

Factors Affecting Stadium Attendance in the Ghana Premier League amid High Social Media Consumption: A Study among Soccer Fans in Ghana

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ABSTRACT

The recent attention to social media has altered the place of consumption of products and services in almost every sphere of business. The rise of social media has deepened the consumption of soccer, as it has brought on a new space for effective and convenient interactions, and engagement for sport fans. Thus, fans are been connected and linked to their favourite sport through social media with a sense of feeling and experience vis-à-vis their physical presence at the stadium. The purpose of this study was to investigate the factors contributing to low stadium attendance in the Ghana Premier League amid the high social media consumption of soccer among Ghanaians. The study adopted a quantitative method with a survey design via random sampling technique to gather data from 397 football fans in Accra, Kumasi and Ho. Validity and reliability of research instrument adopted the Lawshe's content validity ratio, R and Cronbach Alpha, α which recorded $R=0.86$ and $\alpha=0.77$ respectively. The study revealed factors such as poor leadership, officiating, Hooliganism/vandalism, club management, and advertisement and promotion of the league have affected stadium attendance among Ghanaian soccer fans. This has resulted in a switch to social media consumption to keep the spirit of their favourite sports alive and thereby been attracted to other leagues. This means that sponsors may not find the league attractive and this will affect league sponsorship.

Keywords: Stadium Attendance; Social Media; Ghana Premier League; Soccer Consumption; Ghana Football Association

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INTRODUCTION

Sport, perceived as a way to unwind, rejuvenate, and cultivate a healthy body, mind, and soul, has evolved into a lucrative industry. In 2018, the sports market generated close to \$488.5 billion, representing a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 4.3% from 2014, and this amount is anticipated to increase at a CAGR of 5.9% to reach close to \$614.1 billion by the end of 2022 (Business Wire, 2019). Major League Baseball (MLB), the National Basketball Association (NBA), the National Football League (NFL), and the National Hockey League (NHL) are the major sports leagues in the Global North, especially in the US. In 2019, MLB's revenue was close to \$10.7 billion with a corresponding increase in digital consumption on the MLB.TV above 15% in paid subscriptions, Bat app recorded over 18% app starts relative to previous year, and this amounts to over 2 billion digital users in the same year (MLB, 2019; The Daily Gazette,



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2022). The NFL's revenue in 2018 was \$16 billion, and this amount is underpinned by a study in Samford University indicate the league experienced a 9.38% increase in relevance on social media, unheard of in previous years of the league (Laing, 2018; The Daily Gazette, 2022).

The NBA's revenue in the 2018-2019 season was \$8.76 billion as reported by The Daily Gazette (2022), and a study supports the usage of social media by fans of the NBA (Abdourazakou & Deng, 2019). In addition, a study by Nielsen (2018) indicates that fans of NBA across Facebook, Twitter (now X), Instagram and YouTube reached 1.5 billion, culminating to \$490 million revenue generated on social media for sponsorship, resulting in 20%-50% of social media share in media value. Finally, the NHL's revenue in the 2018-2019 season was \$5.09 billion and juxtaposing this to social media usage, a study conducted on the influence of Social TV on NHL indicates that fans of the league would stream online while watching TV (Mereu, 2021).

A further dive into the sports market revenue of the English Premier League (EPL) reveals a projected amount of £ 2.3 billion from broadcasting fees and commercials, while sponsorship alone generated £1.6 billion, with match day revenue amounted to £599 million, and social media users particularly Facebook surpass 250 million active users in the 2019/2020 season (Statista Research Department, 2022). Additionally, La Liga's total revenue for the 2020/2021 season was €3,818 million, with social media active engagement across Twitter (now X), Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Sina Weibo and Tik Tok increase from 664 million to 752 million according to the league in Spain (Nota de Prensa, 2022; LaLiga, 2022). Additionally, Ligue 1, in France, made €836 million in total revenue the 2020/2021 season, with television fees being the main source (Statista Research Department, 2022). More so, the league has attracted active followers on social media platforms as Tik Tok active users surpass 1 million, Facebook and Twitter record close to 15 million active users in five languages (French, English, Spanish, Portuguese and Arabic), with over 1 million subscribers on YouTube (Ross, 2020).

