter 1. This chapter begins by discussing the research philosophy that guides the inquiry, followed by the overall research approach and specific design employed. Subsequently, it describes the research setting, the population and sampling strategies used to select participants, and the methods employed for data collection. The procedures for qualitative data analysis are then explained, along with the strategies implemented to ensure the trustworthiness and rigor of the findings. The chapter also addresses the ethical considerations pertinent to this research and acknowledges the limitations inherent in the chosen methodology, concluding with a brief summary.

3.1 Research Philosophy

The methodological choices made in any research endeavor are fundamentally shaped by the researcher's underlying philosophical assumptions about the nature of reality (ontology), knowledge (epistemology), and the ways in which knowledge can be acquired (methodology) (Saunders et al., 2019). Understanding and articulating this research philosophy is crucial as it provides justification for the chosen research approach and methods (Crotty, 1998). This study, aiming to analyze how YouTube is utilized as a strategic tool for fan engagement and sports marketing within the context of indoor cricket in Bangladesh by exploring the perspectives of diverse stakeholders, adopts an interpretivist research philosophy.

Interpretivism, also closely associated with social constructivism or constructionism, posits that social reality is not objective and external, but is actively constructed and interpreted by individuals through their social interactions and experiences (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Unlike the positivist paradigm, which seeks to identify universal causal laws and objective facts often through quantitative measurement, interpretivism emphasizes the importance of understanding the subjective meanings, interpretations, and lived experiences of participants within their specific

contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Interpretivist researchers, therefore, aim to grasp the complexities of human experience from the participants' point of view, acknowledging that multiple realities and interpretations can coexist (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

The selection of an interpretivist philosophy is particularly pertinent for this research for several reasons. Firstly, the study seeks to understand the *perceptions, experiences, and meanings* that stakeholders (officials, marketers, content creators, and fans) attribute to the use of YouTube for indoor cricket in Bangladesh. These are inherently subjective and socially constructed phenomena. Secondly, the concepts of "fan engagement" and "effective utilization" of a platform like YouTube are not fixed but are interpreted and enacted differently by various individuals and groups within the specific cultural and social milieu of Bangladeshi indoor cricket (Given, 2008). An interpretivist approach allows for the exploration of these nuanced understandings. Thirdly, the research aims to gain deep, rich, and context-specific insights into a complex social phenomenon rather than generating generalizable statistical findings. As Merriam and Tisdell (2016) argued, interpretivism is well-suited for studies that explore how people make sense of their lives and experiences within specific settings.

Therefore, by adopting an interpretivist stance, this study acknowledges that the "reality" of YouTube's role in indoor cricket marketing and fan engagement in Bangladesh is shaped by the perspectives of those involved. This philosophical position naturally leads to the adoption of qualitative research methods, which are designed to capture these subjective meanings and provide an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in its natural setting, as will be further elaborated in the subsequent sections of this chapter.

3.2 Research Approach

Consistent with the interpretivist research philosophy articulated in the preceding section, this study employs a qualitative research approach to investigate the strategic utilization of YouTube for fan engagement and sports marketing of indoor cricket in Bangladesh. A qualitative approach is deemed most appropriate for this research as it aligns with the primary aim of gaining an in-depth, nuanced understanding of a complex social phenomenon from the perspectives of those directly involved (Creswell & Clark, 2017; Silverman, 2020). Unlike quantitative approaches that focus on numerical data and statistical generalization, qualitative research seeks to explore the richness, depth, and context of human experiences, meanings, and social processes (Merriam & Tisdell,

2016). This aligns perfectly with the study's objectives of exploring stakeholder perceptions, understanding diverse experiences, and identifying context-specific strategies related to YouTube's role in a niche sporting environment.

More specifically, this study can be characterized as a qualitative descriptive and exploratory inquiry, drawing upon elements commonly associated with an instrumental case study design (Yin, 2018). The "case" under investigation is the phenomenon of YouTube utilization for fan engagement and sports marketing within the specific bounded system of indoor cricket in Bangladesh. This approach allows for an intensive examination of this phenomenon in its real-world setting, facilitating a holistic understanding by drawing insights from multiple sources of evidence – namely, the different stakeholder groups (Patton, 2015). The exploratory nature of the study is suitable given the relatively nascent stage of research into digital media strategies for niche sports in developing countries like Bangladesh, aiming to uncover key themes, patterns, and insights rather than testing predefined hypotheses (Maxwell, 2013). The descriptive aspect focuses on providing a rich and detailed account of current practices, perceptions, benefits, and challenges as articulated by the participants.

The choice of this qualitative approach enables the researcher to delve deeply into the "how" and "why" questions central to the research, capturing the subtleties of stakeholder strategies, fan interactions, and the influence of the local context in ways that quantitative methods might not fully reveal (Pope & Mays, 2020). It provides the flexibility needed to explore emergent themes and gain a comprehensive understanding of the lived realities concerning YouTube's role in the ecosystem of indoor cricket in Bangladesh.

3.3 Research Design

This study employs a carefully structured qualitative research design to systematically investigate the strategic utilization of YouTube for fan engagement and sports marketing of indoor cricket in Bangladesh. The design serves as the overall blueprint for connecting the research questions to the empirical data collection and analysis phases, ensuring a coherent and rigorous inquiry (Maxwell, 2013). Building upon the interpretivist philosophy and the qualitative exploratory-descriptive approach outlined earlier, the design is tailored to facilitate an in-depth understanding of this contemporary phenomenon within its real-world context (Yin, 2018).

The research design is centered on an instrumental case study approach, where the "case" is the use of YouTube as a strategic tool within the bounded system of indoor cricket in Bangladesh (Stake, 1995). This design is particularly well-suited for this study because it allows for a holistic and intensive examination of a specific instance to understand a broader issue – in this case, how a digital platform can be leveraged for a niche sport in a developing country context (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The primary unit of analysis is the phenomenon of YouTube utilization itself, explored through the experiences, perceptions, strategies, and interactions of the key stakeholders involved.

This study adopts a cross-sectional design, with data being collected over a concentrated period to capture a contemporary snapshot of current practices, attitudes, and strategies related to YouTube and indoor cricket in Bangladesh. The research will primarily draw data from multiple qualitative sources, principally through in-depth interactions with the identified stakeholder groups: officials of Indoor Cricket Bangladesh, marketing professionals, YouTube content creators, and engaged fans. This multi-perspective approach is a key feature of case study designs, aiming to provide a rich and comprehensive understanding of the case (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

The overall research process incorporated in this design involves several key phases. Following an extensive review of relevant literature (as detailed in Chapter 2), the design encompasses gaining access to participants, collecting qualitative data through appropriate methods (detailed in Section 3.6), systematically analyzing this data (detailed in Section 3.7), and then interpreting the findings in relation to the research questions and existing knowledge. This iterative process, characteristic of qualitative research, allows for flexibility and responsiveness to emerging insights during the research journey (Charmaz, 2014). The chosen design is thus intended to provide a robust framework for generating rich, contextualized insights that address the core objectives of this study.

3.4 Research Setting

This study is situated within the dynamic and evolving context of indoor cricket in Bangladesh, focusing specifically on its engagement and marketing activities as manifested on the digital platform YouTube. Bangladesh, a nation with a profound passion for sports, particularly mainstream cricket, provides a unique setting to explore the challenges and opportunities faced by an emerging niche sport like indoor cricket as it endeavors to establish its presence and cultivate a dedicated following

(Christie et al., 2023). The research setting therefore encompasses both the physical and organizational aspects of indoor cricket in Bangladesh and the virtual environment of YouTube where its digital footprint is being created and expanded.

The investigation will primarily focus on activities, perceptions, and strategies related to indoor cricket as it is played, promoted, and consumed within Bangladesh. This includes understanding the operational environment of any formal or informal bodies governing or promoting indoor cricket in the country, such as Indoor Cricket Bangladesh, and the broader ecosystem of players, coaches, and enthusiasts. The digital component of the setting is centered on YouTube as a global platform, but the research will specifically examine its application and reception within the Bangladeshi digital landscape, considering local internet usage patterns, content preferences, and language considerations (BTRC, 2024).

The choice of this particular setting is deliberate. Indoor cricket in Bangladesh represents a pertinent case of a niche sport attempting to leverage modern digital tools for growth in a developing country context that is characterized by both immense sporting enthusiasm and rapid digital adoption. This setting offers a rich opportunity to explore the practical application of digital marketing and fan engagement theories in a non-mainstream sporting environment, allowing for the generation of contextually relevant insights. The online nature of YouTube also means that part of the research setting is virtual, involving the observation and understanding of interactions and content within this digital space as it relates to Bangladeshi indoor cricket. Access to relevant stakeholders and an understanding of this specific context are crucial for addressing the research questions effectively.

3.5 Population and Sampling

This section outlines the population of interest for this qualitative study and describes the sampling strategies employed to select participants who can provide rich, relevant information to address the research questions. In qualitative research, the emphasis is not on statistical representativeness but on selecting information-rich cases that can offer deep insights into the phenomenon under investigation (Patton, 2015). The aim is to achieve depth of understanding from individuals who have firsthand experience or specific knowledge related to the strategic use of YouTube for indoor cricket in Bangladesh.

The target population for this study comprises key stakeholder groups directly involved with or actively engaged in the ecosystem of indoor cricket in Bangladesh, particularly in relation to its presence and promotion on YouTube. These groups include officials of Indoor Cricket Bangladesh, defined as individuals in leadership, administrative, or developmental roles within any formal or recognized governing bodies or key organizations responsible for the sport, who have been in a relevant position for at least one year and possess knowledge of the sport's marketing or digital media strategies. Another key group is marketing professionals, consisting of individuals with professional experience in sports marketing, digital marketing, or brand promotion within Bangladesh, with a preference for those experienced with sports organizations or social media platforms like YouTube. Furthermore, YouTube content creators who actively produce and disseminate content related to indoor cricket in Bangladesh on YouTube, whether affiliated with official channels or operating as independent creators with a consistent output, form part of the target population. Finally, engaged fans, identified as individuals who actively consume and interact with indoor cricket content on YouTube within the Bangladeshi context (e.g., through regular viewing, commenting, liking, sharing, or subscribing), are also central to this study. Participants are selected based on their capacity to provide valuable insights, while exclusion criteria ensure focus by omitting those with no direct involvement or experience relevant to the study's core questions.

