

# Empathy To Drive Football Fan Engagement in 2021

Submitted by: Mediacells

Wednesday, 13 January 2021

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After a year of mostly fanless sports stadiums Mediacells asks, what are the implications for physical-digital event experiences in 2021?

In 2020, English Premier League clubs posted over 80k messages, attracting 280+ million fan engagements\*.

The Mediacells Club Social Top 100+ applies a data technique to present the most engaging club social activity and then overlays a human lens to identify emerging trends in fan behaviour.

Empathy is a strong social media theme in 2020. Last year's top 100 tweets show over a million likes, retweets, replies and mentions surrounding positive, off-the-pitch sentiments expressed by fans from Premier League clubs.

There are many successful posts showing empathy for others. For example, tributes to healthcare workers or victims of the Beirut port explosion.

Fans echo club sentiments, sometimes berating the graceless, more attention-grabbing members of the social media community, particularly around the tragic passing of Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola's mother.

Brad Rees, CEO, Mediacells commented on the emerging Empathy trend in club social media:

"UK Football's interactions on Twitter contradict the accepted narrative around the degrading social effect of social media. AFC Marine may have lost 0-5 against Spurs in the FA Cup on January 10, 2021 but they won GBP30k in virtual tickets, a substantial amount attributed to @SpursOfficial promotions. Manchester United's Marcus Rashford has become an advocate for the social good off the pitch and when he influenced UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson's U-turn on free school meals for poor kids, the loudest digital applause came from rivals Manchester City, Liverpool FC and far beyond the football family."

The power of football to move and be moved is captured in the kind of messaging which commemorates the passing of legends like Maradona, Gérard Houllier and even Black Panther star Chadwick Boseman.

There are few surprises in the popularity of social posts that rejoice or celebrate, attracting 3.5 million engagements, 59% of top 100 post engagements. Last season's Premier League winners, Liverpool, amplified jubilant emotions to good effect.

Lighter messaging notes containing camaraderie and banter are on the rise, attracting 2.2 million engagements (15%).

To request access to the full report contact [insights@mediacells.com](mailto:insights@mediacells.com)

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\*Twitter engagement is a native metric and is calculated by combining likes, retweets, replies, @mentions.