Furthermore, the sports market in Africa projected to reach \$8.37 million by the end of 2022, with total revenue expected to grow at CAGR of 8.45%. The sports market volume is projected at \$11.57 million by 2026, revenue generation in terms of advertising in the Africa sports market stood at \$2.87 million in 2019, and it is expected to reach \$4.41 million by the end of 2022, with a projected revenue of \$5.93 million by 2026 (Statista, 2022). More so, the sports market in Ghana is projected to reach \$15.7 million in revenue by the end of 2022, with an expected annual growth rate of CAGR at 14.18% from 2022 to 2027 and a projected market volume of \$30.55 million by 2027 (Statista, 2022).

It is clear the sport market revenues in the Global North, Europe, Africa and narrowing to Ghana indicate that, the recreational and healthy notion of sport has indeed metamorphosed into a business venture adept at generating revenue. Football also referred to as soccer in other parts of the world, is one of the major sport in Ghana followed by Boxing and Athletics. Quite recently, the consumption of soccer among fans in Ghana, particularly on social media platforms has increased (Aboagye et al., 2021). There exist little or no literature as to why this sudden increase in soccer consumption on social media, meanwhile stadium attendance across the Ghana Premier League (GPL) matches has stalled and continue to reduce (Sienu, 2023). In a news article by Sienu (2023), the editor suggests that poor management decisions,

poor player performance and lack of strategic planning have contributed to the low stadium attendance, but this lacks scientific data.

As a result, this paper seek to bridge the gap and contribute to literature on factors that have led to low stadium attendance among Ghanaian fans amid high consumption of football on social media. This study will help better inform the marketing and advertising tactics of the GPL and Women's Premier League been regulated by the Ghana Football Association (GFA) taken into context the recent demonstration against the football federation to develop football infrastructure locally. This would also help the federation to leverage for sport sponsorship and revenue generation, as the sports is now a big business adept at generating revenue.

A retrospection to the literature in this study reveal many speculations and opinions on low stadium attendance in the GPL. Hence, to better understand and present a holistic perspective to the menace, the study aimed to:

1. Examine the role of GFA leadership on stadium attendance.
2. Identify the role of hooliganism on stadium attendance.
3. Describe the role of officiating in GPL matches on stadium attendance.
4. Analyse the role of advertisement of the GPL on stadium attendance.
5. Investigate the role of club management on stadium attendance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Social Media and Sport Consumption Globally

The increase trend in sports market revenues, across the three regions indicated earlier, social media's rise and usage, have been made possible by the availability of smart phones, tablets, smart televisions, computers, and the internet. These, been hypothesized to be an effective way to further increase the number of users who consume sport on social media, thereby boosting revenues (Gough, 2022). Currently, social media wine and dine with many enterprises in their business operations serving as a means to create impression on products and services (Attor et al., 2022). For example, Facebook has enticed an estimate of 2.9 billion monthly active users (MAUs) globally, with 2021 report showing revenues of \$117.9 billion, net profit of \$39.3 billion, and an average usage on daily basis around 1.91 billion people (Statista, 2022). The huge usage of this social media platform has translated, and influenced the domain of sport marketing (Huang & Hsu, 2017). For instance, a study by Sportcal (2017) showed an estimate of 442.7 million sport fans registered on Facebook sport related pages, which was a jump of 21% from 2016. Furthermore, the study revealed other social media platforms like Twitter (now X), Instagram, and YouTube, also experienced a high jump in user registration.

To date, global registered users of social media platforms surpass 3.96 billion, with Facebook leading the social space of more than 2.89 billion users monthly, Followed by YouTube, WhatsApp and Instagram all a subsidiary of the mother company Facebook (Dixon, 2022). It is reported that, in the third zone of 2021, Facebook alone recorded over 3.58 billion active users on monthly basis (Dixon, 2022). As at 2019 in a survey by Gough (2022) reported that 67% of respondents between the age group 18-27 watched sport content on social media using Facebook, YouTube or X. In the same survey, it revealed an average of 69% of sport fans indicated that advance technologies have influenced their sport viewing experience. This, taken into consideration the data above, one may conclude that, social media has increased the consumption of sport, and largely, it is the case.

