

**Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research**

**High National School of Journalism and Information Sciences**



**The Impact of Social Media on Sports Journalists' Coverage of the Football Transfer Market.**

**Content Analysis of Fabrizio Romano's Coverage of the 2024 Winter Transfer Window for the Top 6 Clubs in the English Premier League on 'X' (Twitter).**

**Dissertation submitted to the Department of Journalism in partial  
fulfilment of a Master's degree.**

**Journalism and Sports Communication Specialty**

**Directed by:**

Mohammed Elamine  
SAADAOU

**Supervised by:**

Dr. Djamel BOUCHAKOUR

**Jury:**

**President:** Pr. Cherif DRIS

**Supervisor:** Dr. Djamel BOUCHAKOUR

**Member:** Dr. Abdelhak BOUIFER.

**Academic Year: 2023/2024**

المدرسة الوطنية العليا للصحافة وعلوم الإعلام  
قسم: صحافة



تأثير وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي على تغطية الصحفيين  
الرياضيين لسوق انتقالات كرة القدم.  
تحليل محتوى لتغطية فابريزيو رومانو لنافذة الانتقالات الشتوية  
لعام 2024 لأفضل 6 أندية في الدوري الإنجليزي الممتاز على  
منصة "X".

مذكرة لنيل شهادة ماستر في علوم الإعلام والاتصال.

تخصص: صحافة واتصال رياضي

تحت إشراف الأستاذ:

د. بوشاقور جمال

إعداد الطالب:

محمد الأمين سعداوي

أعضاء لجنة المناقشة:

الرئيس:

المشرف: د. بوشاقور جمال

المناقش:

السنة الجامعية: 2024/2023

## Dedication

I dedicate the fruit of my humble efforts to those about whom Allah Almighty said:

﴿وَاخْفِضْ لَهُمَا جَنَاحَ الذُّلِّ مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ وَقُلْ رَبِّ ارْحَمْهُمَا كَمَا رَبَّيَانِي صَغِيرًا﴾  
[ [الإسراء](#): 24 ]

To my father, may Allah protect him.

To my mother, may Allah protect her.

To my siblings and all my friends.

To everyone who believed in me.

## Acknowledgments

God Almighty said, "If you are grateful, I will surely increase you" (Surah Ibrahim, Ayah 7).

All praise is due to Allah, praise that is equal to His blessings and matches His increase, and thanks to Him for enabling us to complete this work.

I extend my deepest thanks and appreciation to my supervising professor, Dr. Bouchakour Djamel, who generously provided me with guidance and direction throughout the duration of this thesis. Words cannot fully express your position and grace. May God reward you with goodness.

I also extend my utmost gratitude to all my teachers, from the beginning of my academic journey to this stage, who taught me a letter or a word.

I would like to thank my family for motivating me, standing by me, and providing for me throughout my life. My dad, who is always my safe shelter and refuge; my mother, who is my remedy and soul; my brother Ayman, who is my supporter and big brother; and Amina, my little princess and lovely sister.

Special thanks to all my friends—Salah, Miyou, Islem, Allawa, Moh, Farouk and all my friends—for supporting me and always being here with me, forever.

Finally, I must also extend my thanks to everyone who contributed to this work, whether from afar or nearby.

**Abstract:**

This research explores the impact of social media on sports journalists' coverage of the football transfer market, focusing on the freelance journalist Fabrizio Romano's coverage during the 2024 winter transfer window for the top six Premier League clubs on 'X'. Utilizing the two-step flow of communication theory, the study examines how Romano's role as an opinion leader shapes public discourse. The research employs content analysis to evaluate Romano's use of visuals, language, hashtags, and sourcing practices to establish credibility and engage audiences. By assessing audience engagement metrics, the study aims to understand the reach and impact of his content, offering insights into the evolving nature of sports journalism in the digital age.

**Keywords:** Social Media, Sports Journalism, Football Transfer Market, Fabrizio Romano, 'X'.

**Résumé :**

Cette recherche examine l'impact des médias sociaux sur la couverture du marché des transferts de football par les journalistes sportifs, en se concentrant sur la couverture du journaliste indépendant Fabrizio Romano de la fenêtre de transfert hivernale 2024 pour les six principaux clubs de la Premier League sur 'X'. En utilisant la théorie du flux de communication en deux étapes, l'étude explore comment le rôle de Romano en tant que leader d'opinion façonne le discours public. La recherche analyse l'utilisation par Romano des visuels, du langage, des hashtags et des pratiques des sources pour établir sa crédibilité et engager les audiences. En évaluant les métriques d'engagement du public, l'étude vise à comprendre la portée et l'impact de son contenu, offrant des perspectives sur la nature évolutive du journalisme sportif à l'ère numérique.

**Mots-clés :** Réseaux Sociaux, Journalisme Sportif, Marché des Transferts de Football, Fabrizio Romano, 'X'.

## ملخص:

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى الكشف عن علاقة تأثير الممارسة الصحفية الرقمية عبر وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي على أحد جوانب الصحافة الرياضية المتمثلة في سوق انتقالات لاعبي كرة القدم، مع التركيز على تغطية الصحفي الحر فابريزيو رومانو لفترة الانتقالات الشتوية لعام 2024 لأفضل ستة أندية في الدوري الإنجليزي الممتاز على منصة 'X'. باستخدام نظرية تدفق المعلومات عبر مرحلتين، تستكشف الدراسة كيف يؤثر رومانو في الخطاب العام كقائد رأي. تحلل الدراسة استخدام رومانو للصور واللغة والاعتماد على المصادر لتعزيز مصداقيته وجذب الجماهير. من خلال تقييم مؤشرات تفاعل الجمهور، تهدف الدراسة إلى فهم مدى تأثير وانتشار محتواه، مقدمة رؤى حول الطبيعة المتطورة للصحافة الرياضية في العصر الرقمي.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي، الصحافة الرياضية، سوق انتقالات كرة القدم، فابريزيو رومانو، "X".

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dedication.....	c
Acknowledgments.....	d
Abstract.....	e
Table of contents.....	g
List of tables.....	i
List of figures.....	j
<b>Introduction</b> .....	1
<b>Chapter 1: Problem statement, research significance and conceptual Framework</b> .....	3
1. Problem statement.....	4
2. Research motivations.....	5
3. Research objectives.....	6
4. Research significance.....	6
5. Conceptual framework.....	7
6. Previous Studies.....	10
<b>Chapter 2: Literature Review</b> .....	13
1.1 Social Media Theoretical Framework.....	14
1.1.1 The Evolution of Social Media.....	14
1.1.2 The Relationship between Social Media and Sports Journalism.....	15
1.1.3 Sports Journalism and Professional Change in the Digital Age.....	18
1.1.4 Social Media, Personal Branding and Influencing.....	21
1.1.5 Sports Journalists and X.....	22
1.2 Sports Journalists Coverage of the Football Transfer Market.....	24
1.2.1 Sports Journalists and the Transfer Story.....	24
1.2.2 The Transfer Market and Rumours.....	25
1.3 Underpinning Theory - The Two-Step Flow of Communication Theory.....	29
1.3.1 Definition of the Theory.....	29

1.3.2 Fundamental Principles.....	30
1.3.3 Relevance to the Research.....	30
<b>Chapter 3: Research design and methodology.....</b>	<b>32</b>
1. Research approach.....	33
1.1 Data collection method.....	33
1.2 Research hypotheses.....	33
2. Research field and sample.....	34
2.1 Research field.....	34
2.2 Research Sample.....	34
<b>Chapter 4: The Practical Framework.....</b>	<b>35</b>
1.1 Data Presentation.....	36
1.2 Content Analysis of Fabrizio Romano's Coverage of the 2024 Winter Transfer Window for the Top 6 Clubs in the English Premier League on ‘X’ ...	39
1.3 Discussion of Results.....	82
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>86</b>
References.....	88

## List of tables

<b>Table Number</b>	<b>Title of table</b>	<b>Page</b>
1	Player Image Category	42
2	Hashtag Usage Category	46
3	Likes Category	50
4	Retweets Category	53
5	Source Category	62
6	Terms Use Category	74
7	Club Mentions Category	76
8	Completed Transfers Category	78
9	The Modelling of the Two Step Flow of Communication Theory based on our Research.	85

## List of figures

Figure Number	Figure Title	Page
1	Player Image Category	44
2	Hashtag Usage Category	48
3	Likes Category	51
4	Source Category	69
5	Club Mentions Category	78

## **Introduction:**

The advent of social media has profoundly transformed the landscape of sports journalism, blurring the boundaries between traditional media and emerging digital platforms. This research delves into the intricate interplay between sports journalists and social media, exploring the impact of these new channels on the coverage of the football transfer market. Specifically, it investigates the influential role played by Fabrizio Romano, a prominent sports journalist, in shaping the discourse surrounding the 2024 winter transfer window for the top six clubs in the English Premier League on the social media platform Twitter (now known as X).

The football transfer market, characterized by its ever-evolving nature and the constant movement of players between clubs, has long been a captivating subject for fans and media alike. The rise of social media has introduced new dynamics to this arena, enabling sports journalists to disseminate information and engage with audiences in real-time. Fabrizio Romano, with his extensive network of sources and substantial following on X, has emerged as a key opinion leader in the realm of football transfer news.

This study draws upon the two-step flow of communication theory (Lazarsfeld et al., 1940), which posits that information flows from mass media to opinion leaders, who then interpret and disseminate it to their respective social networks. Romano's coverage on X during the 2024 winter transfer window serves as a pertinent case study, enabling an exploration of the influential role played by sports journalists as opinion leaders in shaping public discourse and perceptions surrounding football transfers.

By examining Romano's coverage through the lens of the two-step flow theory, this research aims to provide valuable insights into the dynamics of information dissemination within social media networks, the impact of interpersonal influence, and the potential implications for the broader football community. It seeks to unravel the intricate interplay between traditional sports journalism and emerging digital platforms, shedding light on the evolving nature of professional expertise and the challenges faced by sports journalists in maintaining credibility and authority in an increasingly participatory media landscape.

Furthermore, this study delves into the intersection of sports journalism and the phenomenon of misinformation, particularly in the context of the football transfer market. The proliferation of rumors and unverified claims during transfer windows has raised concerns about the reliability and truthfulness of reported information. By examining Romano's coverage, this research aims to contribute to the understanding of how sports journalists navigate the

complexities of misinformation, uphold ethical standards, and maintain public trust in their reporting.

Through a rigorous analysis of Romano's coverage on X during the 2024 winter transfer window, this dissertation seeks to contribute to the academic discourse on the evolving role of sports journalism in the digital age. It promises to offer valuable insights for both practitioners and scholars, fostering a deeper understanding of the impact of social media on the coverage of the football transfer market and the broader implications for the sports journalism profession.

## **CHAPTER 1:**

# **Problem statement, research significance and conceptual Framework**

# **Chapter1: Problem statement, research significance and conceptual Framework**

## **1. Problem statement:**

The world of sports journalism has undergone significant transformations due to the rise of social media platforms, challenging traditional norms and practices. The football transfer market, in particular, has become a focal point of intense media attention and speculation, fuelled by the real-time dissemination of information on social media. Sports journalists, once the gatekeepers of information, now find themselves navigating a complex landscape where rumours, unverified claims, and influencer dynamics shape the discourse surrounding player transfers.

The proliferation of social media has democratized access to information, blurring the lines between professional journalism and user-generated content. Sports journalists must contend with the challenge of maintaining credibility, objectivity, and adhering to journalistic standards in an environment where misinformation can spread rapidly and influence public perception.

Fabrizio Romano, a prominent sports journalist known for his extensive coverage of the football transfer market, has emerged as a central figure in this evolving landscape. His extensive use of the social media platform X (formerly Twitter) during the 2024 Winter Transfer Window for the top six clubs in the English Premier League raises pertinent questions about the impact of social media on sports journalism and the potential implications for the profession.

This research aims to critically examine the interplay between social media and sports journalism, with a particular focus on Fabrizio Romano's coverage of the 2024 Winter Transfer Window. By analysing his use of X, the types of content he shares, and the engagement dynamics with his followers, this study seeks to shed light on the shifting boundaries of sports journalism, the role of influencers, and the potential challenges posed by the dissemination of unverified information.

Furthermore, the research will explore the application of the two-step flow of communication theory in the context of sports journalism and social media. By investigating Fabrizio Romano's position as an opinion leader and the influence he exerts within the football community, this study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how information about football transfers flows through social media channels and the mechanisms through which it shapes public discourse.