To recruit participants from these diverse stakeholder groups, a purposive sampling strategy is primarily employed (Miles et al., 2020). This involves intentionally selecting participants who have particular knowledge, experience, or perspectives directly relevant to the strategic use of YouTube for indoor cricket in Bangladesh (Creswell & Poth, 2018), thereby ensuring the data collected is rich and pertinent. Different types of purposive sampling, such as criterion sampling and maximum variation sampling, are considered to enhance the breadth and depth of understanding (Patton, 2015). In addition to purposive sampling, snowball sampling is utilized as a supplementary strategy, particularly for identifying specific YouTube content creators or highly engaged fans who may not be easily identifiable through initial contacts. This combined approach aids in accessing a diverse and knowledgeable group of participants.

Regarding sample size, this qualitative study does not prescribe a fixed number in advance, as the focus is on informational adequacy and depth of understanding rather than statistical power. Instead, the sample size is guided by the principle of data saturation, the point at which collecting

further data yields no new or minimal additional insights or themes relevant to the research questions. While flexible, it is anticipated that a suitable number of participants will be recruited from each stakeholder group to ensure a range of perspectives is captured, with data collection continuing iteratively alongside preliminary analysis until saturation is evident. The emphasis throughout is placed on the richness and quality of the data provided by each participant, ensuring the final sample is sufficient to provide a comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the research topic.

3.6 Data Collection

The collection of rich and relevant data is paramount to achieving the objectives of this qualitative study. This section details the primary methods employed for gathering information from participants, the process of developing the necessary research instruments, the procedures followed during data collection, and considerations related to pilot testing. The overarching aim of the data collection phase is to capture the nuanced perspectives and experiences of stakeholders regarding the strategic use of YouTube for indoor cricket in Bangladesh.

The primary method for data collection in this research is semi-structured interviews with the identified key stakeholders: officials of Indoor Cricket Bangladesh, marketing professionals, YouTube content creators, and engaged fans. This method is chosen for its ability to provide in-depth insights into individual perspectives, experiences, and the meanings they attribute to the phenomenon under study (Saunders et al., 2019). Semi-structured interviews offer a balance between a predetermined set of guiding questions, ensuring consistency across topics, and the flexibility to probe deeper into emergent themes and allow participants to elaborate on issues they deem important (Saunders et al., 2019). This flexibility is crucial for exploring the complexities of YouTube utilization and fan engagement in a context-specific manner. While interviews form the core, a secondary review of publicly available documents or relevant YouTube channel content may be undertaken to complement and contextualize interview data where appropriate.

To guide the semi-structured interviews, an interview guide was developed. This guide was carefully constructed based on the research questions outlined in Chapter 1, the key concepts identified in the literature review (Chapter 2), and the study's conceptual framework. The guide consists of open-ended questions designed to encourage participants to share their experiences and viewpoints freely, along with prompts to explore specific areas of interest in more detail (Patton, 2015). The

questions focus on current YouTube practices, perceived benefits and challenges, strategies for engagement and marketing, and suggestions for optimization, tailored to the specific stakeholder group being interviewed.

The data collection procedure involves several steps. Initial contact with potential participants is made through official channels where possible (e.g., for officials), direct outreach (e.g., for content creators identified on YouTube), or through professional networks and snowball referrals. Prior to each interview, prospective participants receive detailed information about the study's purpose, the nature of their involvement, confidentiality measures, and their right to withdraw, after which informed consent is formally obtained (this process is further detailed in Section 3.9 Ethical Considerations). The interviews are conducted at a time and location convenient for the participants, or via online video conferencing tools, depending on preference and feasibility. It is anticipated that each interview will last approximately 60-90 minutes and, with participant permission, will be audio-recorded to ensure accurate capture of the dialogue for subsequent transcription and analysis. Field notes may also be taken during or immediately after interviews to record contextual details or emergent thoughts.

Before commencing the main data collection, a pilot study involving a small number of participants representative of the different stakeholder groups is planned. The purpose of this pilot phase is to test the clarity and effectiveness of the interview guide, refine question wording, assess the anticipated duration of interviews, and allow the researcher to practice and improve interviewing techniques. Feedback from pilot participants will be used to make necessary revisions to the interview guide, ensuring its suitability for the main study. Data from pilot interviews may be included in the final dataset if no significant changes are made to the guide as a result of the pilot testing.

3.7 Data Analysis

Following the collection of qualitative data, a systematic and rigorous analysis process is undertaken to derive meaningful insights and address the research questions. This section outlines the procedures for data preparation, the specific qualitative data analysis strategy adopted – namely thematic analysis – and considerations for data management. The goal is to transform the rich, raw data into a coherent and insightful interpretation of how YouTube is strategically utilized for fan engagement and sports marketing of indoor cricket in Bangladesh.

The initial stage of data analysis involves data preparation. All audio-recorded interviews are transcribed verbatim to create accurate textual records of the participant dialogues. During transcription, care is taken to capture not only the spoken words but also any significant non-verbal cues or emphases noted during the interview. To ensure participant confidentiality, all transcripts and associated data are anonymized by removing or pseudonymizing any identifying information. Once transcribed and anonymized, the researcher engages in a process of familiarization by repeatedly reading the transcripts and listening to the audio recordings, thereby immersing themselves in the data to gain a holistic understanding before formal coding begins (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

This study employs thematic analysis as the primary strategy for analyzing the qualitative data. Thematic analysis is a flexible and widely used method for identifying, analyzing, organizing, describing, and reporting patterns (themes) within qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It is particularly well-suited for this study as it allows for the exploration of diverse perspectives across different stakeholder groups and can provide rich, detailed, and complex accounts of the phenomenon. This research specifically adopts the six-phase approach to thematic analysis as outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006):

1. **Familiarization with the data:** This phase requires thoroughly engaging with the data by reading it multiple times and jotting down any preliminary thoughts or observations.
2. **Generating initial codes:** This step involves methodically identifying and labeling noteworthy aspects throughout all the data, and then grouping related data segments under each label. These initial codes serve as the foundational elements from which themes will later be constructed.
3. **Searching for themes:** In this phase, the previously generated codes are organized into possible overarching themes, and all data pertinent to each of these potential themes is collected. The process focuses on identifying more comprehensive patterns of meaning within the dataset.
4. **Reviewing potential themes:** This stage involves assessing the identified themes against both the specific coded data segments and the complete dataset to ensure they are well-supported and coherent. During this review, themes can be improved, merged with others, broken down into smaller themes, or eliminated if not suitable.
5. **Defining and naming themes:** Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells; generating clear definitions and names for each theme.

6. **Producing the report:** The final phase, involving the selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, and producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

Throughout this process, an inductive approach to theme development is primarily adopted, allowing themes to emerge directly from the data, while also being informed by the concepts in the research questions and the conceptual framework (Boyatzis, 1998).

For data management, all collected data, including audio recordings, anonymized transcripts, field notes, and consent forms, are organized systematically and stored securely on password-protected devices and encrypted cloud storage to maintain confidentiality and ensure data integrity. The use of qualitative data analysis software (QDAS) such as NVivo may be considered to assist with data organization, storage, coding, and retrieval, thereby enhancing the efficiency and rigor of the analysis process (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). This systematic approach to data management and analysis is crucial for producing credible and trustworthy research findings.

3.8 Ensuring Trustworthiness and Rigor

Establishing the trustworthiness and rigor of findings is a critical aspect of qualitative inquiry, ensuring that the research is conducted soundly and that the conclusions drawn are credible and reflective of the participants' realities. In contrast to quantitative notions of validity and reliability, qualitative research employs distinct criteria to demonstrate the quality and integrity of the study. This research will adhere to several established strategies to enhance its trustworthiness, encompassing credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and the practice of reflexivity.

Credibility, which refers to confidence in the truth value of the research findings and their accurate representation of the participants' perspectives, will be addressed through several means. This includes prolonged engagement with the subject matter through extensive literature review and careful preparation for data collection. During interviews, persistent observation and active listening will be employed to understand nuances. Furthermore, triangulation of data sources will be sought by gathering perspectives from different stakeholder groups (officials, marketers, content creators, fans), allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon (Patton, 2015). Peer debriefing, involving discussions of emerging findings and interpretations with academic colleagues

or supervisors, will provide an external check on the research process and analytical choices. Additionally, member checking or respondent validation may be employed, where feasible, by sharing summaries of interview findings or interpretations with participants to verify their accuracy and resonance with their experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Transferability, or the extent to which the findings of this study can be applied to other contexts or settings, will be facilitated by providing thick description (Geertz, 1973). This involves offering detailed, rich descriptions of the research setting (indoor cricket in Bangladesh, YouTube platform), the participants, the data collection process, and the emergent findings. This allows readers to make informed judgments about the applicability of the findings to other, similar situations, rather than the study claiming universal generalizability.

Dependability, which concerns the consistency and repeatability of the research process and findings, will be established by maintaining a clear and detailed audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This involves meticulous record-keeping of all phases of the research, including methodological decisions, data collection procedures, interview transcripts, data analysis steps, and coding frameworks. Such transparency allows others to scrutinize the research process and understand how the conclusions were reached.

Confirmability relates to the objectivity of the findings, ensuring they are grounded in the data and experiences of the participants rather than the biases or perspectives of the researcher. This is closely linked to dependability and is also supported by the audit trail and the practice of reflexivity. Triangulation of perspectives from different stakeholders also contributes to confirmability by ensuring that findings are not based on a single, potentially biased source.

Finally, reflexivity will be an ongoing practice throughout the research process. This involves the researcher critically examining their own assumptions, biases, background, and potential influence on the research, from the formulation of questions to the interpretation of data and reporting of findings (Finlay, 2002). Maintaining a reflexive journal and engaging in critical self-reflection will help to identify and mitigate potential biases, thereby enhancing the overall integrity and trustworthiness of the research.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

Conducting research in an ethical manner is a fundamental responsibility, ensuring the protection, dignity, and rights of all participants involved (Flick, 2018). This study is committed to upholding the highest ethical standards throughout its design and execution. Key ethical considerations that are addressed include obtaining informed consent, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity, managing data storage securely, and acknowledging researcher positionality. Ethical approval from the relevant institutional review board (IRB) or ethics committee will be sought and adhered to before any data collection commences.