Global Stadium Attendance

Among the most popular sport in the Global North, the MLB has recorded significant increase in stadium attendance by season from 2017 to 2023. Although, attendance decreased from 72, 678, 797 in 2017 to 64, 556, 658 in 2022, there was a significant increase from 2022 to 2023 season which recorded 70, 747, 365. Additionally, MLB has seen an increase in stadium attendance per game from 2022, which recorded 26, 843 to 29, 295 in 2023 (Adler, 2023). The NFL stadium attendance has also seen a jump by 3.25% to 69, 442 per game in 2022, while data from Sport Business Journal indicates that, the NFL stadium attendance has increased from 2016 to date, it is only short of 45 fans per game on average of 69, 442 in the 2022 season (Fischer & Broughton, 2023).

The NBA similar to other sports mentioned above has also recorded significant increase in stadium attendance particularly in the 2022-2023 season with a record high of over 22 million, over 18,000 record average attendance and a 97 % capacity full. The NBA total stadium attendance for a regular season has increased from over 21 million in 2015/2016 season to 22, 124, 559 in 2017/2018 regular season. Even though there was a decrease in attendance in the 2018/2019 regular season to 21, 964, 447, there has been a significant jump to over 22 million in the 2022/2023 regular season (NBA, 2023). The NHL stadium attendance also saw a jump by 7.9% in the 2022/2023 regular season, which recorded over 22 million fans higher than the 2021/2022 regular season (Broughton, 2023).

The EPL stadium attendance has also recorded a phenomenal increase from average of 39, 950 in the 2021/2022 league season to an average of 40, 267 in the 2022/2023 season across all matches and this stood at a capacity of 98.7% which is also a jump from 97.7 % in the 2021/2022 season. Stadium attendance in the La Liga in Spain has also increased over 11 million in the 2022/2023 season, with Italy's Serie A stadium attendance also increased to over 29,000 in the 2022/2023 season (Rial, 2023). The Ligue 1 in France has also recorded an increase of stadium attendance from an average of over 5,000 in the 2020/2021 season to an average of over 23,000 in the 2022/2023 season (Transfer Market, 2022).

Social Media and Football Consumption in Ghana

A study aimed at examining sport consumption on social media platforms by Aboagye et al (2021) of Ghanaian football fans, showed that, fans consumed more sport products on Facebook representing 46.2% of the sample size, and those who often use team apps stood at a percentage of 34.1% of the sample size, 305. Deducing from the percentages of the sample size, it is clear more than half (240+) of the sample use social media in Ghana to consume football. The study further provided evidence to team owners and administrators on the appropriate place (Facebook) to engage sport fans.

In another study conducted by Awini (2019) aimed at assessing the impact of social media and sport fan engagement showed that interactions and engagement on social media presents a positive and significant influence on fan loyalty. The study further revealed that social media projects teams' visibility substantially. In addition, a further study on social media as a tool for publicity by Kwaw (2021) showed that social media was indeed a significant tool to enhance publicity for Ghanaian league clubs. It is therefore not surprising to see actors in sport such as professional leagues,

sport governing bodies, sport organisations, professional athletes and sport event owners now adopting social media in their operations (Attor et al., 2022; Kwaw, 2021).

The consumption of sport on social media by Aboagye et al. (2021) falls in line with the findings of Mohammadkazemi (2015) that near 60% of adults prefer to consume sport online than to be present at the stadium. It is therefore not surprising that Aboagye et al. (2021) further concluded that Ghanaian football fans enjoy social media platforms to consume sport as it presents an easy and convenient space to interact with teams, athletes, get club news and match updates. Again, a study by Kwaw (2021) revealed that social media was a preferred tool for publicity among the premier league clubs in Ghana. Kwaw's study further showed that premier league clubs prefer using social media to interact and engage with sport fans and for marketing tactics. Furthermore, in another study on the "Use of Social Media by Four Ghanaian Premier Football Clubs" conducted by Owusu and Pokumensah (2020) showed that all football clubs were apt on the impact of social media in the management of modern football clubs. However, the study revealed some challenges as cost of data usage, internet stability and cost of engaging social media expert in managing contents.