Ultimately, this research endeavours to provide valuable insights into the evolving landscape of sports journalism in the digital age, offering empirical evidence and theoretical frameworks to inform discussions around journalistic practices, ethics, and the responsible use of social media platforms in the coverage of the football transfer market.

From this, we present the main research problem of the study:

**How did social media shape the way that Sports Journalists like Fabrizio Romano cover the Football Transfer Market?**

## **1.1 Research questions:**

- How do social media dynamics influence the credibility and objectivity of sports journalists' reporting on football transfers?
- What role does personal branding play in the effectiveness of sports journalists' use of social media platforms?
- How does Fabrizio Romano use 'X' to cover the transfer market?

## **2. Research motivations:**

### **2.1 Personal Reasons:**

- **Interest as a Sports Journalism Student:** As a student studying sports journalism, I'm eager to explore how football news is reported. This research helps me learn more about the profession and improve my skills as a future sports journalist.
- **Dream of Becoming a Sports Reporter:** I aspire to be a sports reporter, and this research is a chance for me to understand how football news is shared. It helps me learn how to tell stories better and prepares me for my future career.
- **Passion for Football:** I've always loved football, finding excitement in its stories and drama. This love fuels my interest in sports journalism, especially in covering football events like transfers.

### **2.1 Objective Reasons:**

- **New Area of Study:** This topic is new and exciting. By studying how social media affects sports reporting, especially in football transfers, we can learn more about something that hasn't been explored much before.
- **Helps Journalists and Clubs:** Learning about social media's impact on sports reporting can help journalists, clubs, and media companies. They can use this information to better reach their audience and share news more effectively.
- **Relevance to Current Trends:** Acknowledging the contemporary relevance of social media's influence on journalism, especially in the context of football transfers, aligning with broader societal trends.

### **3. Research Objectives:**

- **Influence on Reporting Methods:**

- To identify and analyze the specific ways in which the impact of social media shapes the reporting methods employed by sports journalists during the coverage of the football transfer market.
- To explore the implications of social media dynamics on the speed, content, and style of reporting within the context of football transfers.

- **Contribution to Credibility:**

- To examine how social media contributes to the establishment and maintenance of credibility for sports journalists, with a specific focus on the case study of Fabrizio Romano.
- To identify the factors on social media platforms that enhance or detract from the credibility of sports journalists during football transfer market coverage.

- **Strategies Employed by Fabrizio Romano:**

- To investigate the specific strategies employed by Fabrizio Romano on social media platforms to enhance his credibility in the context of covering the football transfer market.
- To understand the key elements of Romano's reporting style and interaction with his audience that contribute to his perceived credibility.

- **Navigating Challenges Posed by Social Media Dynamics:**

- To assess how sports journalists navigate the challenges posed by the dynamic nature of social media to maintain accuracy and credibility during their coverage of the football transfer market.
- To identify and analyze the common challenges faced by sports journalists in balancing immediacy with accuracy in the era of social media reporting.

- **Impact on Narrative and Perception:**

- To measure and analyze the extent to which the credibility of sports journalists, including Fabrizio Romano, impacts the overall narrative and public perception of football transfers within the realm of social media.
- To explore the correlation between journalist credibility and audience trust in shaping the discourse around football transfers on social media

### **4. Research significance:**

The significance of this research lies in its contribution to the field of sports journalism, particularly in the context of the impact of social media on reporting practices and audience

engagement. By focusing on a specific case study of Fabrizio Romano's coverage of the 2024 Winter Transfer Window for the Top 6 Clubs in the English Premier League on a particular platform, this research aims to provide valuable insights into how social media is transforming the way football transfer news is disseminated, consumed, and interacted with by audiences.

Understanding how a prominent sports journalist like Romano utilizes social media for reporting and engaging with audiences can offer practical implications for journalists, media organizations, and sports clubs. By identifying themes in Romano's coverage and analyzing audience interaction through social media features, this research can shed light on effective strategies for leveraging social media platforms to enhance sports journalism practices and audience engagement.

Furthermore, by delving into the implications of social media on sports journalism practices, this research can inform industry professionals and media organizations about the evolving landscape of sports reporting in the digital age. The findings of this study can help stakeholders in the sports journalism industry make informed decisions about utilizing social media effectively, adapting to changing audience preferences, and maximizing the reach and impact of their content.

Overall, this research has the potential to advance knowledge in the field of sports journalism, provide practical insights for professionals, and contribute to ongoing discussions about the intersection of social media, sports reporting, and audience engagement strategies.

## **5. Conceptual framework:**

### **5.1 Social Media Definition**

#### **A. Dictionary definition:**

The Cambridge Learner's Dictionary defines it as forms of electronic communication that allow people to share information using the Internet or mobile phones<sup>1</sup>.

#### **B. Procedural definition:**

Social Media is a digital platform that facilitates the creation, sharing, and exchange of user-generated content and interactions. It typically involves users signing up for accounts, creating

---

<sup>1</sup> Cambridge University Press. "Definition of Social Media." Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/learner-english/social-media> Consulted on February 04<sup>th</sup> 2024 at 09:26 AM.

profiles, connecting with other users, and sharing various forms of content such as text, images, videos, and links. Users can engage with content by liking, commenting, sharing, or messaging other users, thereby fostering communication, collaboration, and networking across virtual communities<sup>1</sup>.

### **C. Operational definition:**

In the context of sports journalism and coverage of the football transfer market, social media encompasses platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, and specialized forums where journalists, clubs, players, agents, and fans participate in discussions, share news, rumours, and updates, and contribute to the dissemination and consumption of information related to player transfers, contract negotiations, club activities, and other developments within the football industry.

## **5.2 Sports Journalism:**

### **A. Procedural definition:**

Sports journalism is the practice of gathering, analysing, and disseminating news and information related to sporting events, athletes, teams, and the sports industry. It involves various procedures such as researching, interviewing athletes, coaches, and stakeholders, attending sporting events, press conferences, and training sessions, writing articles, producing multimedia content, and delivering news through different media channels such as newspapers, magazines, websites, radio, television, and social media platforms. Sports journalists adhere to professional standards of accuracy, fairness, and objectivity while providing in-depth analysis, commentary, and coverage of sporting events to inform and engage sports enthusiasts and the wider audience<sup>2</sup>.

### **B. Operational definition:**

Sports journalism plays a crucial role in mediating the relationship between the football transfer market and the public through various media platforms, including social media. Sports journalists like Fabrizio Romano leverage their expertise, access to sources, and communication channels to report on transfer rumours, negotiations, and official announcements, providing audiences with real-time updates and insights into the dynamic world of football transfers.

---

<sup>1</sup> Boyd, D., & Ellison, N. "Social Network Sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship." *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, (2008) 13(1), 210-230

<sup>2</sup> Boyle, Raymond. "*Sports Journalism: Context and Issues, 1st ed.*" London: Sage. (2006).

Sports journalism encompasses traditional print and broadcast media as well as digital platforms, with social media platforms serving as essential tools for journalists to engage with audiences, verify information, and enhance the immediacy and interactivity of their coverage.

### **5.3 Football Transfer Market:**

#### **A. Procedural definition:**

The football transfer market is an intricate system wherein professional football clubs engage in negotiations and transactions for player acquisitions, sales, loans, or exchanges. It operates within designated transfer windows established by governing bodies, typically occurring twice each year. One of these windows is the winter transfer window, which spans from January 1st to January 31st annually. During this period, clubs have the opportunity to bolster their squads midway through the season, addressing deficiencies or capitalizing on emerging opportunities. Outside of the winter transfer window, the football transfer market also encompasses the summer transfer window, which typically occurs from July 1st to August 31st. This window allows clubs to make significant changes to their rosters ahead of the upcoming season, including strategic signings, player departures, and loan arrangements. Throughout these transfer windows, clubs, players, agents, and regulatory bodies engage in a flurry of negotiations, contract discussions, medical assessments, and administrative processes. These activities collectively shape the composition and competitiveness of football teams across various leagues and competitions<sup>1</sup>.

#### **B. Operational definition:**

The football transfer market is a designated period during which professional football clubs engage in buying, selling, loaning, or exchanging players to strengthen their squads and address strategic needs. The transfer market serves as a focal point for sports journalists like Fabrizio Romano to provide coverage and analysis of player movements, transfer rumours, negotiations, and official announcements. It represents a dynamic and highly anticipated period within the football industry, characterized by intense speculation, strategic manoeuvres, and significant financial transactions. It intersects with my dissertation topic by influencing the content, tone, and audience engagement of sports journalism coverage on social media platforms, as journalists leverage these events to attract and inform football fans.

---

<sup>1</sup> Gernon, Alan. *The Transfer Market: The Insider Stories*. Pitch Publishing Ltd, 2019

## 6. Previous Studies:

### 6.1 First Study:

Simon McEnnis's 2023 study titled "**There He Goes: The Influencer–Sports Journalism of Fabrizio Romano on Twitter and Its Implications for Professionalism**"<sup>1</sup> examined the Twitter practices of prominent influencer and sports journalist Fabrizio Romano through a content and textual analysis of 494 of his tweets and replies in November 2022. Categorizing tweets based on markers of sports journalism practice, the study found that Romano's output prioritized objective transfer news over subjective opinion, subverting expectations of personal branding and influencing. Play-by-play reporting was a minor aspect, contributing to debates on live game coverage significance. Romano's transfer news focused mainly on major European football clubs, consistent with sports journalism's trajectory on digital platforms. Notably, his tweets did not mention human rights issues surrounding the 2022 Qatar World Cup despite it being a major talking point, suggesting normative assumptions that sports journalists scrutinize power and highlight social injustice may not apply universally across all practitioners and contexts, particularly ultra-specialist settings. Overall, the study posits that Romano is professionalizing sports journalism on social media by favouring news over opinion and the professional over the personal.

### 6.2 Second Study:

One such study, titled "**Football Misinformation Matrix: A Comparative Study of 2020 Winter Transfer News in Four European Sports Media Outlets**"<sup>2</sup> by José Luis Rojas Torrijos and Matheus Simoes Mello, sheds light on the issue.

The authors highlight the information overload generated by mainstream sports media during transfer windows. This abundance of news, often delivered through various digital channels, makes it difficult for fans to discern fact from fiction. The sheer volume of information can overwhelm audiences, making them susceptible to believing unsubstantiated rumours presented as confirmed news.

---

<sup>1</sup> McEnnis, Simon. 2023. "There He Goes: The Influencer–Sports Journalism of Fabrizio Romano on Twitter and Its Implications for Professionalism" *Journalism and Media* 4, no. 2: 430-444.

<sup>2</sup> Rojas-Torrijos, Jose Luis, and Matheus Simoes Mello. "Football Misinformation Matrix: A Comparative Study of 2020 Winter Transfer News in Four European Sports Media Outlets." *Journalism and Media* 2, no. 1 (2021): 625-40.

To address this concern, Torrijos and Mello set out to assess the level of misinformation within the coverage of the 2020 winter transfer window by leading European digital sports media outlets. Their study aimed to quantify the prevalence of inaccurate or misleading information surrounding player transfers.

The findings of this study, along with similar investigations, are crucial for comprehending the current landscape of football transfer news. By measuring the extent of misinformation, researchers can raise awareness about the issue and equip fans with tools to critically evaluate the information they encounter during transfer windows.

This knowledge can empower fans to become more discerning consumers of football news, allowing them to differentiate between credible reports and baseless rumours. Furthermore, such studies can inform the practices of sports journalists, encouraging them to prioritize accuracy and responsible reporting during this highly dynamic and information-rich period.

The work by Torrijos and Mello represents a valuable starting point for a deeper exploration of misinformation within the football transfer market. Future research could delve into the specific types of misinformation prevalent during transfer windows, the factors that contribute to its spread, and potential solutions to mitigate its impact on fans and the overall information ecosystem surrounding the sport. By building upon these initial investigations, researchers can contribute to a more transparent and trustworthy environment for football transfer news, benefiting both fans and journalists alike.