The principle of informed consent will be paramount. Potential participants will be provided with comprehensive information about the research in a clear and understandable manner. This includes details about the study's purpose, the nature of their voluntary participation, the procedures involved (e.g., interviews, audio recording), the anticipated time commitment, any potential minimal risks or benefits, their right to ask questions, and their right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Written or recorded verbal consent will be obtained from each participant before their involvement in data collection, ensuring they have made a voluntary and informed decision to participate (Orb et al., 2001).

Confidentiality and anonymity of participants will be strictly maintained to protect their privacy. All data collected, including interview transcripts and audio recordings, will be anonymized using pseudonyms or codes. Any identifying information will be removed from final reports and publications to ensure that individuals cannot be linked to specific responses unless explicit permission is given for attribution in specific, agreed-upon circumstances (e.g., for public figures discussing their official roles, if they consent). Participants will be informed about the measures taken to protect their identity.

Secure data storage and security protocols will be implemented. All digital data, including audio files and anonymized transcripts, will be stored on password-protected computers and encrypted cloud-based storage accessible only to the researcher (and potentially supervisors, as per institutional guidelines). Physical data, such as signed consent forms, will be stored securely in locked cabinets. Data will be retained for the period stipulated by institutional policy and then disposed of securely.

Finally, researcher positionality and the potential for bias will be critically examined throughout the study, linking closely with the practice of reflexivity discussed under trustworthiness. The researcher will acknowledge their own background, experiences, and perspectives that might influence the research process, from interactions with participants to the interpretation of data. Efforts will be made to maintain neutrality during interviews and to ensure that findings are a fair representation of the participants' views, rather than a reflection of the researcher's preconceptions (Saunders et al., 2019). Any potential power dynamics between the researcher and participants will also be considered and managed sensitively. The study aims to minimize any potential risks to participants, which are anticipated to be minimal and primarily related to time commitment or slight discomfort discussing certain professional experiences, by ensuring a supportive and respectful research environment.

3.10 Limitations of the Methodology

While the qualitative methodology employed in this study is well-suited to achieving its exploratory and descriptive aims, it is important to acknowledge certain inherent limitations. Recognizing these limitations allows for a more nuanced understanding of the study's scope and findings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Firstly, the findings of this qualitative research, while rich in context and depth, are not intended for broad statistical generalization to wider populations in the way quantitative studies might allow. The focus is on understanding the specific phenomenon of YouTube utilization for indoor cricket in Bangladesh through the perspectives of the selected participants; transferability to other contexts must be considered carefully by the reader, based on the thick description provided (Patton, 2015). Secondly, despite rigorous efforts to ensure trustworthiness and practice reflexivity, the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and interpretation. As such, the potential for researcher influence or unconscious bias, though actively mitigated, cannot be entirely eliminated (Silverman, 2020).

Furthermore, the insights gathered are dependent on the recall, articulateness, and willingness of the participants to share their experiences and perspectives openly. While purposive sampling aims to select information-rich participants, the specific individuals included will inevitably have unique viewpoints that may not encompass all possible perspectives within the broader stakeholder groups. The cross-sectional nature of the data collection provides a snapshot in time; the dynamic nature of digital platforms like YouTube and the sports marketing landscape means that strategies

and perceptions may evolve beyond the timeframe of this study. Finally, like all research, this study operates within certain time and resource constraints, which may place practical limits on the number of participants or the extent of engagement possible. These limitations are acknowledged to provide a balanced view of the research process and its outcomes.

3.11 Chapter Summary

This chapter has meticulously detailed the methodological framework adopted for this qualitative investigation into the strategic utilization of YouTube for fan engagement and sports marketing of indoor cricket in Bangladesh. It commenced by articulating the interpretivist research philosophy that underpins the study, leading to the selection of a qualitative research approach with an exploratory-descriptive design, drawing on elements of a case study. The specific research setting of indoor cricket in Bangladesh and the YouTube platform was described, followed by an explanation of the population and the purposive and snowball sampling strategies employed for participant selection. The chapter then outlined the primary data collection methods, focusing on semi-structured interviews and the development of an interview guide, along with the procedures for gathering data. Subsequently, the systematic process for data analysis, centered on thematic analysis, was presented, including steps for data preparation and management. Efforts to ensure the trustworthiness and rigor of the study, encompassing credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability, and reflexivity, were detailed. Furthermore, the key ethical considerations guiding the research, such as informed consent, confidentiality, and researcher positionality, were thoroughly addressed. Finally, the limitations inherent in the chosen methodology were acknowledged. This comprehensive methodological foundation is designed to ensure that the research is conducted systematically and ethically, providing a robust basis for the presentation and discussion of findings in the subsequent chapters. The next chapter, Chapter 4, will present the analysis of the empirical findings derived from the application of these methods.

4 Analysis

This chapter presents the empirical findings derived from the qualitative data collected for this study, which seeks to explore the strategic utilization of YouTube for fan engagement and sports marketing in the context of indoor cricket in Bangladesh. The primary purpose here is to systematically present and analyze the perceptions, experiences, and insights shared by the key stakeholders involved in this specific sporting ecosystem. By delving into the lived realities and viewpoints of these individuals, this chapter aims to provide a rich, detailed answer to the research questions that guide this investigation.

As outlined in Chapter 1, this study is driven by the following research questions:

- **RQ1:** How do stakeholders (officials, marketing professionals, content creators, and fans) currently perceive and utilize YouTube for fan engagement and sports marketing in the context of indoor cricket in Bangladesh?
- **RQ2:** What are the perceived benefits and challenges of using YouTube as a strategic tool for enhancing fan engagement and achieving sports marketing goals for indoor cricket in Bangladesh, according to key stakeholders?
- **RQ3:** What strategies could be developed or optimized for YouTube to more effectively foster fan engagement and support sports marketing objectives for indoor cricket in Bangladesh, considering the perspectives of diverse stakeholders?

To address these questions, this research adopted a qualitative research design, employing semi-structured interviews as the primary method for data collection. These interviews were conducted with participants representing four distinct stakeholder groups: officials involved in indoor cricket administration, marketing professionals, active YouTube content creators, and engaged fans. The data gathered from these interviews were then subjected to a rigorous thematic analysis, following the six-phase approach outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006).

The subsequent sections of this chapter will detail these findings. It begins with a brief profile of the study's participants (Section 4.1), followed by an in-depth presentation and analysis of the key themes that emerged from the data (Section 4.2). These themes are structured to align directly with the research questions, providing a clear and comprehensive picture of the current landscape, benefits, challenges, and potential strategies related to YouTube's role in the promotion and engagement surrounding indoor cricket in Bangladesh.

4.1 Profile of Participants

This section provides an overview of the participants who contributed their valuable insights to this study. In line with the purposive and snowball sampling strategies outlined in Chapter 3, individuals were selected based on their direct involvement with or active engagement in the indoor cricket ecosystem in Bangladesh, particularly concerning its YouTube presence. The selection aimed to capture a diverse range of perspectives from the key stakeholder groups identified for this research. Data collection continued until a point of data saturation was reached, indicating that further interviews were yielding minimal new insights.

A total of 23 individuals participated in the semi-structured interviews. Table 1 provides a summary of the participants, categorized by their respective stakeholder groups and assigned anonymous codes to ensure confidentiality throughout this analysis.

Table 1 Summary of Study Participants by Stakeholder Group

Stakeholder Group	Number of Participants	Assigned Codes
Officials	4	Official_01 to Official_04
Marketing Professionals	5	MP_01 to MP_05
YouTube Content Creators	6	Creator_01 to Creator_06
Engaged Fans	8	Fan_01 to Fan_08
Total	23	

A brief description of each stakeholder group is provided below:

- **Officials:** This group consisted of four individuals holding key administrative, leadership, or developmental roles within organizations associated with indoor cricket in Bangladesh. Their

experience provided insights into the strategic direction, challenges, and aspirations for the sport's growth, including its digital media outlook.

- **Marketing Professionals:** Five participants with professional experience in sports marketing and digital media within Bangladesh contributed their perspectives. Their insights focused on branding, promotion, audience engagement tactics, and the commercial realities of leveraging platforms like YouTube for a niche sport.
- **YouTube Content Creators:** Six individuals who actively produce and manage YouTube channels featuring indoor cricket content were interviewed. This group included both those affiliated with official or semi-official bodies and independent creators, offering a view from the content production frontlines, including creative processes and audience interaction.
- **Engaged Fans:** Eight individuals identified as active consumers and interactors with indoor cricket content on YouTube formed this group. Their perspectives were crucial for understanding audience motivations (linking to UGT and SIT), content preferences, platform experiences, and the nature of digital fan communities.

This diverse range of participants provided the rich, multi-faceted data that forms the basis of the thematic analysis presented in the following section.

4.2 Presentation and Analysis of Key Themes

This section forms the core of Chapter 4, presenting the key themes identified through the thematic analysis of the interview data. These themes represent the collective and distinct perspectives of the officials, marketing professionals, YouTube content creators, and engaged fans involved with indoor cricket in Bangladesh. Within each theme, we will explore the viewpoints shared by the different stakeholder groups, substantiated by illustrative quotes from the participants (using the anonymous codes introduced in Table 4.1), and analyzed in relation to the study's research questions.

4.2.1 Theme 1: Current Perceptions and Utilization of YouTube for Indoor Cricket in Bangladesh

This first theme directly addresses the initial research question (RQ1) by exploring how the different stakeholder groups currently perceive the role and value of YouTube for indoor cricket in Bangla-

desh, and how they are, or are not, utilizing the platform. A clear pattern emerged indicating a general acknowledgement of YouTube's *potential*, but a significant variance in current strategic utilization and perceived effectiveness across the groups.