A further study by Ocansey et al. (2016) indicated that majority of Ghanaians use social media for communication purposes. Again, in another study by Meng (2020) indicated that 85% of respondents use social media in Ghana, mainly young people from less-wealthy background who may prefer to use social media for personal and educational advancement and this falls in line with the study of Ocansey et al (2016). More so, in another study by Attor et al. (2022) it was revealed that brand sincerity, brand competence and brand excitement significantly mediated the relationship between social media usage and customer purchase decisions. Social media has become a preferred destination of choice among football fans in Ghana to consume their favourite sport, but it may seemingly appear, a combination of stadium attendance and social media consumption may work together, but this is not the case in Ghana.

From the literature, it is very clear stadium attendances across major sport from Global North to Europe, has increased over the regular seasons amid high social media consumption of same sport, but this is not the case in Ghana as football fans are reluctant to attend stadium to watch GPL matches and have resorted to social media consumption (Sienu, 2023). There is little or no literature to underpin this phenomenon and uncover the cause (s) of this trend, which has bedevilled the GPL many years now, thus this study attempts to unravel the cause (s) that has led to low stadium attendance among football fans in Ghana from diverse perspectives.

Theoretical Framework

Grounded Theory (GT) is a systematic procedure of research that shapes the collection and analysis of data in a diverse and strategic manner with the focus of developing and or constructing a model that offers an understanding of the issue at hand (Charmaz & Thornberg, 2020). Grounded theory presents researchers a guide to strategically aide in their theoretical analyses to generate new concepts with the possibility of having direct application in policies and professional practices (Charmaz, 2020). Thus, the investigation of drivers that foster the high consumption of football on social media at the expense of low stadium attendance influenced by the grounded theory postulates to inform policies, decisions and practices at the GFA and football development in Ghana.

METHOD

Study Design

The study adopted quantitative research using survey design with linear scale of questions on google forms to collect data from football fans in Ghana on Football Fans Facebook pages and WhatsApp platforms. Simple random sampling technique was adopted and Slovin's formula used in determining sample size. The nature of this study in an attempt to gather data in a quantifiable manner from participants adopting narrow questions supports the assertion of Skinner et al. (2015) that quantitative approach to sport management research uses statistics to conduct an inquiry in an unbiased and objective manner. This is also in line with the assertion of Watson (2015) who indicates that adopting quantitative research embraces a variety of methods in line with systematic inquiry of social phenomenon being enhanced by numerical data.

Methods of Data Collection

Ghanaian adult of age 18 and above qualified to participate in the study. Google form link shared among football fans on Facebook pages and WhatsApp. Administrators and Managers of the aforementioned pages were engaged to discuss the purpose of the study and upon their consent; the link shared for participation. The research instrument had a linear scale of questions where Lawshe's content validity formula used to determine the validity of the items. Cronbach Alpha formula used to determine the reliability and internal consistency of the items. Due to the online nature of data collection, individuals without smart devices and/ or unavailable on Facebook platform and WhatsApp could not participate and was excluded from the study.

Analytical Procedures

Data was analysed using Microsoft Excel (2016 version). Data was imported from the google form into excel spreadsheet with an initial sample size of 22 to test for internal consistency and validity of the items. Cronbach Alpha, $\alpha = 0.77$ was recorded. Seven panel of experts were used to assess the items' readability and relevance using a scale of 1 to 4 where 1 meant 'Not relevant' and 4 was 'Relevant'. Based on the assessments from the experts, the Lawshe's formula was used to determine the validity index, $R = 0.86$. With an estimated population of fifty thousand football fans, and a projected margin of error at 0.05, the Slovin formula gave an approximate sample size, $n=397$.