### **6.3 Third Study:**

Simon Chadwick's conceptual study titled "**The Science behind Football Transfer Rumours**"<sup>1</sup> published in *The Conversation*, explored the factors fuelling the proliferation of transfer rumours in football journalism. Drawing from his expertise and observations, Chadwick identified several key drivers: the opaque nature of transfer negotiations fostering an information vacuum, the role of agents and intermediaries deliberately leaking or planting stories, the insatiable 24/7 demand for content from media outlets, the power dynamics between clubs, media, and fans where rumours serve various agendas, and the underlying psychology tapping into human tendencies for gossip and the desire for insider knowledge. Without explicitly stating a methodology or data collection process, the conceptual analysis highlighted

---

<sup>1</sup> Chadwick, Simon. 2013. *The Science behind Football Transfer Rumours*. *The Conversation*. Available online: <https://theconversation.com/the-science-behind-football-transfer-rumours-16293> (accessed on January 13st, 2024 at 10:42 AM).

how the unique dynamics of the football transfer market, coupled with the modern sports media landscape's demands, create an environment ripe for transfer rumours to thrive, becoming an integral part of sports journalism and fan discourse. This study is highly relevant to my research in: Understanding the drivers of transfer rumours: Chadwick's study provides insights into the underlying factors that fuel and sustain transfer rumours in football journalism. This understanding can inform my analysis of how these rumours manifest and spread on social media platforms like 'X'. Opaque nature of transfer dealings: The study highlights how the lack of transparency in transfer negotiations creates an information vacuum that rumours fill. I can examine how social media may exacerbate or alleviate this issue in my analysis of Romano's coverage. Role of agents and intermediaries: Chadwick points out that agents and intermediaries may deliberately leak information or plant stories. I can investigate whether social media has changed the dynamics of this practice and how Romano navigates or contributes to it. Demand for constant content: The study underscores how the 24/7 news cycle drives media outlets to report on and speculate about potential transfers. I can analyse whether this demand is amplified or moderated on social media platforms like 'X' and how Romano's coverage is influenced by it. Power dynamics: Chadwick discusses how clubs, media, and fans use rumours for various agendas. My research can explore how social media may have shifted these power dynamics and whether Romano's coverage reflects or challenges these dynamics.

**Chapter 2.**  
**Literature Review**

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Social Media Theoretical Framework

#### 2.1.1 The Social Media Evolution:

In addition to providing entertainment, social media has emerged as a primary source of news and current information for many people around the globe. This is one of the factors contributing to the swift expansion of social networks and the phenomenon known as the "social media evolution."

First of all, what is social media? According to Merriam-Webster, social media is defined as *"forms of electronic communication (such as websites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (such as video)."* Broadly speaking, Boyd and Ellison define social networking sites, apps, or platforms as tools that enable individuals to create a public profile, establish a network of connections, and "view and interact with" these connections and profiles<sup>1</sup>. A 2019 report by the Pew Research Center revealed that 72 percent of American adults use some form of social media. This is a significant increase from 2005, the year after Facebook launched, when only five percent of American adults used social media.

How did it all begin? While social networks have evolved over the years, the concept of social media is not entirely new. Its origins can be traced back to the telephone rather than the computer. In the 1950s, the practice of phone phreaking emerged, which Brett Borders describes as the rogue exploration of the telephone network. Phreakers hacked into unused corporate voicemail boxes to host the first blogs and podcasts. In the 1960s, email was introduced, but the internet didn't become publicly accessible until 1991<sup>2</sup>.

In 2000, the rise of numerous social networking sites significantly boosted social media. This growth was driven by the creation of networks among individuals and groups with shared interests in music, education, movies, and friendship<sup>3</sup>. Some prominent platforms that emerged in the 2000s included LunarStorm, Six Degrees, Cyworld, Wikipedia, MySpace, LinkedIn, lastFM, Facebook, Yahoo!360, and YouTube<sup>4</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> Carr, C. T., & Hayes, R. A. social media: Defining, developing, and divining. *Atlantic Journal of Communication*, (2015), 23(1), 46–65.

<sup>2</sup> Borders, B. (2009). A brief history of social media. <http://socialmediarockstar.com/history-of-social-media> Retrieved December 05, 2010,

<sup>3</sup> Edosomwan, S. O. The history of social media and its impact on business. *The Journal of Applied Management & Entrepreneurship* (2011), 16(3):79-91, 3-9

<sup>4</sup> Junco, R., Heiberger, G., & Loken, E. The effect of Twitter on college student engagement and grades. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning*, (2011), 27, 119-132.

The rapid advancement of technologies and digital services has shifted the primary devices from desktops and laptops to smartphones and tablets, with high-speed wireless internet becoming widely available in homes, businesses, and public spaces. The introduction of social media apps for smartphones has enabled users to access social networks anytime and anywhere. As a result, many people have developed the habit of checking online information with just a few clicks. This shift has led to a transition from traditional media outlets to digital news sources. Media organizations quickly recognized the need to utilize social media tools to retain their audiences and, crucially, to generate revenue to sustain their operations<sup>1</sup>. In his book ‘Mobile and Social Media Journalism’, Anthony Adornato notes that people are increasingly consuming news on social media platforms, engaging with it in real-time as events unfold<sup>2</sup>. Consequently, social media has significantly influenced how people perceive journalism today.

### **2.1.2 The Relationship between Social Media and Sports Journalism:**

In his review of social media literature, Harper contends that before defining the relationship between social media and journalism, it is essential to elucidate journalism's purpose and the challenges it faces within the broader media industry<sup>3</sup>. In a letter published in the American Journalism Review, Kevin Klose stated that journalism, at its core, involves witnessing events and documenting them for others to observe and comprehend<sup>4</sup>. Likewise, Pamela J. Podger expressed in an American Journalism Review article that journalism revolves around listening to those who have something to convey<sup>5</sup>. Social media has demonstrated its enduring significance for journalists over the years. Nearly all journalists now integrate social media into their reporting and news dissemination processes, with many considering it essential<sup>6</sup>. Journalists and news organizations globally have proposed various strategies to enhance journalism in the digital age, such as embracing multimedia storytelling, customization and personalization, utilizing online video (particularly for newspapers), leveraging mobile devices (previously, the iPad was seen as the future of newspapers), developing mobile apps, implementing paywalls, and now exploring virtual and augmented reality technologies<sup>7</sup>. Each of these strategies has initially been

---

<sup>1</sup> Harper, R. A. The Social Media Revolution: Exploring the impact on journalism and news media organizations. *Inquiries Journal*, (2010), [202].

<sup>2</sup> Adornato, A. *Mobile and social media journalism a practical guide for multimedia journalism*. Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group. 2022.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Klose, K. Notes from a new dean. *American Journalism Review*, (2009). 31(3), 2.

<sup>5</sup> Podger, Pamela J. “The Limits of Control.” *American Journalism Review* 31.4 (2009): P33-37.

<sup>6</sup> Weaver, D. H., Willnat, L. Changes in U.S. journalism: How do journalists think about social media? *Journalism Practice*, (2016). 10(7), 844–855.

<sup>7</sup> Lewis, S. C., & Molyneux, L. A decade of research on social media and journalism: Assumptions, blind spots, and a way forward. *Media and Communication*, (2018). 6(4), 11–23.

met with high expectations that were later moderated by a more realistic assessment<sup>1</sup>. In the context of journalism, some argue that after initially being hailed as a saviour and a crucial catalyst for connection and social change, social media has now faced criticism for being a breeding ground for misinformation and fake news<sup>2</sup>.

According to Lewis and Molyneux, “studies of social media and journalism frequently rely on two overarching narratives, one addressing normalization and one addressing control. Normalization focuses on changes in how journalists themselves relate to their profession and its institutional role, while control focuses on changes in journalists’ relationships with their audiences and content. In both cases, the focus is on change, with the advent of digital communication - and specifically social media - being the fulcrum about which these changes have occurred. For instance, a greater adoption of social media is usually juxtaposed with a diminishing emphasis on “traditional” journalistic practices or roles.”<sup>3</sup>. This narrative suggests that some journalists who use social media as a tool to support their reporting “imposed existing journalistic norms on the new platforms and in others adopted elements of social media as newly journalistic”<sup>4</sup>, which has been called a “hybrid normalization”<sup>5</sup>. In *The SAGE handbook of digital journalism*, Hermida says “the new normal on social media is characterized by the hybrid mixing of contexts and practices as boundaries collapse between personal and professional, public and private”<sup>6</sup>.

With news organizations becoming more prominent on social media, a two-way communication channel has emerged between journalists and their audiences. This dynamic has been shown to assist journalists in performing their roles more effectively by fostering greater audience engagement. Adornato suggests that journalists who actively engage with their followers are perceived as more credible and receive more positive ratings compared to those who only use social media to disseminate news<sup>7</sup>. In her blog, Alyssa Rosenblatt highlights how two-way communication enables journalists to transform traditional news outlets into conversational platforms through social media. This openness fosters a direct interaction between audiences

---

<sup>1</sup> Creech, B., & Mendelson, A. L. Imagining the journalist of the future: Technological visions of journalism education and news work. *The Communication Review*, (2015). 18(2), 142–165.

<sup>2</sup> Frish, Y., & Greenbaum, D. Is social media a cesspool of misinformation? Clearing a path for patient-friendly safe spaces online. *The American Journal of Bioethics: AJOB*, (2017). 17(3), 19–21.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> Lasorsa, D. L., Lewis, S. C., & Holton, A. E. Normalizing Twitter: Journalism practice in an emerging communication space. *Journalism Studies*, (2012). 13(1), 19–36.

<sup>5</sup> Bentivegna, S., & Marchetti, R. Journalists at a crossroads: Are traditional norms and practices challenged by Twitter? *Journalism*, 19(2), (2018). 270–290.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> OP:CIT

and journalists. Rosenblatt points to Keri L. Blakinger, an American journalist and author focusing on the American prison system, as an exemplar. Blakinger actively engages with her audience, adopting a conversational tone and showcasing authenticity while effectively reporting the news. This approach contributes to establishing credibility and rapport with her audience<sup>1</sup>.

Similarly, Kurt Wagner argues in his article that social media makes it easier for journalists to build a reputation. “The standard newspaper byline now includes other elements, like Facebook and Twitter profiles where journalists can interact with readers, share unfiltered thoughts, and amass a following that can travel with them from one job to the next.” The drawback, however, is that “moving fast means people are more prone to making mistakes, or worse, careless reporting” and “the race to be first is real” but “does not always correlate with getting things right.”<sup>2</sup>.

Journalists and news organizations are not the only ones who benefit from the shift from one-way communication in traditional journalism to two-way conversations. It gives audiences a tool to voice their opinions to the world. In a book titled *Groundswell: Winning in a World Transformed by Social Technologies*, Charlene Li and Josh Bernoff argue social media has empowered individuals and has forced the idea of “news media” to morph whether or not the industry has desired this change<sup>3</sup>. In the book *Twitter Power*, Joel Comm states social media allows anyone to publish ideas at a relatively non-existent price<sup>4</sup>. By creating a two-way communication approach between journalists and readers, Rosenblatt states that the readers get to know the journalist on a more personal level and not just what they cover, allowing the readers to see that there is a real person behind the news<sup>5</sup>. However, it allows certain readers to personally reach journalists they disagree with, and some journalists can be the target of aggressive harassment<sup>6</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> Rosenblatt, A. Two-way communication is the new journalism. <https://medium.com/@arosenblatt21/two-way-communication-is-the-new-journalism-1e4962b10c22> Consulted on April, 15<sup>th</sup> 2024 at 10:22 AM.

<sup>2</sup> Wagner, K. Three Major Ways Social Media is Changing Journalism <https://medium.com/analyzing-media-bias-case-studies/the-weaponization-of-social-media-d8c0d5664b14> Illuminate, Santa Clara University. Consulted on April, 18<sup>th</sup> 2024 at 10:36AM.

<sup>3</sup> Li, Charlene, and Josh Bernoff. *Groundswell: Winning in a World Transformed by Social Technologies*. Boston: Harvard Business Press, 2008

<sup>4</sup> Comm, Joel. *Twitter Power: How to Dominate Your Market One Tweet at a Time*. Hoboken, N.J.: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2009.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> OP: CIT

### 2.1.3 Sports Journalism and Professional Change in the Digital Age

Journalism stands out among professions because it lacks typical markers of occupational closure, such as strict licensing and defined entry routes seen in fields like medicine and law. However, it still qualifies as a profession because of its strong commitment to providing essential services to the public, a fundamental aspect of its occupational ideology<sup>1</sup>. Throughout history, journalists have faced challenges in establishing firm control over their profession, often due to the close association with public relations. This proximity has hindered efforts to elevate the status and credibility of journalism<sup>2</sup>.