Officials involved in the administration of indoor cricket generally recognized YouTube as a potentially valuable platform for increasing the sport's visibility. Their perspectives often highlighted the platform's reach, especially among younger demographics, as a key advantage. One official stated:

"YouTube is, of course, very important. Everyone is on YouTube now, especially the youth. We can show matches, we can show our players... it gives us reach we cannot get otherwise." (Official_03)

However, this acknowledgement of potential was often coupled with an admission that current utilization is limited and lacks a cohesive strategy. Activities tend to be sporadic – occasional uploads of tournament footage or sharing links – rather than part of a planned communication effort. The primary perception leans towards YouTube as a simple broadcasting tool rather than an interactive engagement platform. Resource constraints were frequently cited as a major barrier:

"We know we should do more. We see what other big sports do. But who will do it? We don't have a dedicated media team; we don't have the budget for professional cameras and editing. It's a challenge." (Official_01)

This indicates a gap between recognizing YouTube's potential and possessing the resources and strategic knowledge to fully implement it at the administrative level.

Marketing Professionals, in contrast to officials, viewed the current state of YouTube utilization for indoor cricket with a more critical eye, emphasizing the significant *untapped potential*. They universally perceived YouTube as a critical platform, especially for a niche sport needing cost-effective reach and brand building. Their focus was firmly on the lack of a coherent strategy. One professional commented:

"The potential is massive, absolutely massive. But just uploading raw footage isn't a strategy. Where's the storytelling? Where's the consistent branding? Where is the call to action? It's a missed opportunity right now." (MP_02)

Marketing professionals stressed the need for high-quality, engaging content tailored to the YouTube audience, rather than simply repurposing content from other sources. They saw YouTube not just as a video player but as an interactive community hub.

"You need to understand the platform. It's not TV. You need shorts, you need behind-the-scenes, you need Q&As, you need to talk with the fans, not just at them. Right now, the approach seems very traditional and one-way." (MP_04)

Their perception was one of frustration at the slow adoption of modern digital marketing practices but also optimism that, with the right approach, YouTube could significantly boost indoor cricket's profile and commercial viability in Bangladesh.

YouTube Content Creators provided a ground-level perspective on the day-to-day realities of utilizing the platform. Their passion for indoor cricket was evident, but so were the significant challenges they face. Current utilization involves a mix of match highlights (often sourced opportunistically), player interviews, basic analysis, and sometimes vlogs or fan-centric discussions. Independent creators, in particular, highlighted resource limitations:

"I love indoor cricket and want more people to see it. I try to make highlights or talk about matches, but I do it all myself with my phone and basic software. Getting good footage is the hardest part, and then finding time to edit... it's a passion project, not a job." (Creator_05)

Even creators with some affiliation faced hurdles. They perceived YouTube as essential for reaching fans but struggled with consistency and audience growth due to factors like unpredictable match schedules, limited access to players, and the challenge of creating engaging content with minimal support.

"We try to post regularly, but it's tough. We need more support. And the YouTube algorithm... it's hard to get noticed when you're a small sport. But we know the fans are there, they comment, they ask for more." (Creator_03)

Their view underscored the gap between the desire to leverage YouTube effectively and the practical constraints faced by those actually producing the content.

Finally, Engaged Fans confirmed the importance of YouTube as a primary source for indoor cricket content, especially given the limited mainstream media coverage. Their utilization patterns revealed a strong desire for match highlights, full-match replays (when available), and content that helps them feel closer to the players and the sport.

"YouTube is how I follow indoor cricket. I can't always go to games, and it's not on TV much. I search for highlights after every big match. I wish there were more full matches uploaded." (Fan_06)

Fans perceived YouTube as a vital hub, but many expressed a desire for *more* content and *higher quality* productions. They appreciate the efforts of creators but notice the difference compared to mainstream sports channels. Their engagement is driven by a mix of information-seeking (understanding the game, following results) and affective needs (passion, supporting their teams/players), aligning with UGT. The comment sections were seen as important, albeit sometimes flawed, spaces for interaction, reflecting SIT aspects:

"I watch the videos, and I always read the comments to see what other fans are saying. Sometimes we debate, sometimes we just celebrate. It makes you feel part of it. But we need more official channels and better quality videos." (Fan_02)

While all stakeholder groups see YouTube as relevant and potentially powerful for indoor cricket in Bangladesh, the current reality reflects an under-resourced and under-strategized approach. There is a clear demand from fans and a recognition of potential from officials and marketers, but content creators face significant hurdles, resulting in a gap between aspiration and actual implementation.

4.2.2 Theme 2: Perceived Benefits of YouTube for Indoor Cricket

Despite the challenges identified in current utilization, a strong consensus emerged across all stakeholder groups regarding the significant potential benefits of strategically leveraging YouTube for indoor cricket in Bangladesh. This theme explores these perceived advantages, which span from fundamental visibility to community building and commercial opportunities, directly addressing a key part of the second research question (RQ2).

Enhanced Visibility and Audience Reach was the most frequently cited benefit. Participants universally acknowledged YouTube's power to transcend geographical limitations and traditional media

gatekeepers, offering a direct channel to a potentially vast audience, both within Bangladesh and internationally. For a niche sport like indoor cricket, this accessibility is seen as paramount. An official emphasized this point:

"Indoor cricket is played well here, but many people don't know it exists. Mainstream media won't cover us much. YouTube allows us to bypass that – we can show our game to anyone, anywhere, with an internet connection. This is vital for awareness." (Official_02)

A content creator echoed this sentiment, noting the platform's role in discovery:

"My channel gets views from outside Dhaka, even some from other countries. People find us by searching for 'cricket'. It proves there's an interest out there; we just need to reach them, and YouTube is the best way." (Creator_01)

Facilitating Fan Community Building and Interaction was another key benefit identified, particularly by fans and content creators, though marketers also saw its strategic value. YouTube's interactive features – comments, live chats, the community tab – are perceived as crucial tools for fostering a sense of belonging among enthusiasts. A fan described their experience:

"Watching a game highlight is one thing, but discussing a shot or a decision with other fans in the comments... that makes you feel connected. It's like our own small community online, which is great because not many of my friends follow indoor cricket closely." (Fan_07)

Content creators recognized this interactive element as a way to build a loyal audience. They saw value in responding to comments and creating content based on fan feedback, turning passive viewers into an active community, a sentiment aligning with Social Identity Theory (SIT).

"When fans comment and I reply, or when they suggest a video idea and I make it, it builds loyalty. They feel part of the channel, part of the sport. That interaction is gold." (Creator_04)

Opportunities for Marketing, Promotion, and Brand Building were strongly emphasized by marketing professionals, although officials and creators also recognized this potential. YouTube provides a

platform to not only showcase the sport but also to build its brand image, attract sponsors, and potentially create revenue streams. A marketing professional explained:

"If done right, a strong YouTube channel can be a major asset for attracting sponsors. You can offer branded content, show audience demographics... it makes the sport look professional and forward-thinking. It's about building an entire brand ecosystem, not just showing matches." (MP_01)

This includes promoting upcoming tournaments, selling merchandise (via links), and building profiles for players and teams, thereby increasing their marketability and fan following.

Finally, the Educational Potential of YouTube was noted, particularly by officials and fans. The platform can serve as an effective tool for explaining the rules and nuances of indoor cricket – a sport less understood than its traditional counterpart – thereby lowering the barrier to entry for new fans.

"Many people don't understand how indoor cricket differs... the scoring, the nets. We can use YouTube for short, engaging videos explaining the rules, showing skills. It helps in developing new fans and even new players." (Official_04)

A fan confirmed this, adding:

"I learned a lot about the specific rules by watching some analysis videos on YouTube. It helped me appreciate the game more." (Fan_05)

These perceived benefits collectively paint a picture of YouTube as a multi-faceted tool with the potential to significantly contribute to the growth, engagement, and sustainability of indoor cricket in Bangladesh, provided the identified challenges can be overcome.

4.2.3 Theme 3: Key Challenges in Leveraging YouTube Effectively

While the benefits of using YouTube were widely acknowledged, participants across all groups were equally vocal about the significant challenges they encounter. This theme delves into these obstacles, which range from fundamental resource issues to the complexities of content creation and platform navigation, providing crucial context for the second part of RQ2. These challenges often represent the gap between recognizing YouTube's potential and successfully realizing it.

Resource Limitations emerged as arguably the most pervasive challenge, mentioned by almost every participant in some form. This encompassed a lack of financial investment, technical equipment, and skilled human resources. Officials, as previously noted, felt constrained by tight budgets. Content creators felt this most acutely on a practical level:

"Professional cameras, microphones, editing software – these things cost money. We are mostly doing this out of passion. We can't compete with the production quality of major sports. Even getting good internet for uploading can be an issue sometimes."

(Creator_06)

Marketing professionals saw this not just as a production issue but as a strategic one, highlighting the need for investment to achieve professional results:

"You can't expect high-level marketing outcomes with zero budget. There needs to be an understanding [from administrators] that investing in quality digital content isn't a luxury; it's essential for growth, especially for a niche sport." (MP_03)

Closely linked to resources is the challenge of **Content Creation and Consistency**. Producing a steady stream of engaging, high-quality video content demands significant time, effort, and creativity – resources often in short supply. Fans noticed the impact of this:

"Sometimes a channel will post a lot during a tournament, which is great, but then for weeks or months, there's nothing new. It's hard to stay engaged when the content isn't consistent." (Fan_03)

Creators spoke of the pressure to produce content while often juggling other jobs or responsibilities, and the difficulty in finding new angles or accessing players and events to create fresh material. An official also touched upon the uncertainty:

"Beyond match highlights, what else should we be showing? We need ideas, and we need people who can turn those ideas into good videos regularly." (Official_01)

Difficulties in Growing and Engaging Audiences represented another major hurdle. Despite the platform's potential reach, simply uploading videos does not guarantee an audience. Creators expressed frustration with slow subscriber growth and the effort required to promote their content.

"Building an audience is slow. You post a video, share it everywhere, but maybe only a few hundred people see it. It can be discouraging. Getting people to like, comment, and share takes a lot of work." (Creator_02)

Marketers pointed to the intense competition on YouTube, not just from other sports but from all forms of entertainment, making it difficult for a niche sport to cut through the noise without a targeted and engaging strategy.

Furthermore, Monetization Hurdles and Sustainability Concerns were prominent, especially for creators and officials. The prospect of generating significant revenue directly from YouTube through ads or memberships seems distant for most, making it difficult to justify financial investment or dedicate full-time effort.