Ethical statement

This paper is an extract from the researcher's Doctor of Philosophy study, and ethical clearance from the Graduate School of Business and Management at Philippine Christian University cover this study, and stated on the google form. Again, ethical approval sought from the National Sports Authority, Ghana with reference number NSA/HQ/SF/DEC/23 and the Ghana League Clubs Association. As the participants' contributions are just for research purposes, confidentiality and anonymity, is strictly upheld in this study.

RESULTS

Table 1. Demographic of Respondents

	Frequency (N)	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	259	65.2%
Female	138	34.8%
Ages		
18-26	96	24.2%
27-35	107	27.0%
36-44	99	24.9%
45-53	52	13.1%
54 and above	43	10.8%
Marital status		
Married	222	55.9%
Single	167	42.1%
Divorced	8	2.0%
Education		
High School	72	18.1%
University/Technical/Vocational	325	81.9%
Location		
Greater Kumasi / Ashanti Region	195	49.1%
Greater Accra/ Greater Accra Region	171	43.1%
Ho	31	7.8%

Table 1 shows the demographic of respondents. The study recorded two hundred and fifty-nine (259) males representing 65.2% of the sample while the remaining one hundred and thirty-eight (138) were females representing 34.8% of the sample. The data showed that more males participated in the study relative to their female counterparts. The age of the respondents spanned from (18-26) recorded 96 participants representing 24.2% of the sample, (27-35) recorded 107 participants which represents 27% of the sample, (36-44) also recorded 99 participants which represents 24.9% of the sample, again (45-53) recorded 52 participants which represents 13.1%, and finally (54 and above) recorded 43 participants which represents 10.8% of the sample.

Table 2. Age Summary Statistics

<i>Age</i>	
Mean	2.518892
Standard Error	0.06735
Median	2
Mode	1
Standard Deviation	1.341931
Sample Variance	1.800779
Kurtosis	-0.92739
Skewness	0.498316
Range	4
Minimum	1
Maximum	5
Sum	1000
Count	397
Confidence Level(95.0%)	0.132407

Table 2 shows the age summary statistics of the respondents. The mean age is 2.5 with a standard deviation of 1.3. The closeness of the standard deviation to the mean age is an indication of the closeness of age among soccer fans in Ghana, and not spread out at all. With a standard error at 0.06 is an indication of the sample mean is close or around the population mean, and thus a representative of the population.

RO 1: Examining the role of GFA leadership on stadium attendance

3. Leadership in the GPL attracts you to watch matches

397 responses

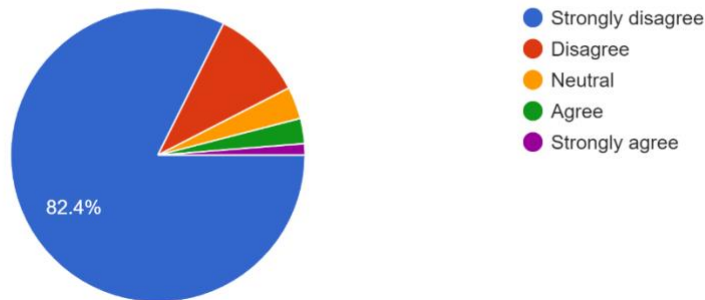


Figure 1. Leadership Factor

Figure 1 examined the role of leadership at the Ghana Football Association as an attractive factor for soccer fans to watch matches in the GPL. 82.4% of the sample indicated that leadership at the GFA does not attract them to watch matches in the stadium, and thus soccer fans will resort to other means such as social media, TV etc., to engage with their favourite sport.

RO 2: Identifying the role of hooliganism on stadium attendance

2. Hooliganism/Vandalism in the GPL attracts you to watch GPL matches

397 responses

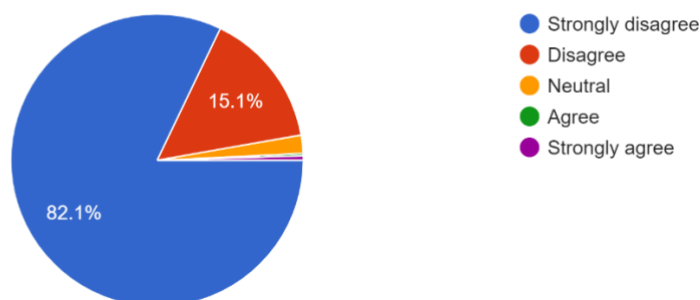


Figure 2. Hooliganism/Vandalism Factor

Figure 2 examined how hooliganism and or vandalism may deter soccer fans in attending the stadium to watch GPL matches. The research revealed 82.1% of the sample strongly disagree hooliganism is an attractive factor to the stadium, and are