In sports journalism, professionalism is a significant focus, especially due to its perception as a "toy department." To enhance its professional standing, sports journalism needs to uphold key occupational values like objectivity, impartiality, autonomy, and public service. Additionally, sports journalists must demonstrate a dedication to quality journalism by employing critical and investigative approaches in their work<sup>3</sup>. Sports journalists are anticipated to take independent positions that allow them to highlight instances of corruption, abuse of power, and social justice concerns. These endeavours may involve source-driven investigations, akin to Andrew Jennings' impactful work on uncovering the FIFA corruption scandal<sup>4</sup>. Alternatively, some sports journalists, like U.S. sportswriter David Zirin, adopt more distanced commentator roles. Zirin consistently tackles social issues related to sports, such as power dynamics, inequality, and human rights, in various platforms including his blog, books, and mainstream outlets like Sports Illustrated. This underscores the encouragement for sports journalists to leverage their influence, privilege, and audience reach to amplify the voices of marginalized and underrepresented groups<sup>5</sup>.

Yet, sports journalists must uphold standards of quality journalism despite the challenges posed by the digital age, which have shaken the very core of their professional domain. The rise of

---

<sup>1</sup> Aldridge, Meryl and Evetts, Julia, *Rethinking the concept of professionalism: The case of journalism*, British Journal of Sociology, 2003, Vol.54, No.1, pp. 547–64.

<sup>2</sup> Abbott, Andrew, *The Systems of Professions: An Essay on the Division of Expert Labour*, 1st ed, Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1988.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> Rowe, David, Sports journalism and the FIFA scandal: Personalication, co-optation and investigation, *Communication & Sport*, 2017, Vol.5, No.1, pp. 515–33.

<sup>5</sup> Forde, Shawn and Wilson, Brian, Radical sports journalism? Reflections on 'alternative' approaches to covering sport-related social issues, *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 2018, Vol.35, No.1, pp. 66–75.

digital platforms has blurred the lines of exclusivity, as fans themselves now provide opinions and analysis on sports events, challenging the traditional role of sports journalists<sup>1</sup>.

The perception of sports journalists as "fans with notebooks" and the perceived absence of professional distance with sources, as well as criticality in reporting, have raised doubts about their uniqueness and differentiation from bloggers<sup>2</sup>. Sports journalists have faced growing disempowerment within the confined source environment of professional sports. This situation has rendered them vulnerable to efforts aimed at censoring and controlling their work, often through threats of expulsion or exclusion from press briefings and conferences<sup>3</sup>. Boyle highlights that journalist once had intimate access to athletes, but this changed in the 1980s as "money flowed into the higher echelons of professional sport from television, the cultural and financial gap between journalists and sports stars grew apace".

Consequently, football clubs have become increasingly brand and publicity conscious, leading to tighter media management and supervision of journalists<sup>4</sup>. For example, Bradshaw and Minogue illustrate the ban imposed on the Newcastle Chronicle by the UK football club Newcastle United in 2013 due to its coverage of a fan protest against the club's owner, Mike Ashley. Moreover, clubs have significantly invested in their own media operations to support their assertive global commercial strategies<sup>5</sup>.

These transformations have ramifications for sports journalists' access to professional athletes, as sports clubs and organizations have evolved into both competitors and sources themselves<sup>6</sup>. Sports journalists have faced challenges in delineating themselves from public relations, with seasoned newspaper sports journalists transitioning into team media roles, blurring the boundaries further.

Efforts to elevate practice standards have become increasingly challenging in digital realms, where clickbait reigns supreme and work routines have intensified. Practitioners are now tasked

---

<sup>1</sup> Hutchins, Brett and Rowe, David, *Sport Beyond Television: The Internet, Digital Media and the Rise of Networked Sport*, 1st ed, London: Routledge. 2012.

<sup>2</sup> McEnnis, Simon, Playing on the same pitch: Attitudes of sports journalists towards fan bloggers, *Digital Journalism*, 2017, Vol.5, No.1, pp. 549–66.

<sup>3</sup> Sherwood, Merryn, Nicholson, Matthew, and Marjoribanks, Tim, Access, agenda building and information subsidies: Media relations in professional sport, *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 2017, Vol.52, No.1, pp. 992–1007.

<sup>4</sup> OP: CIT.

<sup>5</sup> Bradshaw, Tom and Minogue, Daragh, *Sports Journalism: The State of Play*, 1st ed, Abingdon: Routledge. 2020.

<sup>6</sup> Sherwood, Merryn, Nicholson, Matthew, and Marjoribanks, Tim, Controlling the message and the medium? The impact of sports organisations' digital and social channels on media access, *Digital Journalism*, 2017, Vol.5, No.1, pp. 513–31.

with writing stories, posting blogs, managing social media, and producing videos in a 24/7 rolling news environment<sup>1</sup>.

The online sports desk has morphed into what can be described as a "toy department within a toy department," as the office-based routines of digitally native sports journalists diverge from the traditional centrality of fieldwork in professional culture. Historically, reporting live events has been a cornerstone of sports journalism practice.

However, in the digital era, sports journalists increasingly opt to live blog and/or live tweet the spectacle, drawn by the immediacy afforded by digital and social media platforms<sup>2</sup>. Technological disruptions have prompted Randles to question the relevance of the match report, a more traditional form of sports journalism practice. Instead, coverage of off-field issues has gained prominence, as highlighted by Moritz and Mirer, who state, "There's no professional currency in being the first to report that the Yankees beat the Red Sox, 3-2, in a game. There is professional currency in being the first to report that Aaron Boone will be fired as the Yankees manager."

Furthermore, shifting dynamics in digital media have influenced decision-making regarding coverage and presentation. Stories are becoming shorter due to concerns about the attention spans of digital audiences, often sacrificing depth, detail, and context. There are also growing concerns about plagiarism among journalists, underscoring the heightened need for ethical adherence in attributing sources. Additionally, editors, driven by the pursuit of clicks, tend to centralize coverage around major sports and elite teams<sup>3</sup>.

In recent years, football's top professional leagues in Europe such as England's Premier League, Germany's Bundesliga, and Spain's Primera Liga have experienced significant commercialization. Lucrative TV rights deals, propelled by satellite technology, have opened doors for commercial expansion through sponsorship, advertising, and marketing. In this landscape, sports journalism plays an ideological role as a promotional tool for hyper-

---

<sup>1</sup> Moritz, Brian, The story versus the stream: Digital media's influence on newspaper sports journalism, *International Journal of Sport Communication*, 2015, Vol.8, No.1, pp. 397–410.

<sup>2</sup> McEnnis, Simon, *Sports journalism and cultural authority in the digital age*, in *Transforming Sport: Knowledges, Practices and Structures* (s.dir) Burdsey, Dan, Carter, Thomas, and Doidge, Mark, Abingdon: Routledge, 2018, pp. 207–19.

<sup>3</sup> Cable, Jonathan and Mottershead, Glyn, *Can I click it? Yes, you can: Sport journalism, Twitter and clickbait*, *Ethical Space: The International Journal of Communication Ethics*, 2018, Vol.15, No.1, pp. 69–80.

commercialized sport. Consequently, mainstream media often delivers homogeneous content, lacking in diversity and plurality<sup>1</sup>.

### **2.1.4 Social Media, Personal Branding and Influencing:**

Social media platforms have empowered sports journalists with greater individualization and autonomy, challenging the control and surveillance traditionally held by editors and news organizations. Journalists are now expected to cultivate their own personal brands on social media. Brand building encompasses journalists adopting marketing techniques to shape not only the perception of their reporting but also their personal image. These strategies may involve providing insights into their personal lives alongside their professional work, fostering communities, discussing themselves, highlighting accolades, and engaging emotionally with audiences, potentially leading to collaboration.

Additionally, brand building entails crafting a distinct persona, such as Romano's identity as a transfer specialist, which enhances self-commodification and market value. Moreover, celebrified journalism features a consistent self-presentation across various social media platforms, reflecting Romano's multi-platform and multimedia approach<sup>2</sup>.

As a result, journalists often prioritize subjectivity over objectivity in the process of building their personal brands. This shift is reflected in the observation that "journalists ... use Twitter primarily to argue with others and to share their opinions." The emphasis on subjectivity in personal branding has led to the notion of a shift toward emotional journalism<sup>3</sup>.

The concept of "influencer" and "influencing" extends beyond personal branding and brand building as it entails commercial relationships and transforms advertising into a form of content<sup>4</sup>. Romano incorporates strong influencer elements alongside traditional journalistic practices, as he is engaged by both news and non-news entities. For instance, in August 2021, Romano featured in a brief video on the Spanish football club Valencia's Twitter account to

---

<sup>1</sup> English, Peter, *Sports journalism*, in Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Communication (s.dir) Nussbaum, Jon, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018, pp. 1–18.

<sup>2</sup> Olausson, Ulrika, The celebrified journalist: Journalistic self-promotion and branding in celebrity constructions on Twitter, *Journalism Studies*, 2018, Vol.19, No.1, pp. 2379–99.

<sup>3</sup> Beckett, Charlie, Towards an emotionally networked journalism (long read version), Polis | LSE's Journalism and Society Think Tank, <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/polis/2017/08/31/sense-and-sensibility-towards-an-emotionally-networked-journalism/>, Accessed on April 24th, 2024, 09:41 AM.

<sup>4</sup> Duffy, Brooke Erin, *Social media influencers*, in *The International Encyclopedia of Gender, Media, and Communication* (s.dir) Ross, Karen, Bachmann, Ingrid, Cardo, Valentina, Moorti, Sujata, and Scarcelli, Cosimo Marco, Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2020, pp. 1–4.

announce the signing of Brazilian striker Marcos Andre from Real Valladolid. This blurs the line between team media and journalism.

Furthermore, Romano's influence extends to both the industry and audiences, evident in his catchphrase, "Here We Go," which has become synonymous with the confirmation of completed deals<sup>1</sup>. Brand building and influencing have presented professional challenges for journalists. Molyneux and Holton observe that self-promotion "does not align with long-standing ideals of journalistic objectivity and the division between editorial and advertising practices." Similarly, Brems et al. found a tension between traditional one-way information dissemination and networked, interactive communication. This tension involves balancing the presentation of facts with opinion and integrating personal and professional aspects.

### **2.1.5 Sports Journalists and X:**

Sports journalists utilize Twitter for various purposes, such as disseminating news and opinions, gathering story leads, and promoting their work. However, Twitter's accessibility, allowing any user to express opinions on sports, has sparked concerns regarding professional expertise and distinctiveness within the field<sup>2</sup>. Sports journalists have come to recognize that some traditional norms and values do not seamlessly translate onto social media platforms. For example, the concept of a scoop a story not previously reported on has a limited lifespan on social media before competitors react. Initially, sports journalists attempted to withhold scoops for publication in the morning newspaper, but now such stories are often released on Twitter, with core news platforms focusing more on providing context and analysis.

Consequently, Twitter has reshaped approaches to sports journalism, with scoops now being predominantly associated with a select few elite practitioners who boast exceptional contacts, rather than being a general expectation<sup>3</sup>. Reporting play-by-play outcomes typically doesn't generate much engagement in the form of likes and retweets on social media, unlike analysis,

---

<sup>1</sup> Smith, Rory, Behind the Curtain of Soccer's Prophet of the Deal, New York Times, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/24/sports/soccer/fabrizio-romano-transfer-rumors.html>, consulted on April 23, 2024, 12:00 at AM.

<sup>2</sup> Oelrichs, Inga, Adoption of Innovations in Digital Sports Journalism: The Use of Twitter by German Sports Journalists, extract from collective book (s.dir) Communication & Sport, Newcastle upon Tyne: SAGE, 2020.

<sup>3</sup> Moritz, Brian and Mirer, Michael, *The end of the scoop scoreboard: Boundary work and breaking news in sports journalism*, extract from collective book (s.dir) Domenghetti, Roger, Insights on Reporting Sports in the Digital Age, Abingdon: Routledge, 2021, pp. 138–54.

opinion, and visual content<sup>1</sup>. Consequently, sports journalists are incentivized to prioritize subjectivity and opinion on Twitter.

Sheffer and Schultz's content analysis found that opinion dominated, despite sports journalists believing they prioritized breaking news on the platform. This shift means that sports journalists are now expected to actively engage with audiences across various Web 2.0 platforms<sup>2</sup>, but this interaction is particularly intense on Twitter because of constant real-time updates<sup>3</sup>. By encouraging constructive debate, this kind of interaction can, in fact, bring sports journalists and audiences closer together while also serving the public interest<sup>4</sup>. However, due to accusations of bias and cruel abuse, sports journalists frequently have a tense relationship with audiences<sup>5</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> Shermak, Jeremy L., Scoring live tweets on the beat: Examining Twitter engagement in sports newspaper beat reporters' live coverage, *Digital Journalism*, 2018, volume 6, pp. 118–36.

<sup>2</sup> Sherwood, Merryn and Nicholson, Matthew, Web 2.0 platforms and the work of newspaper sport journalists, *Journalism*, 2013, volume 14, pp. 942–59.