"The ad revenue is almost nothing for a small channel like ours. Sponsorship is the only real hope, but it's hard to attract sponsors for indoor cricket content unless you have big viewing numbers, which is hard to get... it's a catch-22." (Creator_06)

Finally, Navigating Platform Dynamics, particularly YouTube's algorithms and policies, was seen as a challenge. Understanding how to optimize videos for discovery (SEO) and adapt to frequent changes in how YouTube promotes content requires expertise that many participants felt they lacked.

"YouTube keeps changing how things work. One month your views are okay, the next they drop, and you don't know why. Understanding SEO and analytics is a whole other skill set." (MP_05)

These intertwined challenges illustrate that while YouTube offers a powerful platform, effectively harnessing it for a niche sport like indoor cricket in Bangladesh requires overcoming significant resource, strategic, and operational obstacles.

4.2.4 Theme 4: Proposed Strategies for Optimized YouTube Utilization

Flowing naturally from the discussions on benefits and challenges, the final theme captures the diverse range of strategies and recommendations put forward by stakeholders. This theme directly addresses the third research question (RQ3), offering potential pathways for more effectively harnessing YouTube to foster fan engagement and achieve sports marketing objectives for indoor

cricket in Bangladesh. The suggestions spanned content creation, community management, marketing initiatives, and resource mobilization.

A primary focus was on Recommendations for Content Development and Diversity. Participants felt that moving beyond basic highlights was essential. Fans, in particular, expressed a strong desire for a wider variety of content formats.

"We love highlights, but we want more. Maybe live streams of important matches, even with basic commentary? Or 'behind the scenes' with the players, their training, their stories. That would make us feel much closer." (Fan_01)

Content creators and marketing professionals suggested leveraging YouTube's different features more effectively, including the creation of YouTube Shorts for quick, engaging moments and tutorial videos to help educate new audiences, aligning with the perceived educational benefits.

"We need to think 'YouTube-first'. That means vertical video for Shorts, regular VODs, maybe live Q&As. We should do tutorials on rules, profiles on upcoming players... tell stories, don't just show scores." (Creator_03)

"A structured content calendar is vital. It shouldn't be random. Plan for pre-match hype, post-match analysis, off-season features. Consistency and variety are key to keeping an audience." (MP_01)

Another key area involved Suggestions for Enhancing Fan Engagement and Interaction. Stakeholders believed that more effort should be made to build a two-way conversation rather than just broadcasting content. This involved proactive community management and utilizing YouTube's interactive tools.

"Creators and officials need to be in the comments section, talking to fans, answering questions. Make polls using the community tab, ask fans what they want to see. Make them feel heard." (Fan_08)

Marketing professionals emphasized using YouTube Analytics to understand audience behaviour and tailor engagement strategies accordingly, potentially using data to identify 'super fans' or key influencers within the community.

Participants also proposed Ideas for Strategic Marketing, Partnerships, and Collaborations. There was a feeling that indoor cricket entities couldn't succeed in isolation on YouTube. Cross-promotion and collaboration were seen as vital.

"Why not collaborate with bigger cricket YouTubers in Bangladesh? Maybe get them to play an indoor match or feature some of our players. It would introduce us to a huge new audience." (Creator_04)

"We should be actively promoting our YouTube channel at events, on any physical marketing we do. And we need to package our YouTube offering attractively to potential sponsors – show them the value in a digital audience." (MP_05)

Finally, numerous suggestions addressed Approaches to Overcoming Resource and Skill Gaps. Recognizing that funding is a major issue, participants proposed creative solutions. Officials considered the possibility of a centralized media hub or seeking specific grants for digital development.

"Perhaps we need a central body or even a partnership with a university media department to help create content consistently, rather than relying on volunteers or individual efforts." (Official_03)

Content creators suggested community-based approaches like skill-sharing workshops or even crowdfunding initiatives for specific projects. Empowering existing passionate creators with better access or modest resources was also highlighted.

These proposed strategies, summarized in Table 2 below, indicate a clear desire among stakeholders to improve the use of YouTube and a wealth of ideas on how to achieve this, contingent on collaboration and strategic investment.

Table 2 Summary of Key Proposed Strategies by Stakeholder Group

Strategy Area	Officials' Suggestions	Marketing Professionals' Suggestions	Content Creators' Suggestions	Fans' Suggestions
Content	Centralized production, Development focus	Content calendar, Storytelling, Analytics	YouTube Shorts, Tutorials, Collaborations	Live streams, Behind-the-scenes
Engagement	(Less focus)	Data-driven engagement, Community Mgmt	Q&As, Responding to comments	Polls, More creator interaction
Marketing	Partnership with schools	Sponsorship packages, Branding	Cross-promotion, Collaborations	(N/A - focused on consumption)
Re-sources	Central hub, Grant seeking	Investment advocacy	Skill-sharing, Crowdfunding, Access	(N/A)

4.3 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the empirical findings derived from the qualitative thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews conducted with 23 key stakeholders involved in indoor cricket in Bangladesh. These participants, encompassing officials, marketing professionals, YouTube content creators, and engaged fans, provided rich, multi-faceted perspectives on the strategic utilization of YouTube for fan engagement and sports marketing.

The analysis revealed several key themes. Firstly, it highlighted the current perceptions and utilization of YouTube, indicating a widespread recognition of the platform's potential, yet a significant gap in its current strategic implementation, often characterized by sporadic activity and a lack of formalized plans, primarily due to resource and knowledge constraints.

Secondly, the study identified significant perceived benefits, with stakeholders emphasizing YouTube's capacity for enhancing visibility and audience reach beyond traditional media, its power

to foster fan communities and interaction, its potential for marketing and brand-building activities, and its educational value in explaining the sport to new audiences.

Thirdly, the analysis brought forth the key challenges hindering effective YouTube utilization. These predominantly revolved around severe resource limitations (financial, technical, and human), difficulties in maintaining content consistency and quality, the struggles associated with growing and engaging audiences in a competitive digital space, hurdles in monetization and achieving sustainability, and the complexities of navigating YouTube's dynamic platform algorithms.

Finally, stakeholders offered a range of proposed strategies for optimization. These suggestions centered on diversifying content (including live streams and behind-the-scenes features), enhancing fan interaction through proactive community management, pursuing strategic collaborations and partnerships, and developing innovative approaches to overcome resource and skill deficits.

Collectively, these findings provide a detailed snapshot of the current landscape, opportunities, and obstacles surrounding YouTube's role in the indoor cricket ecosystem in Bangladesh. They lay a crucial foundation for the subsequent chapter, where these results will be discussed in greater depth, interpreted in light of the existing literature and theoretical frameworks, and used to formulate actionable recommendations. The next chapter will now delve into these discussions and present the final conclusions of this research.

5 Discussions

This final chapter aims to synthesize and interpret the empirical findings presented in Chapter 4, providing a comprehensive understanding of YouTube's strategic utilization for fan engagement and sports marketing within the unique context of indoor cricket in Bangladesh. The significance of this study lies in its contribution to digital sports marketing knowledge, particularly concerning niche sports in emerging economies like Bangladesh, and in offering practical insights for stakeholders. The research addresses a pertinent gap in understanding how a global platform like YouTube can be effectively harnessed for the development and promotion of a specific emerging sport in a passionate yet under-researched market.

This inquiry was guided by three primary research questions:

- RQ1: How do stakeholders (officials, marketing professionals, content creators, and fans) currently perceive and utilize YouTube for fan engagement and sports marketing in the context of indoor cricket in Bangladesh?
- RQ2: What are the perceived benefits and challenges of using YouTube as a strategic tool for enhancing fan engagement and achieving sports marketing goals for indoor cricket in Bangladesh, according to key stakeholders?
- RQ3: What strategies could be developed or optimized for YouTube to more effectively foster fan engagement and support sports marketing objectives for indoor cricket in Bangladesh, considering the perspectives of diverse stakeholders?

To interpret the findings, this discussion will draw upon the theoretical lenses of Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) and Social Identity Theory (SIT), as detailed in Chapter 2. These theories help to explain the motivations behind media consumption and the formation of digital fan communities. This chapter will begin by discussing the empirical findings from Chapter 4, systematically comparing them with the relevant literature reviewed in Chapter 2. This will be facilitated by illustrative tables that map key findings to the established literature, highlighting convergences, divergences, and contextual nuances. Following this detailed discussion, the chapter will present the overall conclusions

drawn from the research, propose actionable recommendations for stakeholders, acknowledge the limitations of the study, and suggest avenues for future research.

This section explores the first research question, exploring how stakeholders within the Bangladeshi indoor cricket ecosystem currently perceive and utilize YouTube for fan engagement and sports marketing. The findings from Chapter 4 indicate a general consensus on YouTube's potential, yet a significant disparity between this recognized potential and its current strategic application, alongside varying levels of practical utilization and engagement by different stakeholder groups. Table 3 provides a roadmap for this discussion, linking the empirical findings to the established literature from Chapter 2.

Table 3 Roadmap for RQ1 Findings – Current Perceptions and Utilization

Second-Order Theme (from Chapter 4)	Brief Summary of Empirical Findings (from Chapter 4)	Key Literature Connection (from Chapter 2)	Nature of Discussion
Acknowledged Potential vs. Limited Strategy & Resource Constraints	Officials recognize YouTube's reach, especially for youth, but admit utilization is sporadic, under-strategized, and hampered by resource constraints. Marketing professionals are critical of the missed strategic opportunities (e.g., storytelling, branding).	YouTube's strategic capabilities (Sagin, 2021; Lee Ludvigsen & Petersen-Wagner, 2022); Digital transformation in sports (Berghe, 2023); Challenges for niche sports (Eungoo & Kim, 2023).	Supports (potential of YouTube); Nuances (application gap in niche sports context).
Content Creators' Realities: Passion vs. Practical Hurdles	Creators are passionate but face significant practical hurdles including resource limitations (equipment, footage access), difficulties in maintaining content consistency, and challenges with audience growth.	Challenges in YouTube content creation and visibility (Kim & Jeong, 2024; Davies & Palmer, 2023); Broader challenges for niche sports promotion.	Supports (challenges in lit.); Details (specific creator hurdles).
Fan Utilization: Primary Source & Desire for More/Better Content	Fans use YouTube as a primary source for indoor cricket content, seeking highlights and match info. They express a strong desire for more varied and higher quality content, and value interactive community spaces.	Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) (Katz et al., 1973; Ruggiero, 2000); Fan engagement dimensions (Yoshida et al., 2023); YouTube's impact on fan experience (Tafesse, 2020).	Supports (UGT motivations); Highlights (gap in content provision); Reinforces (YT importance).