dissatisfied with the recent hooliganism and vandalism in the stadium, and thus would not attend the stadium. Furthermore, 15.1% of the sample also disagree that hooliganism is an attractive factor to the stadium. Overall, 97% of the sample are unhappy about hooliganism and vandalism in the stadium, and require immediate attention to remedy the situation.

RO 3: Describing the role of officiating in GPL matches on stadium attendance

1. Officiating in the GPL attracts you to watch matches

397 responses

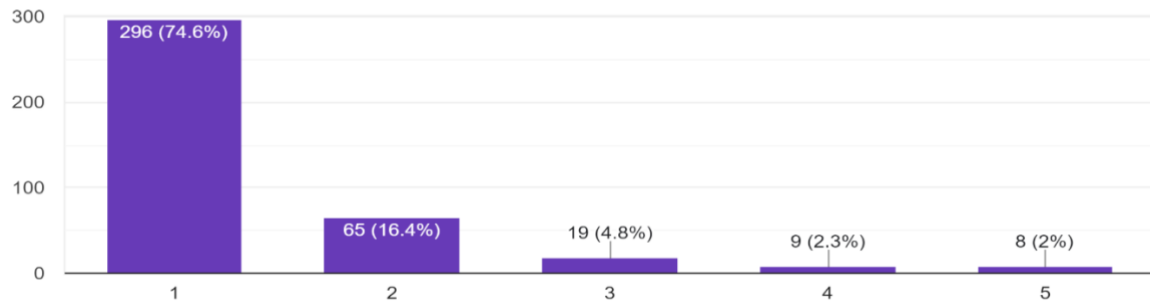


Figure 3. Officiating Factor

Figure 3 examined the role of officiating in stadium attendance among soccer fans in Ghana. A scale of 1-5 was used to ascertain the level of agreement among the soccer fans. 1 meant 'strongly disagree', 2 meant 'disagree', 3 meant 'neutral', 4 meant 'agree' and 5 meant 'strongly agree'. The study revealed that 74.6% of the sample strongly disagree that officiating in the GPL was an attractive factor to watch matches in the stadium. 16.4% of the sample further disagree while only a few remained neutral and very few agreed and strongly agreed officiating was an attractive factor.

RO 4: Analysing the role of advertisement of the GPL on stadium attendance

4. Advertisement and promotion in the GPL attracts you to watch matches

397 responses

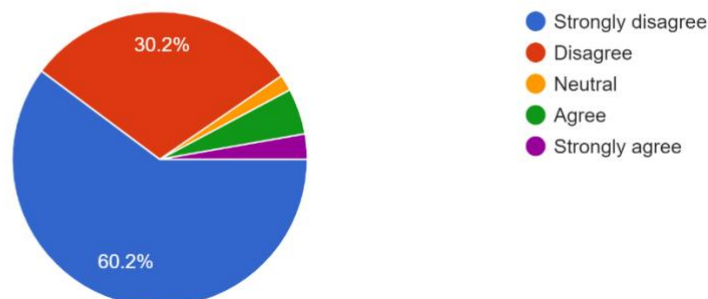


Figure 4. Advertisement and Promotion Factor

Figure 4 examined how advertisement and promotion of the GPL attracted soccer fans into the stadium. The study revealed that 60.2% of the sample strongly disagree

advertisement and promotion attracted them to the stadium to watch matches. Furthermore, 30.2% of the sample disagree advertisement and promotion was an attractive factor to attend the stadium to watch GPL matches. Almost the entire sample shared that, promotion and, advertisement of the GPL was inadequate, and require immediate action.