<sup>3</sup> Price, John, Farrington, Neil, and Hall, Lee, Changing the game? The impact of Twitter on relationships between football clubs, supporters and the sports media, *Soccer & Society*, 2013, volume 14, pp. 446–61.

<sup>4</sup> McEnnis, Simon, *Sports journalism and cultural authority in the digital age*, extract from collective book (s.dir) Burdsey, Dan, Carter, Thomas, and Doidge, Mark, *Transforming Sport: Knowledges, Practices and Structures*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2018, pp. 207–19.

<sup>5</sup> Antunovic, Dunja, "We wouldn't say it to their faces": Online harassment, women sports journalists and feminism, *Feminist Media Studies*, 2019, volume 19, pp. 428–42

## 2.2 Sports Journalists Coverage of the Football Transfer Market

### 2.2.1 Sports Journalists and the Transfer Story:

"The hiring and firing of coaches and other team personnel, a player changing (or wanting to change) teams via trade or free agency, or an update on a player's injury and availability" are examples of the transfer (or transaction) story, which is a well-established practice in football journalism<sup>1</sup>. Player movement started to become more frequent in the 1990s due to regulatory shifts such as the relaxing of homegrown player quotas in Europe and the Bosman ruling that allowed players freedom to move clubs upon expiration of their contracts.

Football transfer news has intensified periods of the year that correspond to the January and August transfer windows<sup>2</sup>. Transfer stories give football fans something to consume in between games, which contributes significantly to the always-on sports consumption in a 24/7 news culture. Other sports have this genre as well, especially in the US where free agency and trade deadlines take place.

Transfer news is "among those quick online stories that provide metrics to media organizations" and feeds rumours and conversation within fan communities. But the transfer type creates uncertainty on the reliability and truthfulness of the stories that are published<sup>3</sup>. When a rumour isn't true, news outlets don't correct it later; instead, it gets quietly forgotten. A limited sports news schedule that includes transfer rumours is likely to encourage speculation about a few major European teams<sup>5</sup>.

Sports journalism gives the clubs themselves the responsibility for verification and "truth-holders," further solidifying their authority and control<sup>6</sup>. Reed and Harrison's content analysis of NBA trades revealed that unsourced transactions prevailed over sourced ones. Similarly, Rojas-Torrijos and Mello's study of Twitter posts and news stories across four major European news outlets during the 2020 winter transfer window found that, on average, 45.1% of transfer stories on Twitter materialized compared to only 41% on websites. These outlets did not hesitate to publish numerous tips, speculations, and statements from anonymous sources, offering more

---

<sup>1</sup> OP: CIT.

<sup>2</sup> OP: CIT.

<sup>3</sup> Reed, Sada, American sports writers' social media use and its influence on professionalism, *Journalism Practice*, 2013, Vol.7, No.1, pp. 555–71.

<sup>4</sup> OP: CIT.

<sup>5</sup> Stanton, John, January Transfer Window? Can You Believe Gossip Column Rumours? BBC, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/football/37975118>, Accessed on April 23th, 2024, at 12:36 AM.

<sup>6</sup> OP: CIT.

analysis, opinions, and rumours about three or four teams in each league than factual news about transfers or loans concerning them<sup>1</sup>.

## 2.2.2 The Transfer Market and Rumours:

Mainstream sports journalism continues to dictate the daily news agenda with a noticeable lack of diversity. Within this realm, certain disciplines and competitions are often overlooked in daily coverage, resulting in women's sports and female athletes receiving only a minimal share of sports media attention. This disparity in coverage is a direct consequence of the sports news work model, which perpetuates a male-dominated, hegemonic culture within sports newsrooms. This model is reinforced by established and ingrained assumptions about readership preferences, as well as the systematic and repetitive nature of sports news reporting<sup>2</sup>. The specifics of this "beat model," in which reporters are tasked with covering a specific sport or team, mean that sports media coverage globally is primarily male-oriented and concentrates on a small number of professional football clubs and players in the majority of countries.

More often than not, the "footballisation" of sports journalism<sup>3</sup> involves a football information overload that makes it increasingly difficult to separate the noise from real news. This is particularly the case of information surrounding transfer windows, which occur twice a year in the major European leagues.

Despite the fact that telling the truth is "journalism's first obligation"<sup>4</sup> and major ethical codes and media accountability instruments in this respect make explicit reference to avoiding conjectures<sup>5</sup>, speculative reporting has emerged as a central aspect of contemporary sports journalism.<sup>6</sup> In football, "a sport known for its post-truth propagation of transfer rumours"<sup>7</sup>,

---

<sup>1</sup> OP: CIT

<sup>2</sup> OP: CIT

<sup>3</sup> OP: CIT.

<sup>4</sup> Kovach, Bill and Rosenstiel, Tom, *The Elements of Journalism: What Newspeople Should Know and the Public Should Expect*, 2ed, New York: Three Rivers Press, 2007.

<sup>5</sup> Plaisance, Patrick Lee, *Media Ethics. Key Principles for Responsible Practice*, 2ed, Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2013.

<sup>6</sup> OP: CIT.

<sup>7</sup> Smith, Rory, The Original Fake News: Soccer Transfers, The New York Times, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/13/sports/soccer/premier-league-transfers-window.html> , consulted on March 26th, 2024 at 09:08 AM.

news outlets sometimes cover unverified claims, online gossip and viral content, thus contributing to spreading lies across all digital platforms<sup>1</sup>.

In the age of social media, false content spreads "significantly farther, faster, deeper, and more broadly than the truth" across all categories of information<sup>2</sup>. Although false content has always been present in journalism, various aspects of the digital media environment have facilitated its dissemination to a wider audience, enabling misinformation to become global.

Firstly, the increasingly stiffer competition between media outlets in the new "marketplace of attention"<sup>3</sup> has led them to compete in a race in which they finally tend to rely more on self-interested sources than on original reporting<sup>4</sup>. However, sports media outlets have less control over gatekeeping and distribution procedures on social media platforms. As a result, readers can more easily find fake or falsified information, even though they might find it difficult to tell it compared to legitimate news<sup>5</sup>.

With all of these changes, concerns have been expressed regarding the ability of the media to provide accurate information as well as the authority and societal function of journalism<sup>6</sup>. The digital 24-hour news cycle dictates both the pressure on media to compete and conquer dispersed audiences and the dominant role of social media platforms to set standards in today's practices of journalists.

Because of this, media outlets must publish news at a breakneck pace that could potentially be dangerous because it encourages the spread of rumours and emotions rather than accurate

---

<sup>1</sup> Silverman, Craig, Lies, Damn Lies, and Viral Content: Examining the Role of News Websites, New York: Tow Center for Digital Journalism, <https://academiccommons.columbia.edu/doi/10.7916/D8Q81RHH> , consulted on March 26th, 2024 at 09:14 AM.

<sup>2</sup> Vosoughi, Soroush, Roy, Deb, and Aral, Sinan, The spread of true and false news online, *Science*, 2018, volume 359, pp. 1146–51.

<sup>3</sup> Webster, James G., *The Marketplace of Attention: How Audiences Take Shape in a Digital Age*, Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2014.

<sup>4</sup> Thorson, Emily, Belief echoes: The persistent effects of corrected misinformation, *Political Communication*, 2016, volume 33, pp. 460–80.

<sup>5</sup> Nielsen, Rasmus Kleis and Graves, Lucas, News You Don't Believe: Audience Perspectives on Fake news, Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/our-research/news-you-dont-believe-audience-perspectives-fake-news> , consulted on March 26th, 2024 at 09:43 AM.

<sup>6</sup> Ekström, Mats, and Seth C. Lewis. 2020. Epistemologies of digital journalism and the study of misinformation. *New Media & Society* 22: 205–12.

information<sup>1</sup>. Since internet news is delivered more quickly, Twitter has become the most popular social media channel among sports journalists.

According to English<sup>2</sup>, the heavy use of this social media site has caused changes to traditional news gathering and publishing techniques in sports coverage to the extent that is occasioning a “paradigm shift” in the field<sup>3</sup>. This shift implies that sports media try constantly to break news, or rare scoops<sup>4</sup>, on Twitter as soon as they are confirmed before expanding the story in any other platform. Nevertheless, this trend has also stimulated the growth of ‘clickbait culture’, in which reporters and editors produce sensationally headlined stories with the aim of attracting a higher number of visitors to websites<sup>5</sup>.

However, as Cable and Mottershead explain, the pursuit of audience through clickbait techniques has undermined the quality of sports coverage. These authors consider this strategy of producing more clickbait content may be a short-sighted way of trying to build a loyal community of users. Instead, clickbait reinforces the production of content that sports journalists and media outlets believe will appeal to their audiences and generate traffic to their social media accounts and websites<sup>6</sup> and income via advertising.

In the wake of this, complex stories are left behind in favour of those ones than can be easily written and consumed. In sports journalism, breaking news, which “often revolves around transfer stories”<sup>7</sup>, are among those quick online stories that provide metrics to media organisations.

In this context, the winter and summer football transfer windows are the the ideal period for generating and spreading rumours, especially when there is no World Cup or any other

---

<sup>1</sup> Rosenberg, Howard, and Charles S. Feldman. 2008. *No Time to Think; The Menace of Media Speed and the 24-Hour News Cycle*. New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group, ISBN 9780826429315.

<sup>2</sup> English, Peter, *Twitter’s diffusion in sports journalism: Role models, laggards and followers of the social media innovation*, *New Media & Society*, 2016, 18, 484–501.

<sup>3</sup> Schultz, Brad & Sheffer, Mary Lou, *An Exploratory Study of How Twitter Is Affecting Sports Journalism*, *International Journal of Sport Communication*, 2010, 3, 226–39.

<sup>4</sup> OP: CIT.

<sup>5</sup> Bradshaw, Tom, *Benefit or burden? Social media and moral complexities confronting sports journalists*, extract from collective book (s.dir) Domeneghetti, Roger, London: Routledge, 2021, p 10.

<sup>6</sup> Domeneghetti, Roger, *Insights on Reporting Sports in the Digital Age*, 1ed, London: Routledge, 2021.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

international tournament in the offing. Consequently, both likely and confirmed player signings occupy a central position in the agenda-setting of sports media outlets<sup>1</sup>.

Misinformation in football news coverage becomes "a problem driven by a combination of some news media who publish it, some sources who contribute to it, and some platforms that help distribute it,"<sup>2</sup> much like in other journalistic fields. Typically, published rumors about transfers are "stories designed to take root in an explicitly partisan environment," where fans are inclined to believe them irrespective of their accuracy<sup>3</sup>.

To be direct, rumours about new signings are often viewed as an opportunity by fans, media, and non-neutral sources, each with their own motivations for starting and spreading them. According to Chadwick, for fans, such rumours drive ticket sales and news consumption; for media outlets, they generate traffic to their platforms when there is little else to report on; and for partisan sources like agents, they may serve as a form of market signalling. Despite this, the proliferation of misinformation in sports journalism remains a relatively unexplored issue in academic literature.

Therefore, it is crucial to examine how hearsay influences and shapes the newsgathering and reporting practices of sports journalists in today's media landscape. Additionally, this inquiry prompts the increasingly critical question of how and when misinformation, as the antithesis of news and truth, emerges and spreads<sup>4</sup>, determines how viewers feel and how much the deceptive or fraudulent information that these media channels distribute may damage their credibility<sup>5</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> OP: CIT.

<sup>2</sup> Nielsen, Rasmus Kleis and Graves, Lucas, News You Don't Believe: Audience Perspectives on Fake news, Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/our-research/news-you-dont-believe-audience-perspectives-fake-news> , consulted on March 26th, 2024 at 09:43 AM.

<sup>3</sup> Smith, Rory, The Original Fake News: Soccer Transfers, The New York Times, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/13/sports/soccer/premier-league-transfers-window.html> , consulted on March 26th, 2024 at 09:08 AM.

<sup>4</sup> Waisbord, Silvio, Truth is What Happens to News: On Journalism, Fake News, and Post-Truth, Journalism Studies, 2018, 19, 1866–78.

<sup>5</sup> Hayes, Arthur & Singer, Jane & Ceppos, Jerry, Shifting Roles, Enduring Values: The Credible Journalist in a Digital Age, Journal of Mass Media Ethics, 2007, 22, 262–79.