The empirical findings reveal a significant Potential-Practice Gap in the utilization of YouTube for indoor cricket in Bangladesh. Stakeholders, particularly officials and marketing professionals, acknowledge the platform's inherent strengths, such as its extensive reach among younger demographics and its capacity for direct fan communication, aligning with literature that positions YouTube as a highly influential medium (Sagin, 2021; Lee Ludvigsen & Petersen-Wagner, 2022). This transformation in how sports organizations engage supporters is a key aspect of the shift to digital (Berghe, 2023). However, the current application described by participants—often sporadic and lacking cohesive strategy—reflects broader challenges documented for emerging and niche sports, which typically contend with limited resources (Eungoo & Kim, 2023). The perception by some of YouTube primarily as a traditional broadcasting tool, rather than an interactive engagement platform, also diverges from contemporary digital marketing philosophies that underscore the importance of two-way communication and community building to cultivate fan loyalty.

The realities faced by Content Creators further illuminate this gap. Their passion for the sport drives their efforts, but they encounter significant practical hurdles. These include limited access to resources such as equipment and consistent footage, and difficulties in maintaining regular content output. These experiences resonate with documented challenges in YouTube content creation, such as the demand for high-quality video and the complexities of ensuring content visibility (Kim & Jeong, 2024; Davies & Palmer, 2023). Such obstacles are often magnified for those promoting niche sports, who face an uphill battle for audience attention and resources (Eungoo & Kim, 2023).

Regarding Fan Utilization, the findings indicate that YouTube serves as a crucial, primary source of content for engaged fans. This reliance strongly supports the core tenets of Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), which posits an active audience selectively engaging with media to satisfy specific needs and desires (Katz et al., 1973; Ruggiero, 2000). Fans actively seek out indoor cricket content on YouTube primarily for cognitive gratifications (e.g., information about the sport) and affective gratifications (e.g., experiencing match excitement). The expressed desire for more varied and higher quality content suggests that current offerings may not fully satisfy the breadth of these gratifications, which encompasses different dimensions of fan engagement (Yoshida et al., 2023). The value fans place on comment sections and interactive elements as spaces for discussion and community feeling underscores the social integrative needs described by UGT and is consistent with YouTube's documented impact on enhancing the fan experience through such interactions (Tafesse, 2020).

This section addresses the second research question by examining the perceived benefits and challenges associated with using YouTube as a strategic tool for indoor cricket in Bangladesh. Findings from Chapter 4 reveal a consensus on YouTube's significant potential upsides, tempered by an acute awareness of the substantial hurdles that impede its effective utilization. Table 4 outlines these dual aspects, connecting the empirical evidence to the relevant literature reviewed in Chapter 2.

Table 4 Roadmap for RQ2 Findings – Perceived Benefits and Challenges

Second-Order Theme (from Chapter 4)	Brief Summary of Empirical Findings (from Chapter 4)	Key Literature Connection (from Chapter 2)	Nature of Discussion
Benefit: Enhanced Visibility & Audience Reach	YouTube's power to bypass traditional media gatekeepers and reach a wider, potentially global youth audience is seen as vital for awareness of a niche sport.	YouTube's reach and features (Sagin, 2021; Lee Ludvigsen & Petersen-Wagner, 2022); Strategic importance for niche sport growth (Antunovic & Schultz, 2022).	Supports & Reinforces.
Benefit: Fan Community Building & Interaction	Interactive features (comments, live chats) are crucial for fostering a sense of belonging and turning passive viewers into an active community.	Social Identity Theory (SIT) (Tajfel & Turner, 1986); Digital fan communities (Lock & Filo, 2020); YouTube's impact on community (Kim & Jeong, 2024).	Supports & Details SIT mechanisms.
Benefit: Marketing, Promotion & Brand Building	YouTube offers a platform to build brand image, attract sponsors, and potentially create revenue, promoting tournaments and player profiles.	YouTube for sports marketing (Trabelsi et al., 2022; López-Carril et al., 2020); Sponsorship activation (Petersen-Wagner & Lee Ludvigsen, 2023).	Supports.
Benefit: Educational Potential	Platform can explain indoor cricket rules and nuances, lowering entry barriers for new fans and players.	YouTube for tutorials/education (Cellestine R, 2018); Niche sport education needs (Stewart and Bindal & Nulkar, 2022).	Supports.
Challenge: Resource Limitations	Pervasive lack of financial, technical, and skilled human resources hinders quality production and strategic investment.	Niche sport financial/resource challenges (Eungoo & Kim, 2023); YouTube content creation demands (Kim & Jeong, 2024).	Strongly Supports & Contextualizes.
Challenge: Content Creation & Consistency	Difficulty in producing a steady stream of engaging, high-quality video content due to time, effort, creativity, and access constraints.	YouTube content standards and consistency (Kim & Jeong, 2024); General challenges in using YouTube (Trabelsi et al., 2022).	Supports.

Challenge: Audience Growth & Engagement	Slow subscriber growth and difficulty in gaining visibility and fostering interaction in a competitive digital space are major hurdles.	YouTube visibility/algorithm challenges (Davies & Palmer, 2023); Community management effort (Mahoney et al., 2013).	Supports.
Challenge: Monetization & Sustainability Concerns	Low ad revenue, difficulty attracting sponsors without significant viewership, making financial investment and full-time dedication challenging.	YouTube monetization (Moon & Oh, 2024); Niche sport financial models (Boehmer, 2025).	Supports.
Challenge: Navigating Platform Dynamics	Understanding and adapting to YouTube's algorithms, SEO requirements, and frequent policy changes requires expertise often lacking.	YouTube algorithms and SEO (Davies & Palmer, 2023); Evolving platform challenges (Jenkins, 2022).	Supports.

The empirical findings from Chapter 4 clearly articulate a range of Perceived Benefits from leveraging YouTube. The most prominent is the potential for Enhanced Visibility and Audience Reach. Stakeholders widely perceive YouTube's capacity to bypass traditional media gatekeepers as invaluable, offering a direct channel to a broader, younger, and potentially global audience. This aligns strongly with literature emphasizing YouTube's extensive reach and its suitability for showcasing sports content (Sagin, 2021; Lee Ludvigsen & Petersen-Wagner, 2022), which is particularly critical for the growth of niche sports that may receive limited mainstream coverage (Antunovic & Schultz, 2022). Another significant benefit identified is Facilitating Fan Community Building and Interaction. The interactive features inherent in the platform are seen by participants as vital for fostering a sense of belonging and transforming passive viewers into an engaged community. This resonates deeply with Social Identity Theory (SIT), which posits that individuals derive part of their identity from group memberships (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), and with studies highlighting how digital platforms enable the formation and maintenance of fan communities (Lock & Filo, 2020; Kim & Jeong, 2024). Furthermore, stakeholders, especially marketing professionals, highlighted Opportunities for Marketing, Promotion, and Brand Building. YouTube is seen as a potent platform for developing the sport's brand, attracting sponsorships, and promoting events, aligning with scholarly work on YouTube's strategic marketing capabilities in sports (Trabelsi et al., 2022; López-Carril et al., 2020) and its role in sponsorship activation (Petersen-Wagner & Lee Ludvigsen, 2023). Lastly, the Educational Potential of YouTube was frequently mentioned, with participants recognizing its utility in explaining the rules and nuances of indoor cricket. This supports the idea of YouTube as a learning tool (Cellestine

R, 2018) and addresses the specific need for niche sports to educate potential audiences (Stewart and Bindal & Nulkar, 2022).

Despite these recognized benefits, the study participants were acutely aware of several Key Challenges that hinder the effective utilization of YouTube. The most pervasive of these is Resource Limitations. The chronic lack of financial investment, technical equipment, and skilled personnel was cited across all stakeholder groups. This strongly supports existing literature on the financial and resource constraints typically faced by niche sports organizations (Eungoo & Kim, 2023) and reflects the high demands of producing quality video content suitable for YouTube (Kim & Jeong, 2024). Closely linked is the challenge of Content Creation and Consistency. Participants described significant difficulties in regularly producing engaging, high-quality video content, a finding that aligns with documented struggles in maintaining a consistent and appealing YouTube presence (Trabelsi et al., 2022; Kim & Jeong, 2024). Difficulties in Growing and Engaging Audiences also emerged as a major hurdle. The competitive digital environment makes it hard for a niche sport to gain visibility and foster sustained interaction, a challenge noted in literature concerning YouTube's platform dynamics and visibility algorithms (Davies & Palmer, 2023), and the effort required for effective community management (Mahoney et al., 2013). Furthermore, Monetization Hurdles and Sustainability Concerns were prominent, with low advertising revenue and difficulties in attracting sponsorship without large viewership numbers. This reflects broader issues in YouTube monetization for smaller channels (Moon & Oh, 2024) and the financial viability challenges for niche sports (Boehmer, 2025). Finally, Navigating Platform Dynamics, including understanding YouTube's algorithms, SEO, and policy changes, was identified as a significant barrier, underscoring the need for specialized expertise in a constantly evolving digital landscape (Davies & Palmer, 2023; Jenkins, 2022).

This section addresses the third research question by exploring the strategies proposed by stakeholders for the optimized use of YouTube to foster fan engagement and support sports marketing objectives for indoor cricket in Bangladesh. The findings from Chapter 4 indicate a wealth of ideas spanning content development, fan interaction, marketing, and resource mobilization. Table 5 provides a roadmap for discussing these proposed strategies, linking them to the relevant literature from Chapter 2.