RO 5: Investigating the role of club management on stadium attendance

5. Club management attracts you to GPL matches

397 responses

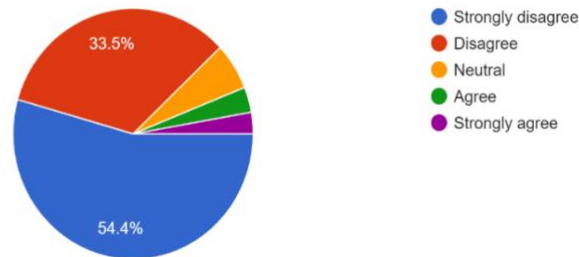


Figure 5. Club Management Factor

Figure 5 examined the role of club management as an attractive factor for soccer fans to attend stadium to watch GPL matches. The study revealed 54.4% of the sample strongly disagree club management was an attractive force to attend stadium to watch their favourite sport –soccer. Furthermore, 33.5% of the sample disagree that club management was an attractive factor. Almost 90% of the sample are dissatisfied with how the various clubs are manage in Ghana, and this is deterring soccer fans from going to the stadium.

Table 3. Correlation

	<i>Officiating</i>	<i>Hooliganism</i>	<i>Leadership</i>	<i>Advertisement</i>	<i>Club Management</i>
Officiating	1				
Hooliganism	0.4559741	1			
Leadership	0.6166301	0.550415365	1		
Advertisement	0.5863161	0.406207425	0.603993	1	
Club Management	0.5232301	0.528681529	0.6981244	0.728267627	1

Table 3 analysed relationships between the factors discovered in the study as deterring soccer fans from attending stadium to watch GPL matches. The study revealed a moderate correlation between hooliganism and officiating ($r=0.45$), also a high correlation existed between leadership and officiating ($r=0.62$), again, there existed an average correlation between leadership and hooliganism ($r=0.55$). Interestingly, the study revealed an average correlation between advertisement and officiating ($r=0.59$), a moderate correlation between advertisement and hooliganism ($r=0.41$), and a high correlation between advertisement and leadership ($r=0.60$). Furthermore, the study showed a moderate correlation between club management and officiating ($r=0.52$), a further moderate correlation also existed between club management and hooliganism ($r=0.53$), a high correlation existed between club

management and leadership ($r=0.70$), and a further high correlation between club management and advertisement ($r=0.73$).

DISCUSSION

The study identified factors affecting stadium attendance among soccer fans in Ghana from three regions: Accra, Kumasi and Ho. The data showed that the age ranges (27-35), (35-44) and (18-26) recorded the highest participants with 27%, 24.9% and 24.2% respectively. These age ranges are not surprising particularly the (27-35) and (35-44) are the abled working class who might be able to afford ticket prices, not occupied so much with academic schedules relative to age range (18-26) and are more youthful who are energetic, vibrant and passionate about the sports they love. Again, the age range (18-26) does not come as a surprise because, these are mainly tertiary students affiliated with college sports, and are likely to translate this passion to the local league. The data further showed that there were 222 married participants which represents 55.9% of the sample, while 167 participants were single which represents 42.1% of the sample and sadly, a few of the participants were divorced which recorded 8 participants representing 2% of the sample.

Furthermore, the data showed that 325 participants were in either the university, technical or vocational institutions which represented 81.9% of the sample. This is an indication of the level of participants' contribution to this study and their perspectives, and views on the GPL cannot be underestimated. However, only a few of the respondents were from high school or had their education level at the senior high college, which recorded 72 participants representing 18.1% of the sample. Clearly, respondents of the study have had some level of education and their views and interests for the GPL needs a consideration.

Finally, the data showed participants were from Greater Accra, which recorded 171 participants representing 43.1% of the sample, while participants from Greater Kumasi also recorded 195 participants, which represents 49.1% of the sample, and the Volta region, recorded 31 participants representing 7.8% of the sample. The data clearly shows majority of football fans in Ghana come from the Greater Kumasi followed by Greater Accra with least representations from the Volta region of Ghana, and this may be a concern for future studies.