## **2.3 Underpinning Theory - The Two-Step Flow of Communication Theory**

### **2.3.1 Definition of the Theory:**

The Two-Step Flow Theory of Communication, developed by Paul Lazarsfeld, Bernard Berelson, and Hazel Gaudet following their research into voters' decision-making during the 1940 U.S. presidential election, challenges the prevailing notion that mass media could exert a direct and potent influence on a uniform mass audience. According to this theory, mass media messages do not directly influence the general public. Instead, these messages first reach "opinion leaders" – individuals who are avid media consumers and play a crucial role in collecting, interpreting, and disseminating the meaning and significance of media content.

Exactly, opinion leaders, who often hold significant influence within one's social or professional networks, serve as intermediaries in the flow of media influences. They interpret and convey media messages to others who are less active in consuming media directly. The two-step flow theory highlights that interpersonal discussions among these opinion leaders and their peers have a greater impact on shaping public opinion than mere exposure to mass media content.

Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet's research revealed that during the 1940 U.S. presidential election, the majority of voters received campaign information not directly from mass media, but rather through word-of-mouth from opinion leaders within their social circles. This finding challenged the prevailing notion that media messaging could uniformly and directly influence a homogeneous audience. Subsequent research has confirmed the validity of the opinion leader concept and the theory's relevance in studying the diffusion of innovations throughout society.

Although criticized by some for oversimplifying the flow as a binary process, where sharing may actually occur horizontally among equally engaged opinion leaders, the two-step flow theory retains its significance. It underscores the pivotal role of interpersonal networks and opinion leaders in filtering and shaping the impact of mass media messaging on diverse audience segments. This highlights the complexity of information dissemination and the dynamic interplay between media content and interpersonal communication within society.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Postelnicu, Monica. Two-step flow model of communication, Encyclopedia Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/two-step-flow-model-of-communication>, consulted on April 7, 2024, at 03:21 AM.

### 2.3.2 Fundamental Principles

- **Opinion Leaders:** The theory recognizes the existence of opinion leaders within social groups or communities. These are individuals who are seen as influential, credible, and well-informed on specific topics or issues.
- **Two-Step Flow:** Information flows in two stages. First, mass media messages reach the opinion leaders. Second, opinion leaders interpret and disseminate the information to others in their social circles through interpersonal communication channels.
- **Interpersonal Influence:** Interpersonal communication and word-of-mouth play a crucial role in shaping attitudes and behaviours. People often rely more on their trusted social connections than on mass media messages alone.
- **Social Networks:** The flow of information is influenced by the structure and dynamics of social networks. Opinion leaders serve as bridges between mass media and their social groups, facilitating the diffusion of information.
- **Selective Exposure and Attention:** People tend to selectively expose themselves to media messages that align with their existing beliefs and pay more attention to opinion leaders who share their values and interests.
- **Heterogeneity of Opinion Leaders:** Different opinion leaders may exist for different topics or issues within the same social group, and their influence may vary depending on the specific context.<sup>1</sup>

### 2.3.3 Relevance to the Research:

The two-step flow of communication theory is highly relevant to the research on "The Impact of Social Media on Sports Journalists' Coverage of the Football Transfer Market," specifically in the context of Fabrizio Romano's coverage of the 2024 Winter Transfer Window for the top six clubs in the English Premier League on the X platform (formerly Twitter).

The theory provides a valuable framework for understanding how information about football transfers disseminates through social media channels and the influential role played by sports journalists like Fabrizio Romano. Several key aspects of the theory are particularly pertinent to this research:

---

<sup>1</sup> Weimann, G. On the importance of marginality: One more step into the two-step flow of communication, *American Sociological Review*, 1982, Vol. 47, No. 6, p.764-773.

- **Opinion Leaders:** In the realm of football transfer news, sports journalists, such as Fabrizio Romano, can be considered opinion leaders. They possess extensive knowledge, credibility, and influence within the football community, shaping the discourse and perceptions around transfer activities.
- **Two-Step Flow:** Social media platforms like X serve as the initial mass media channel through which transfer news and rumours are disseminated. However, the two-step flow occurs when influential sports journalists like Fabrizio Romano interpret, analyse, and share their insights on these transfer developments with their followers, who then further spread the information within their social networks.
- **Interpersonal Influence:** Fabrizio Romano's coverage on X likely holds significant sway over his followers, who trust his expertise and rely on his reporting to make sense of the complex transfer market. This interpersonal influence can shape public opinion and discourse surrounding specific transfer deals.
- **Social Networks:** The structure and dynamics of social networks on platforms like X play a crucial role in the dissemination of transfer news. Fabrizio Romano's followers, who may be part of various football-related communities, can act as secondary disseminators, amplifying the reach of his coverage.
- **Selective Exposure and Attention:** Football fans and enthusiasts may selectively follow and pay attention to journalists like Fabrizio Romano based on their perceived credibility, expertise, and alignment with their interests and allegiances.

By examining Fabrizio Romano's coverage through the lens of the two-step flow of communication theory, researchers can gain valuable insights into the influential role played by sports journalists in shaping the discourse around football transfers on social media. It can shed light on how their interpretations and analyses influence public perception, the dynamics of information diffusion within social networks, and the potential impact on the broader football community.

**CHAPTER 3:**  
**Research Design and Methodology.**

## **1. Research approach:**

It is defined as a research method applied to achieve a purposeful and systematic quantitative description of the communication style level.

Content analysis is a research technique used to analyse media materials to draw accurate and reliable inferences and conclusions that can be replicated in further research or analysis.

We will utilize this research tool to analyse Fabrizio Romano's Coverage of the 2024 Winter Transfer Window for the Top 6 Clubs in the English Premier League on the X platform from January 1st to 31st.

### **1.1 Data collection method:**

#### **Content Analysis:**

Content analysis is a research methodology employed to examine and interpret the features of diverse communication forms, including textual, visual, and auditory materials. This method involves a systematic examination of the content, aiming to identify patterns, themes, and other pertinent characteristics, which subsequently allows for the drawing of inferences or conclusions from the observed data.

This technique is applicable to a broad spectrum of subjects, such as media representations of social issues, political rhetoric, advertising content, and online interactions. Predominantly utilized in qualitative research, content analysis can also be integrated with other research methods to yield a more holistic understanding of a given phenomenon<sup>1</sup>.

### **1.2 Research hypotheses:**

Hypothesis 1: The use of specific language and expressions by sports journalists on social media platforms helps them create a brand for themselves.

Hypothesis 2: Sports Journalists activity on social media is likely driven by newsworthy developments within the clubs themselves.

Hypothesis 3: Sports journalists leverage visual elements, particularly player images, on social media platforms to increase audience engagement and interest in transfer news.

---

<sup>1</sup> Hassan Muhammad, Content Analysis – Methods, Types and Examples, Research Method <https://researchmethod.net/content-analysis/> Consulted on April 22<sup>nd</sup> 2024 at 14:37 PM

## **2. Research field and sample:**

### **2.1 Research field:**

Field research refers to the process and methods of gathering qualitative data about the interactions of people or groups in their natural environments. Social scientists use field research methods to collect information and develop new theories about sociology, human nature and interpersonal interactions. Field research aims to establish and prove cause-and-effect relationships in various natural environments and communities<sup>1</sup>.

In relation to this study, the research field consists of 80 tweets from Fabrizio Romano's coverage of the 2024 winter Transfer window for the Top 6 Clubs in the English Premier League on X from January 1st to 31st.

### **2.2 Research Sample:**

A sample refers to a smaller, manageable version of a larger group. It is a subset containing the characteristics of a larger population. Samples are used in statistical testing when population sizes are too large for the test to include all possible members or observations<sup>2</sup>.

The sample for this study consists of the top 6 clubs in the English Premier League (EPL): Manchester City, Liverpool, Chelsea, Manchester United, Tottenham Hotspur, and Arsenal. These clubs were selected because they were the highest spenders in the football transfer market in the last years<sup>3</sup>, making them the most relevant for this analysis.

The sampling method used is purposive sampling, a non-probability technique where samples are chosen based on specific criteria. The top 6 clubs were selected to understand the impact of social media on sports journalists' coverage of the football transfer market.

---

<sup>1</sup> Indeed Editorial Team. "What Is Field Research? Definition, Methods and Examples." Indeed Career Guide, 22 May 2023, <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/what-is-field-research> . Accessed on April 23th, 2024 at 03:43 PM.

<sup>2</sup> Investopedia. "Sample." Investopedia, <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/s/sample.asp> . Consulted on April 22<sup>nd</sup> 2024 at 03:50 PM.

<sup>3</sup> Watson, Ian. "Man City Sixth in Premier League Five-year Net Spend Table Behind Newcastle." Football365, 20 May 2024, <https://www.football365.com/news/transfers-premier-league-five-year-net-spend-man-utd-man-city> . Consulted on February 16th, 2024 at 09:56 AM.

## **Chapter 4: The Practical Framework**

### **Content Analysis of Fabrizio Romano's Coverage of the 2024 Winter Transfer Window for the Top 6 Clubs in the English Premier League on 'X' from January 1<sup>st</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup>.**

# Chapter 4: The Practical Framework:

## 1. Data Presentation

### 1.1 Presentation of X:

<b>LOGO</b>	
Formerly	Twitter (2006 – 2023)
Language	Multilingual
Founded	March 21, 2006, in San Francisco, California, U.S.
Area served	Worldwide, except blocking countries.
Owner	Odeo (March-October 2006) Obvious Corporation (2006-2007) Twitter, Inc. (2007-2023) X Corp. (2023-present)
Founder(s)	Jack Dorsey Noah Glass Biz Stone Evan Williams
Chairman	Elon Musk
CEO	Linda Yaccarino
URL	Twitter.com
Users	550 million <sup>1</sup> (September 2023)
Launch Date	July 15, 2006.

<sup>1</sup> Kolodny, Lora. “Musk Says Twitter Now X Is Moving to Monthly Subscriptions.” CNBC. <https://www.cnbc.com/2023/09/18/musk-says-twitter-now-x-is-moving-to-monthly-subscriptions.html> Consulted on March 04<sup>th</sup> 2024 at 10:48 AM.

## 1.2 Who is Fabrizio Romano?

Romano has been described within the industry as a ‘transfer window superstar reporter’<sup>1</sup> and football’s ‘prophet of the deal’<sup>2</sup>. Sports journalists consider themselves as generalists and believe they do not have time to concentrate on one niche topic, unlike bloggers<sup>3</sup>. However, Romano’s sports journalism focuses on a specialism (transfer stories) within a specialism (football journalism) within a specialism (sports journalism) in journalism. Romano was born in Naples in 1993 and is a freelance Italian journalist who has worked for various media companies such as Sky Sport Italia and The Guardian in the UK. Romano started writing stories and sending them to websites for free<sup>4</sup>.

Romano was then contacted by an aspiring football agent working at La Masia, Barcelona FC’s youth academy, who wanted him to write an article on players Gerard Deulofeu and Mauro Icardi. Following this initial contact, the journalist–source relationship developed between Romano and player agent, particularly on Facebook messenger. Romano broke the story that Icardi was joining Sampdoria from Barcelona in 2011 and then, more notably because by then Icardi was an established player, he moved on to Inter Milan in 2014 with Romano breaking the news on a fan site<sup>5</sup>.

This scoop effectively launched his journalism career as he took a job at Sky Sport Italia. Romano came to international attention in 2020 when he confirmed that Bruno Fernandes, the Portuguese midfielder, had signed for Manchester United. To confirm the deal had been concluded, Romano used the statement ‘Here We Go’ that has since become his iconic catchphrase<sup>6</sup>. Romano’s announcement provided finality in a genre of transfer stories where fact and fiction are often difficult to separate amid a swirl of rumour<sup>7</sup>. Romano has since become a major cross-platform presence whereby ‘when Romano is not submitting transfer stories to The Guardian or Sky Sport, he is uploading them to Twitter, Instagram, Facebook

---

<sup>1</sup> Jones, Dean, ‘Here We Go!’ What it’s Like to Be a Transfer window Superstar Reporter, Bleacher Report, <https://bleacherreport.com/articles/2899366-here-we-go-whats-it-like-to-be-a-transfer-window-superstar-reporter>, consulted on April 24th, 2024, 10:35 AM.

<sup>2</sup> Smith, Rory, Behind the Curtain of Soccer’s Prophet of the Deal, New York Times, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/24/sports/soccer/fabrizio-romano-transfer-rumors.html>, consulted on April 24th, 2024, 10:41 AM.

<sup>3</sup> McEnnis, Simon, Following the action: How live bloggers are reimagining the professional ideology of sports journalism, *Journalism Practice*, 2016, volume 10, pp. 967–82.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

<sup>5</sup> Sprung, Shlomo, “Here We Go!” Meet Fabrizio Romano, Soccer’s Answer to Woj and Shams, Boardroom, <https://boardroom.tv/fabrizio-romano-here-we-go>, consulted on April 24th, 2024 at 10:55 AM.