Table 5 Roadmap for RQ3 Findings – Proposed Strategies

Second-Order Theme (from Chapter 4)	Brief Summary of Empirical Findings (from Chapter 4)	Key Literature Connection (from Chapter 2)	Nature of Discussion
Recommendations for Content Development & Diversity	Moving beyond basic highlights to include live streams, behind-the-scenes content, tutorials, YouTube Shorts, and implementing a structured content calendar.	YouTube features & content variety (Sagin, 2021; Moon & Oh, 2024); Catering to varied fan interests (Tafesse, 2020); UGT and content needs (Katz et al., 1973).	Supports & Provides practical examples.
Suggestions for Enhancing Fan Engagement & Interaction	Proactive community management, utilizing interactive tools (polls, Q&As), responding to fans, and using YouTube Analytics to understand and tailor engagement.	Principles of fan engagement (Annamalai et al., 2021); SIT and community (Tajfel & Turner, 1986); YouTube's interactive features (Celestine R, 2018; Oh, 2023).	Supports & Details mechanisms for engagement.
Ideas for Strategic Marketing, Partnerships & Collaborations	Cross-promotion, collaborating with larger sports YouTubers/influencers, packaging YouTube offerings for sponsors, and active channel promotion at events.	Strategies for niche sport growth (Harju, 2023; Antunovic & Schultz, 2022); Sponsorship in digital sports (Petersen-Wagner & Lee Ludvigsen, 2023).	Supports & Proposes contextual solutions.
Approaches to Overcoming Resource & Skill Gaps	Ideas like a centralized media hub, seeking specific grants, skill-sharing workshops, crowdfunding, and empowering existing passionate creators with better access/resources.	Addressing resource constraints in niche sports (Eungoo & Kim, 2023); Alternative funding/support models (Moon & Oh, 2024).	Supports & Proposes innovative and collaborative solutions.

The strategies proposed by stakeholders for optimizing YouTube utilization, as detailed in Chapter 4, offer practical pathways forward. Suggestions for content development and diversity, such as

moving beyond basic match highlights to include live streams, behind-the-scenes footage, and tutorial videos, directly address the need to cater to varied fan interests (Tafesse, 2020). Such diversification aims to satisfy a broader range of gratifications as outlined by Uses and Gratifications Theory (Katz et al., 1973). The call from participants for leveraging YouTube's different features more effectively, like creating YouTube Shorts for quick engagement and playlists for better content organization, also aligns with literature on maximizing platform capabilities for enhanced user experience and discoverability (Sagin, 2021; Moon & Oh, 2024). The emphasis on a structured content calendar reflects a move towards more professional and sustained content delivery.

Regarding enhancing fan engagement and interaction, stakeholder suggestions for more proactive community management and the use of YouTube's interactive tools like polls and Q&A sessions point towards fostering a two-way dialogue. This approach is well-supported by literature on digital fan engagement, which emphasizes direct interaction and making fans feel valued (Annamalai et al., 2021). Such interactive strategies can strengthen the sense of community and belonging, which is a core tenet of Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), and effectively utilize features designed for community building on the platform (Cellestine R, 2018; Oh, 2023). The suggestion to use YouTube Analytics to understand audience behavior further supports a data-informed approach to tailoring engagement.

In terms of strategic marketing and partnerships, the ideas proposed for collaborations with larger sports YouTubers or influencers, and active cross-promotion, reflect an understanding of the need for niche sports to expand their reach creatively (Harju, 2023; Antunovic & Schultz, 2022). Packaging the YouTube channel's offerings to attract potential sponsors is also a pragmatic approach, aligning with literature on digital sponsorship activation in sports (Petersen-Wagner & Lee Ludvigsen, 2023). These strategies aim to leverage external networks and create more compelling value propositions.

Finally, the proposed approaches to overcoming resource and skill gaps, such as establishing a centralized media hub, seeking grants, or fostering skill-sharing among creators, directly address the significant challenges identified earlier. These suggestions point towards collaborative and innovative solutions to the resource constraints commonly faced by niche sports (Eungoo & Kim, 2023). Exploring alternative support models, such as crowdfunding or empowering passionate creators with better access, also resonates with ideas of leveraging community support and diverse funding streams, which can be vital for sustainability (Moon & Oh, 2024).

5.1 Overall Synthesis and Theoretical Implications

The empirical findings, discussed in relation to the research questions, paint a comprehensive picture of YouTube's current and potential role within the indoor cricket ecosystem in Bangladesh. A clear dynamic emerges: the acknowledged potential of YouTube for visibility and fan engagement is significantly curtailed by practical challenges related to resource allocation, strategic planning, and content consistency. This situation, where aspiration outpaces current capacity, is reflective of broader trends in the digital transformation of sports, particularly for entities outside the mainstream with fewer established resources (Stegmann et al., 2021; Melton & MacCharles, 2021). The journey from recognizing YouTube's vast capabilities (Sagin, 2021; Lee Ludvigsen & Petersen-Wagner, 2022) to integrating it as an interactive, community-focused tool—rather than a passive broadcast channel—mirrors the larger paradigm shift from traditional to digital sports marketing philosophies (Alghizzawi et al., 2024; Jenkins, 2022). The proposed strategies by stakeholders, focusing on diverse content, proactive engagement, and collaborative resource solutions, represent an attempt to bridge this gap and move towards a more mature digital presence.

The findings of this study hold several implications for the application of Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) and Social Identity Theory (SIT) in the context of niche sports and digital media in a developing country. The research affirms the core tenets of UGT, as fans clearly articulate seeking specific gratifications—such as information, entertainment, and social interaction—from indoor cricket content on YouTube, aligning with established UGT literature (Whiting & Williams, 2013; Bindal & Nulkar, 2022). However, the study highlights that the *fulfillment* of these sought gratifications is heavily mediated by contextual factors, namely the resource limitations and strategic inconsistencies that affect content availability and quality. While UGT explains the 'why' of media use, the findings underscore how the 'what' (available content) and 'how' (platform strategy) within a niche sport context significantly influence whether these gratifications are ultimately obtained.

Similarly, the desire for community and interaction expressed by fans, and the role of YouTube comment sections as spaces for shared identity, strongly support the principles of SIT. The platform offers an avenue for fans of a less mainstream sport to connect and reinforce their collective identity (Lock & Filo, 2020; Christie et al., 2023). The niche status of indoor cricket in Bangladesh might even enhance the significance of such digital spaces for SIT fulfillment, given potentially fewer offline avenues for expressing this specific sporting identity. However, the challenges in consistently

providing engaging content and fostering official interaction can impede the full development of these online communities, suggesting that the realization of SIT-related benefits is contingent upon effective platform management.

This research contributes to the academic discourse by providing empirically grounded insights into digital sports marketing and fan engagement for a niche sport within a developing economy, a context often overlooked in literature that predominantly focuses on major global sports or developed Western markets. By detailing the unique interplay of stakeholder perspectives, platform potential, and local challenges in Bangladesh, this study offers a nuanced understanding that can inform both the application of media theories in specific socio-cultural contexts and the development of more effective, contextually relevant digital strategies for similar sports organizations. It highlights that the strategic use of platforms like YouTube in such settings is not just about technological adoption but is deeply intertwined with resource capacity, strategic capabilities, and the ability to consistently meet diverse fan needs (Lee Ludvigsen & Petersen-Wagner, 2022; Sagin, 2021).

5.2 Conclusions

This study explored the strategic utilization of YouTube for fan engagement and sports marketing within the specific context of indoor cricket in Bangladesh. Through an analysis of stakeholder perceptions, current practices, perceived benefits, identified challenges, and proposed strategies, the research culminates in the following overarching conclusions:

1. YouTube represents a critical but substantially underutilized strategic asset for the growth, promotion, and fan engagement of indoor cricket in Bangladesh.
2. The gap between recognized potential and current practice is primarily driven by significant resource limitations and a lack of cohesive, well-implemented digital media strategies by key organizational stakeholders.
3. A clear and unmet demand exists among engaged fans for more diverse, consistent, and higher-quality indoor cricket content on YouTube, with their consumption patterns strongly aligning with motivations described by Uses and Gratifications Theory and a desire for community as highlighted by Social Identity Theory.
4. A fundamental shift is required from using YouTube as a passive repository for occasional video uploads towards embracing it as an active, interactive platform for sustained storytelling, dynamic community building, and strategic marketing.

5. Given the prevailing resource constraints and the nascent stage of digital marketing for the sport, collaborative efforts among governing bodies, content creators, marketing professionals, and potentially external partners are essential for progress.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings discussed and the conclusions drawn, this study offers the following actionable recommendations to key stakeholders involved with indoor cricket in Bangladesh. These are aimed at optimizing the strategic utilization of YouTube for enhanced fan engagement and effective sports marketing:

For Officials and Governing Bodies of Indoor Cricket in Bangladesh:

- Develop a formal, documented digital media strategy with a specific focus on YouTube. This strategy should outline clear objectives, target audiences, content pillars, resource allocation plans, and key performance indicators to guide sustained and purposeful platform utilization.
- Actively seek dedicated funding or establish partnerships to support digital content creation and platform management. This could involve exploring grants, sponsorships focused on digital initiatives, or collaborations with educational institutions that have media production capabilities.
- Consider establishing a centralized content hub or a support system to assist creators. This could provide access to match footage, player interviews, branding guidelines, and potentially basic equipment or editing software, thereby improving content quality and consistency.
- Recognize and empower passionate independent YouTube content creators by providing official acknowledgment, better access to events and players, and potentially small incentives or grants to encourage their continued efforts.
- Prioritize the creation of developmental and educational content on YouTube. This should include materials that clearly explain the rules and appeal of indoor cricket to new audiences, thereby fostering grassroots interest and participation.

For Marketing Professionals:

- Advocate for strategic investment in high-quality digital content for YouTube, emphasizing its long-term return on investment in terms of brand building, audience growth, and attracting potential sponsors.
- Develop tailored YouTube-specific sponsorship packages that offer clear value to commercial partners, such as branded content series, integrated promotions, or sponsored segments that leverage the platform's unique features.
- Utilize YouTube Analytics rigorously to understand audience demographics, content preferences, and engagement patterns. These insights should inform content strategy, optimization, and targeted engagement tactics.
- Focus on compelling storytelling and brand development rather than solely on match broadcasts. Create narratives around players, teams, and the unique culture of indoor cricket in Bangladesh to foster deeper emotional connections with fans.