In line with research objective one (RO 1), the study identified leadership at the GFA as a factor deterring fans from stadium attendance in the GPL. This finding is in line with Aboagye et al. (2021) and Kwaw (2021) who note that soccer fans in Ghana prefer to use social media to consume their favourite sport – soccer. Again, this finding is also in agreement with Sienu (2023) who note that, soccer fans in Ghana are reluctant to go to the stadium, and would choose social media to consume their favourite sport. This study reveal the underlining cause for the attitudinal change among soccer fans in Ghana, that many of them are not satisfied with leadership of the GFA and thus reluctant to go to the stadium.

From research objective two (RO 2), the study revealed hooliganism/vandalism as a factor discouraging soccer fans from attending the stadium to watch matches. This is not surprising, as in as much, as soccer fans enjoy their favourite sport, their safety and health is a priority and they would not compromise on it. In addition, the finding supports the recent incidence of violence in the 2023/2024 GPL involving Asante Kotoko and Nations FC in Kumasi on Sunday, March 24, 2024 (Ghana Football

Association, 2024). Such acts deter fans from going to the stadium, and needs attention.

In line with RO 3, the study identified officiating as an unattractive factor impelling stadium attendance among soccer fans in Ghana. There is no research or little in this particular area in an attempt to understand how officiating of GPL matches affected soccer fans' stadium attendance. Hence, this study bridge the gap by discovering a new variable playing a role for the attitudinal change among soccer fans in Ghana. It is therefore not surprising as there has been recent backlash on officiating in the GPL with lack of Virtual Assisted Referee (VAR) been the main issue among other factors.

The study further identified advertisement and promotion (RO 4) as factor discouraging fans from stadium attendance. This finding is in line with an article by Okuley (2023) who indicated the recent pull-away of the headline sponsor – BetPawa from the GPL cited poor visibility, and poor branding as some of the reasons.

The study revealed club management as a factor (RO 5) further discouraging soccer fans from attending stadium to watch GPL matches. This finding is in line with the comment from the chairperson of the Ghana League Club Association (GHALCA), Mr. Kudjo Fianoo, who stated that, clubs should have PROs to beat up interest in the league (Zurek, 2021).

Finally, the study showed that there existed moderate correlation between hooliganism and officiating. This is bound to happen, if soccer fans are not happy or satisfied with officiating in GPL matches, the possibility of hooting at officials may be high. Again, the high correlation between leadership and officiating holds as leadership of the GFA is to ensure there is free, fair and transparent games to minimize the possibility of poor officiating. Furthermore, the correlation that existed between leadership and hooliganism also holds in that, it behoves on leadership of the GFA to engage stakeholders and educate them, and find out why these acts among soccer fans happen. Failure on leadership in engaging stakeholders regularly and consistently may have that high probability of hooliganism happening in the GPL.

Surprisingly, the correlation that existed between advertisement and officiating and hooliganism present a new finding to the researcher and future studies may look into this. However, the relationship between advertisement and leadership is valid as there is an effort or responsibility on the part of leadership, to project the league as a product to create its visibility to attract fans.

Lastly, the relationship that existed between club management and officiating, hooliganism, leadership and advertisement does not come as a surprise. Club owners, coaches, staff and stakeholders should make a conscious effort to engage their various fan base to coach them on hooliganism and vandalism to abate such practices in the stadium. In addition, the club management should ensure they project visibility for the teams to attract the fan-base they want, thereby attracting sponsors for sponsorship. All these are feasible on good leadership at the club level.

CONCLUSION

In an attempt to discover the factors that have slowed and halted stadium attendance among soccer fans in the GPL, the study revealed leadership, hooliganism, advertisement and promotion, officiating and club management as factors preventing soccer fans to go to the stadium, and thus adopt other platforms as social media to consume their favourite sports –soccer in Ghana. It is therefore, necessary the GFA,

who owns and run the GPL, adopt a strategic change approach to address these issues affecting stadium attendance. The literature in this study has shown, major soccer leagues from Europe, and Global North, soccer fans adopt both medium (social media and stadium attendance) to consume their favourite sport, but this is not the case in Ghana.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

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