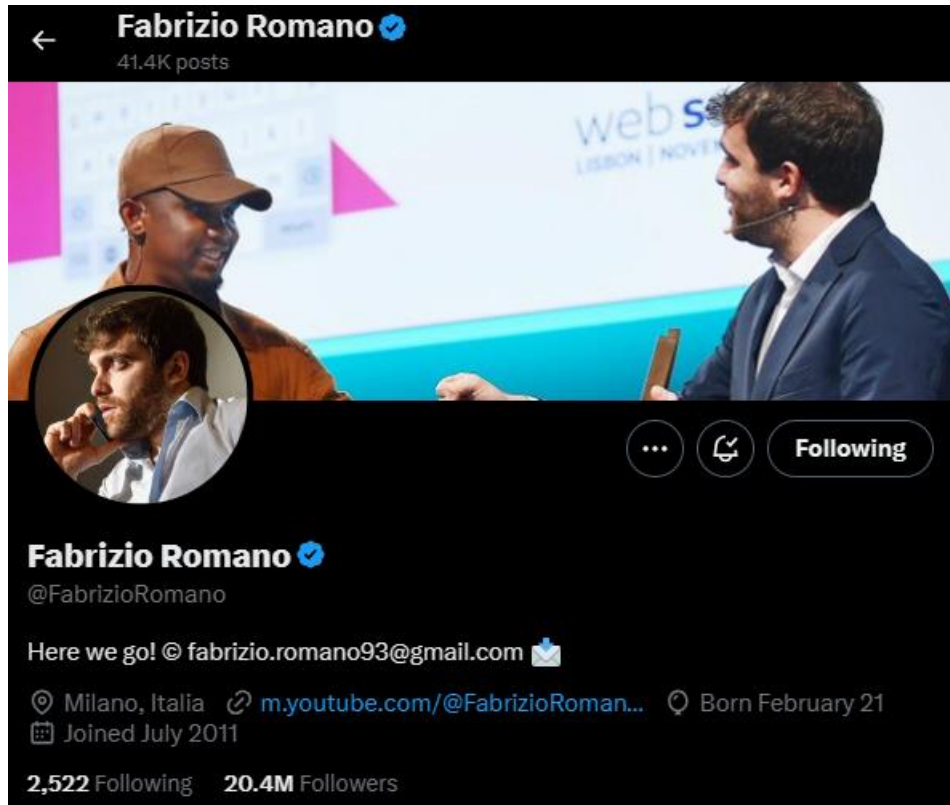
<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> OP: CIT

and YouTube, or he is talking about them on his podcast or his Twitch channel or in his latest role . . . with CBS Sports<sup>1</sup>.

### 1.3 Presentation of Fabrizio Romano's X account:

#### Screenshot of the account:



This screenshot was taken on May 12<sup>th</sup>, 2024 at 02:19 PM.

**Account URL:** <https://twitter.com/FabrizioRomano>

**Account Username:** @FabrizioRomano

**Number of followers:** 20.4 million.

**Number of posts:** 41400 Tweet.

---

<sup>1</sup> OP: CIT.

## **2. Content Analysis of ‘Fabrizio Romano's Coverage of the 2024 Winter Transfer Window for the Top 6 Clubs in the English Premier League on ‘X’ from January 1st to 31<sup>st</sup>’:**

The emergence of social media platforms has profoundly transformed the landscape of sports journalism, presenting new opportunities and challenges for journalists to navigate. In the domain of football, the transfer market has become a focal point of intense media coverage and public discourse, with journalists leveraging social media to disseminate news, insights, and rumours. This study investigates the content and engagement strategies employed by renowned transfer expert Fabrizio Romano during the 2024 winter transfer window for the top six Premier League clubs on ‘X’.

Through a rigorous content analysis, this research examines multiple facets of Romano's coverage, including his use of visuals, hashtags, language, sourcing practices, and audience engagement tactics. By categorizing and analysing these elements, the study aims to uncover insights into Romano's approach to establishing credibility, shaping narratives, and building influence within the football community.

The content analysis delves into Romano's strategic use of player images, distinguishing between original and modified visuals, shedding light on his visual storytelling techniques. Additionally, it explores his judicious use of hashtags, highlighting his targeted engagement strategies. The study also scrutinizes Romano's language, identifying key terms and expressions that reinforce his credibility and expertise while effectively communicating the nuances of transfer deals.

Moreover, the analysis investigates Romano's sourcing practices, examining the extent to which he relies on external sources and the potential implications for his role as a gatekeeper and agenda-setter in the football transfer market. The audience engagement category provides insights into the varying levels of interaction and virality generated by Romano's content, drawing connections to existing theories on shared attention and content diffusion.

Furthermore, the content analysis examines the distribution of club mentions in Romano's coverage, shedding light on potential biases or prioritization strategies. Notably, the study dedicates a category to analysing Romano's coverage of completed transfers, highlighting his commitment to accuracy and professional integrity amidst the often speculative and misinformation-ridden landscape of transfer news.

By synthesizing these diverse categories, this study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the evolving role of sports journalists in the digital age and the potential impact of social media on the flow of information within the football transfer ecosystem. The findings provide insights into the interplay between traditional journalistic values, personal branding strategies, and the dynamics of opinion leadership in the realm of sports journalism on social media platforms.

i. **FORM CATEGORY:**

**1. Player Image Category:**

Visuals play a crucial role in storytelling and shaping narratives<sup>1</sup>, particularly in the fast-paced world of football transfers. Fabrizio Romano's strategic use of player images in his tweets offers valuable insights into his approach to conveying information and generating anticipation among his audience.

Table 1 presents a breakdown of Romano's utilization of player images during the 2024 winter transfer window, categorizing them as either "Original" or "Modified" This distinction is significant as it sheds light on the potential purposes and messaging behind the images he chooses to share.

**Original player images:**



German club still waiting to make final decision + Spurs to sign new centre back soon as Dragusin talks continue.

+ Sessegnon and Van de Ven back in #THFC squad.



544 2K 28K 3.7M



Initial verbal proposal from Spurs is around €23m while Genoa asking price is €30m. Contacts will continue soon.

Postecoglou still convinced: he wants Dragusin.



378 1.6K 23K 2.6M

In these two tweets (as a sample), he used the image of Eric Dier wearing a Tottenham kit while discussing his potential move to Bayern Munich. Similarly, when posting about Radu Dragusin's deal, he shared an image of the player wearing a Genoa kit while talking about his potential move to Tottenham Hotspur.

<sup>1</sup> Parker, Sam. "Exploring Visual Storytelling Impact on LinkedIn Pulse." Medium. <https://medium.com/@samparkerxo/exploring-visual-storytelling-impact-on-linkedin-pulse-4b2520f6fb44> Consulted on April 22nd, 2024 at 07:05 AM.

## Modified player images:



**Fabrizio Romano** @Fabri... · 1/11/24 ...  
 🇸🇰 🇬🇧 Eric Dier joins Bayern for fee close to €4m. Personal terms agreed, Tuchel also called Dier.

Dier, in Munich for medical today.

Spurs accepted after Dragusin deal; green light overnight from Daniel Levy.

Here we go 🇬🇧

🗨️ Bayern will go for new RB as next top target.



🗨️ 1.4K 🔄 8.2K ❤️ 69K 📊 8.2M 📌 📤



**Fabrizio Romano** @Fabri... · 1/10/24 ...  
 🇸🇰 🇬🇧 Radu Dragusin to Tottenham, here we go! Agreement reached on package in excess of €30m after new bid overnight.

Spence joins Genoa on loan.

👉 Dragusin wanted Spurs and confirmed their agreement on personal terms despite Bayern bid.

SAGA OVER.

✈️ @TurkishAirlines



🗨️ 2.4K 🔄 13K ❤️ 70K 📊 8.9M 📌 📤

We can see a change in the players images used, Romano utilized modified images to announce: Eric Dier’s completed move to Bayern Munich, Romano used a modified image showing the player wearing Bayern’s kit with their logo behind. Similarly, he announced Radu Dragusin’s deal by using a modified image of the player wearing Tottenham’s kit with Spurs Logo in the background.

**Table 1. Player Image Category:**

Type of Player Image	Number of Tweets	Tweet %
Original Image	65	81.25%
Modified Image	15	18.75%
Total	80	100 %

## Analysis of the Player Image Category Table

The findings presented in Table 1 provide valuable insights into Fabrizio Romano's use of player images in tweets related to the 2024 Winter Transfer Window. The data revealed that out of the 80 tweets analysed, 81.25% (65 tweets) featured original images of players, while only 18.75% (15 tweets) contained modified images.

This distribution aligns with the existing research on the use of visuals in sports journalism on social media platforms. Studies have shown that sports journalists often rely on original, authentic images to establish credibility and maintain a sense of authenticity when reporting on news and developments<sup>1</sup>. By using unaltered images of players in their current team kits, Romano maintains a level of objectivity and factual reporting, particularly in the initial stages of transfer rumours and negotiations.

However, the presence of modified player images (18.75%) in Romano's tweets is also noteworthy. This practice of visually representing completed transfers by depicting players in their new team's kits is consistent with the findings of Niles, who observed that sports journalists frequently use edited or manipulated images to convey information more effectively and engage audiences on social media platforms<sup>2</sup>.

The use of modified images in Romano's tweets can be interpreted as a form of visual storytelling, where the altered images serve as symbolic representations of the finalized transfers. This visual strategy not only communicates the news more effectively but also adds an element of excitement and anticipation for fans<sup>3</sup>.

It is important to note that while modified images can enhance visual communication, their use should be balanced with a commitment to journalistic integrity and accuracy. As emphasized by Boyle, sports journalists on social media platforms must maintain ethical standards and avoid misleading or manipulative visual practices that could undermine their credibility<sup>4</sup>.

---

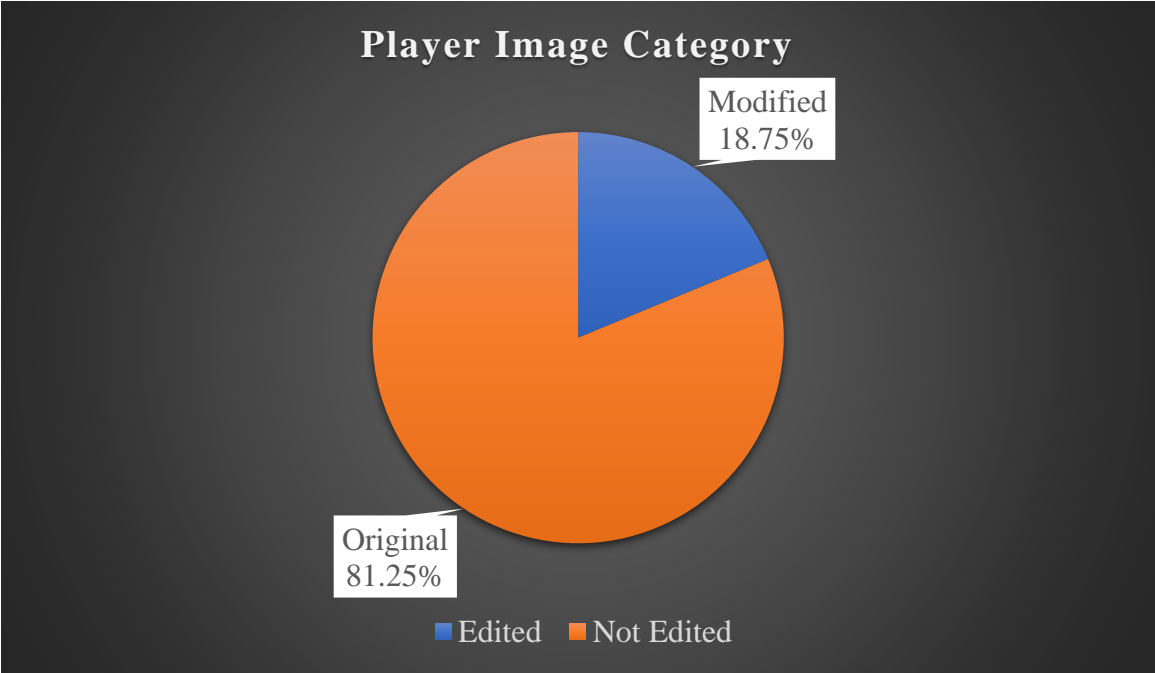
<sup>1</sup> Pegoraro, Ann. "Twitter as Disruptive Innovation in Sport Communication." *Communication & Sport* 2 2014. (2): 132–37.