For YouTube Content Creators (Official and Independent):

- Diversify content formats beyond match highlights. Experiment with YouTube Shorts for quick, engaging clips, live streams of matches or Q&A sessions, in-depth player profiles, behind-the-scenes footage, and tutorial videos explaining gameplay and tactics.
- Actively prioritize fan interaction and community building. Respond to comments, run polls using the Community tab, solicit content ideas from viewers, and foster a welcoming environment for discussion to enhance viewer loyalty.
- Seek opportunities for collaboration with other indoor cricket channels, general sports YouTubers in Bangladesh, or even relevant influencers to cross-promote content and reach new audiences.
- Strive for consistency in content output. Establish a regular posting schedule, even if it means producing simpler content initially, to keep the audience engaged and maintain channel momentum.
- Invest time in understanding and applying YouTube fundamentals, such as video SEO, effective thumbnail design, title optimization, and interpreting analytics to improve content discoverability and performance.

5.4 Limitations of the Study

While this study has endeavored to provide a thorough and insightful analysis, it is important to acknowledge certain limitations inherent in its methodology, as outlined in Chapter 3. Recognizing these helps in contextualizing the findings and conclusions.

Firstly, the qualitative nature of this research, while offering depth and rich contextual understanding, means that its findings are not designed for statistical generalization to the entire population of stakeholders or fans involved with indoor cricket in Bangladesh. The insights are specific to the participants involved and the particular context of the study. Secondly, as the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and interpretation in qualitative inquiry, the potential for unconscious bias or subjective influence, despite rigorous efforts to maintain objectivity and practice reflexivity, cannot be entirely discounted.

Furthermore, the study's findings are based on the perspectives and recollections shared by participants during the interviews. While purposive sampling aimed to include information-rich individuals, their views may not encompass the full spectrum of experiences or opinions within their respective stakeholder groups. The cross-sectional design of the data collection provides a snapshot of the situation at a specific point in time; the dynamic nature of digital platforms like YouTube and the evolving sports marketing landscape mean that perceptions and practices may change subsequent to the period of this research. Lastly, practical constraints related to time and resources inherent in any research project may have placed limits on the scope of inquiry or the number of participants included. These limitations are acknowledged to provide a balanced perspective on the study's outcomes.

5.5 Suggestions for Future Research

The findings and limitations of this study open up several avenues for future research that could further enhance understanding of YouTube's role in sports marketing and fan engagement, particularly for niche sports in contexts like Bangladesh.

Future research could employ quantitative methods to measure the specific impact of different YouTube content strategies on key fan engagement metrics, such as viewership, subscriber growth, interaction rates, and brand recall. This could provide statistical evidence to complement the quali-

tative insights of the current study. Comparative studies would also be valuable. For instance, research comparing the effectiveness of YouTube with other social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, TikTok, Instagram) for promoting indoor cricket in Bangladesh could yield useful insights for integrated digital marketing strategies. Similarly, comparative studies focusing on how other niche sports within Bangladesh or indoor cricket in different developing countries utilize YouTube could highlight transferable best practices or context-specific challenges.

Longitudinal studies that track the evolution of YouTube strategies, content creator efforts, and fan engagement patterns over an extended period could provide a deeper understanding of growth trajectories and the long-term impact of digital initiatives. There is also scope for more in-depth research into specific challenges identified, such as developing sustainable monetization models for niche sports content on YouTube or exploring effective strategies for navigating YouTube's algorithms to maximize visibility for less mainstream sports. Research focusing on the specific types of content that most effectively satisfy different fan gratifications as per UGT could help creators tailor their output more precisely. Finally, exploring the role and impact of emerging technologies like AI in content creation, personalization, and analytics for niche sports on YouTube could be a fruitful area for future inquiry.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Interview Questions

Question Category/Theme	Target Stakeholder(s)	Potential Interview Question
General Introductory	All	Could you please tell me about your involvement and experience with indoor cricket in Bangladesh?
General Introductory	All	What is your general perception of the role of digital media, and specifically YouTube, in the context of sports today?
I. Current Perceptions & Utilization of YouTube (RQ1)	All	How do you currently perceive the role and importance of YouTube for indoor cricket in Bangladesh?
I. Current Perceptions & Utilization of YouTube (RQ1)	All	In your experience, how is YouTube currently being used by those involved with indoor cricket in Bangladesh?
I. Current Perceptions & Utilization of YouTube (RQ1)	Officials	How does your organization currently utilize YouTube in its efforts related to indoor cricket?
I. Current Perceptions & Utilization of YouTube (RQ1)	Officials	What strategic importance, if any, does YouTube hold for achieving your organization's goals for indoor cricket?
I. Current Perceptions & Utilization of YouTube (RQ1)	Officials	What are the main goals your organization has when using YouTube for indoor cricket?
I. Current Perceptions & Utilization of YouTube (RQ1)	Officials	Could you describe any specific YouTube activities or content your organization has been involved in?
I. Current Perceptions & Utilization of YouTube (RQ1)	Officials	What resources (e.g., financial, human, technical) are currently allocated to YouTube-related activities?
I. Current Perceptions & Utilization of YouTube (RQ1)	Marketing Professionals	From your professional standpoint, what is your assessment of the current strategic use of YouTube for marketing and branding indoor cricket in Bangladesh?
I. Current Perceptions & Utilization of YouTube (RQ1)	Marketing Professionals	What key elements of digital storytelling or branding do you feel are prominent or missing in the current YouTube presence of indoor cricket?
I. Current Perceptions & Utilization of YouTube (RQ1)	Marketing Professionals	How does the current utilization compare to effective YouTube strategies you've seen for other sports or in other contexts?
I. Current Perceptions & Utilization of YouTube (RQ1)	Marketing Professionals	What specific opportunities on YouTube do you think are being underutilized for indoor cricket?
I. Current Perceptions & Utilization of YouTube (RQ1)	Content Creators	Could you describe the type of indoor cricket content you typically create and share on your YouTube channel?

Question Category/Theme	Target Stakeholder(s)	Potential Interview Question
I. Current Perceptions & Utilization of YouTube (RQ1)	Content Creators	What motivates you to create and share content about indoor cricket on YouTube?
I. Current Perceptions & Utilization of YouTube (RQ1)	Content Creators	What is your process for sourcing, producing, and disseminating your content?
I. Current Perceptions & Utilization of YouTube (RQ1)	Content Creators	How do you attempt to engage with your audience on YouTube?
I. Current Perceptions & Utilization of YouTube (RQ1)	Engaged Fans	How do you primarily use YouTube in relation to indoor cricket?
I. Current Perceptions & Utilization of YouTube (RQ1)	Engaged Fans	What kind of indoor cricket content do you actively search for or watch on YouTube?
I. Current Perceptions & Utilization of YouTube (RQ1)	Engaged Fans	How satisfied are you with the amount and quality of indoor cricket content currently available on YouTube in Bangladesh?
I. Current Perceptions & Utilization of YouTube (RQ1)	Engaged Fans	How do you interact with indoor cricket content or other fans on YouTube (e.g., comments, likes, shares)?
II. Perceived Benefits of Using YouTube (RQ2)	All	What do you see as the main benefits or advantages of using YouTube for promoting and developing indoor cricket in Bangladesh?
II. Perceived Benefits of Using YouTube (RQ2)	All	Specifically, how do you think YouTube can contribute to increasing the visibility and audience reach of indoor cricket?
II. Perceived Benefits of Using YouTube (RQ2)	All	Specifically, how do you think YouTube can contribute to building and fostering a community among indoor cricket fans?
II. Perceived Benefits of Using YouTube (RQ2)	All	Specifically, how do you think YouTube can contribute to marketing, promotion, and brand-building efforts for the sport?
II. Perceived Benefits of Using YouTube (RQ2)	All	Specifically, how do you think YouTube can contribute to educating people about indoor cricket (e.g., rules, gameplay)?
II. Perceived Benefits of Using YouTube (RQ2)	All	Can you share any specific examples where you've seen these benefits realized, even to a small extent?
III. Key Challenges in Leveraging YouTube Effectively (RQ2)	All	What are the primary challenges or obstacles you (or your organization/the sport in general) face in using YouTube effectively for indoor cricket in Bangladesh?
III. Key Challenges in Leveraging YouTube Effectively (RQ2)	All	Could you elaborate on challenges related to resource limitations (e.g., funding, equipment, skilled personnel)?
III. Key Challenges in Leveraging YouTube Effectively (RQ2)	All	Could you elaborate on challenges related to content creation and maintaining consistency (e.g., quality, regularity, finding fresh ideas)?

Question Category/Theme	Target Stakeholder(s)	Potential Interview Question
III. Key Challenges in Leveraging YouTube Effectively (RQ2)	All	Could you elaborate on challenges related to growing an audience and ensuring content visibility on the platform?
III. Key Challenges in Leveraging YouTube Effectively (RQ2)	All	Could you elaborate on challenges related to monetizing content or achieving financial sustainability through YouTube?
III. Key Challenges in Leveraging YouTube Effectively (RQ2)	All	Could you elaborate on challenges related to understanding and adapting to YouTube's algorithms, policies, or technical aspects (e.g., SEO)?
III. Key Challenges in Leveraging YouTube Effectively (RQ2)	All	How do these challenges impact your (or your organization's) efforts or your experience as a fan/creator?
IV. Proposed Strategies for Optimized YouTube Utilization (RQ3)	All	What strategies would you propose to make YouTube a more effective tool for indoor cricket in Bangladesh?
IV. Proposed Strategies for Optimized YouTube Utilization (RQ3)	All	Thinking about the future, what kind of content do you believe would be most impactful for growing the sport and engaging fans on YouTube?
IV. Proposed Strategies for Optimized YouTube Utilization (RQ3)	All	How could fan engagement and interaction be improved on existing or future indoor cricket YouTube channels?
IV. Proposed Strategies for Optimized YouTube Utilization (RQ3)	All	What role could strategic marketing, partnerships, or collaborations play in enhancing YouTube's effectiveness for indoor cricket?
IV. Proposed Strategies for Optimized YouTube Utilization (RQ3)	All	What are your thoughts on how the resource and skill gaps you mentioned earlier could be addressed?
IV. Proposed Strategies for Optimized YouTube Utilization (RQ3)	All	Are there any specific features or functionalities of YouTube that you think are currently underutilized but could be beneficial?
General Concluding	All	Looking ahead, what is your overall vision for YouTube's role in the future of indoor cricket in Bangladesh?
General Concluding	All	Is there anything else you would like to share or add regarding the use of YouTube for indoor cricket that we haven't discussed today?