<sup>2</sup> Niles, Nicole. "SMG: What's Changed about Sports Journalism: Social Media and Expectations." National Sports Journalism Center, <https://nsjc.mediaschool.indiana.edu/smg-whats-changed-about-sports-journalism-social-media-and-expectations/>. Consulted on March 28st, 2024 at 02:33 PM.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> OP: CIT.

In summary, the findings in Table 1 reflect a strategic balance between the use of original and modified player images in Fabrizio Romano's transfer window coverage on social media. This approach aligns with existing research on the effective use of visuals in sports journalism, combining authenticity and credibility with visual storytelling and audience engagement strategies.



**Figure1. Player Image Category**

**2. Hashtag Usage Category:**

In this category, we analyse Fabrizio Romano’s use of hashtags. He only uses club-related hashtags, such as #AFC for Arsenal, #CFC for Chelsea, #MCFC for Manchester City, #MUFC for Manchester United, #LFC for Liverpool, and #THFC for Tottenham Hotspur. These screenshots provide a sample of his hashtag usage for each club:



**Fabrizio Romano** @Fabrizio... · 1/1/24

EXCL: Arsenal are advancing to final stages of negotiations for Takehiro Tomiyasu's new long term contract with salary rise. It's getting closer.

Understand Tomiyasu will not leave Arsenal in January.

He's 100% part of #AFC plans despite links with Italian clubs move.



556 3.9K 40K 4.4M



**Fabrizio Romano** @Fabrizz... · 1/6/24

Chelsea will proceed soon to activate the recall clause for David Datro Fofana, as reported yesterday.

He's gonna leave Union Berlin while Sevilla are close to getting deal done with #CFC, already approved on player side.



324 1.5K 27K 1.9M



**Fabrizio Romano** @Fabrizio... · 1/1/24

Liverpool see Fabio Carvalho as part of their future plans, potentially from next season.

PL clubs approached #LFC to sign him but he's not for sale.

Fábio will leave on loan deal as reported yesterday, no buy option clause.

Liverpool only want game time assurances.



370 1.5K 29K 2.6M



**Fabrizio Romano** @Fabr... · 1/30/24

Watford have approached Man City in the recent days to sign Micah Hamilton on loan.

Two more Championship clubs also asked for loan this month but #MCFC have no plans to let Hamilton leave.

Understand Man City want Micah to stay with first team.



210 520 8.5K 1M

**Fabrizio Romano** @Fabri... · 1/15/24 ...  
 🇨🇪 🇹🇷 Hannibal Mejbri, on his way to medical tests with Sevilla as loan deal with €20m buy option clause will be signed today.

After initial verbal agreement with #MUFC, INEOS requested for a potential buy back clause in order to give their approval to the deal last night.



313 1.1K 14K 1.7M

**Fabrizio Romano** @Fabr... · 1/24/23 ...  
 Understand Tottenham and Sporting will hold new round of talks for Pedro Porro today. 🇨🇪 🇵🇹 #THFC

Tottenham are offering €37m fixed fee plus add-ons, discussing about one player to be included as part of the deal.



389 1.3K 20K 3.5M

**Table 2. Hashtag Usage Category:**

Type of Tweet	Number of Tweets	Tweets %
With Hashtag	14	17.5%
Without Hashtag	66	82.5%
Total	80	100%

**Analysis of Hashtag Usage Category:**

The findings presented in Table 2 provide insights into Fabrizio Romano's use of hashtags in his tweets related to the 2024 Winter Transfer Window coverage. The data reveals that out of the total 80 tweets analysed, only 17.5% (14 tweets) contained hashtags, while the majority, 82.5% (66 tweets), did not utilize any hashtags.

The limited use of hashtags by Romano aligns with existing research on the practices of sports journalists on social media platforms. Several studies have suggested that journalists,

particularly those with established credibility and a substantial following, tend to rely less on hashtags as a means of amplifying their content or facilitating discoverability<sup>12</sup>.

Romano's relatively low usage of hashtags could be attributed to his reputation as a renowned transfer market expert, with a sizable following that actively seeks out his updates. As noted by (O'hallarn n.d.), 'prominent sports journalists often prioritize concise and impactful messaging over excessive hashtag usage, relying on their established audience to amplify and engage with their content organically'<sup>3</sup>.

However, the findings also indicate that Romano does employ club-related hashtags, such as #AFC, #CFC, #MCFC, #MUFC, #LFC, and #THFC, to facilitate targeted engagement and reach relevant fan communities<sup>4</sup>.

Additionally, the use of club-related hashtags by Romano can be interpreted as a way to integrate his content into broader conversations and discourse surrounding specific clubs, aligning with the findings of Sears, who observed that sports journalists often utilize hashtags to connect their content with larger narratives and trending discussions<sup>5</sup>.

It is important to note that while hashtag usage can be a valuable tool for engagement and discoverability, excessive or irrelevant use of hashtags can be perceived as cluttered or promotional, potentially diminishing the journalist's credibility<sup>6</sup>. Romano's judicious approach to hashtag usage, combined with his established reputation, suggests a conscious effort to maintain a balance between effective communication and professional integrity.

In summary, the findings in Table 2 reflect a strategic and measured approach to hashtag usage by Fabrizio Romano in his transfer window coverage on social media. This practice aligns with existing research on the behaviours of prominent sports journalists, who prioritize impactful messaging and targeted engagement over excessive hashtag usage, while strategically leveraging relevant hashtags to connect with fan communities and broader narratives.

---

<sup>1</sup> O'Hallarn, Brendan. "Sport, Twitter Hashtags and the Public Sphere" (2016). Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), Dissertation, Human Movement Sciences, Old Dominion University, DOI: 10.25777/t2zk-yq36

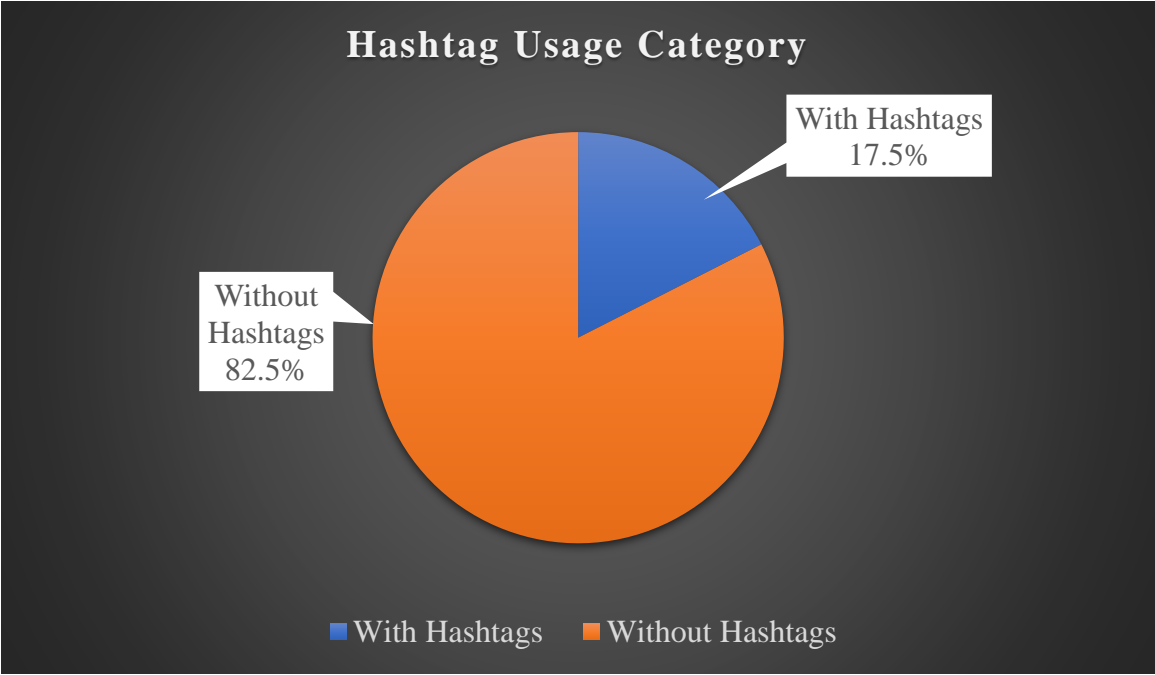
<sup>2</sup> Sears, Kyle, "Twitter's Impact on Sports Journalism Practice: Where a New Medium Meets and Old Art." Thesis, Georgia State University, 2011.

<sup>3</sup> OP: CIT

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.



**Figure2. Hashtag Usage Category**

**3. Audience Engagement Category:**

This section delves into the audience response to Fabrizio Romano's tweets. It analyses the level of engagement generated by each tweet, measured through three key metrics: likes, retweets, and comments. The data is categorized to provide insights into the distribution of engagement across Romano's content.

**3.1 Likes Category:**

This category explores the distribution of likes received by each tweet. It categorizes tweets into "High Like Volume (From 40K to 150K)," "Medium Like Volume (From 16K to 49K)," and "Low Like Volume (From 8K to 16K)" based on the number of likes received.

The screenshot below shows the tweet that received the most likes (146K) from Fabrizio Romano during the 2024 winter transfer window, announcing Jadon Sancho’s loan transfer from Manchester United to Borussia Dortmund. Notably, this tweet features a ‘modified’ image of the player (Table 1) and includes Fabrizio Romano’s signature phrase, ‘Here We Go!’. Additionally, the popularity of Jadon Sancho and the virality of both Manchester United and Borussia Dortmund contributed to this tweet becoming the most liked on Fabrizio's account during the transfer window.

**Fabrizio Romano** @Fabri... · 1/10/24 ...  
🇸🇰 🇪🇸 🇩🇪 Jadon Sancho to Borussia Dortmund, here we go! Deal in place between Man United and BVB on loan, NO buy option.

Understand Sancho can travel later today for medical.

BVB will cover part of the salary plus loan fee. €4m package.

Boarding completed ✈️ @TurkishAirlines



3.3K 19K 146K 15M

The screenshot below shows the tweet that received the fewest likes for Fabrizio Romano during the 2024 winter transfer window, announcing Japhet Tanganga's loan transfer from Tottenham to Millwall. Notably, this tweet features an original image of the player (Table 1). Additionally, Tanganga is not a well-known player, and Millwall is not a prominent club. These factors contributed to the tweet receiving only 8,000 likes, making it the least liked tweet on Fabrizio's account during January.

**Fabrizio Romano** @Fabri... · 1/18/24 ...  
🇸🇰 🇪🇸 Japhet Tanganga's loan move to Millwall will not include any buy option clause.

Straight loan until the end of the season from Spurs.

↪️ Both Tanganga and Reguilón will be back in June.



252 443 8K 1.1M

**Table 3. Likes Category**

Likes Volume	Number of Tweets	Tweets%
Low 8K – 16K	9	11.25%
Medium 16K- 39K	50	62.5%
High 40K- 150K	31	38.75%
Total	80	100%

It is important to note that the Likes Category used in this table is arbitrary. There is no standard definition of what constitutes a weak, medium, or high likes volume. However, these categories can be useful for understanding the overall insights of Likes for Fabrizio Romano’s tweets.

**Likes Category Analysis:**

The table presents an analysis of the distribution of likes received by tweets, categorizing them into "High Like Volume," "Medium Like Volume," and "Low Like Volume" based on predefined ranges of like counts.

From the data, we can observe that a majority (62.5%) of the tweets fell into the "Medium Like Volume" category, receiving between 16K and 39K likes. This suggests that Fabrizio Romano's tweets tend to garner a moderate level of engagement, aligning with findings from previous research on the engagement patterns of sports journalists on social media platforms.

Tweets with a moderate level of engagement (defined as 10K-50K likes and retweets) were more common than those with either extremely high or low engagement levels. This is attributed to the specific interests and demographics of sports fans, who tend to engage more actively with content related to their favourite teams and players<sup>1</sup>.

Additionally, the table shows that a significant portion (38.75%) of tweets received a "High Like Volume" (40K-150K likes), indicating a substantial level of engagement for these posts. This aligns with findings from a study by McEnnis (2023), which highlighted that sports journalists who cover high-profile events or have a strong personal brand tend to receive higher levels of engagement on social media<sup>2</sup>.

Fabrizio Romano's coverage of the 2024 winter transfer window for the top 6 clubs in the English Premier League, which are among the most popular and widely followed teams globally, contributed to the high engagement levels observed for some of his tweets.

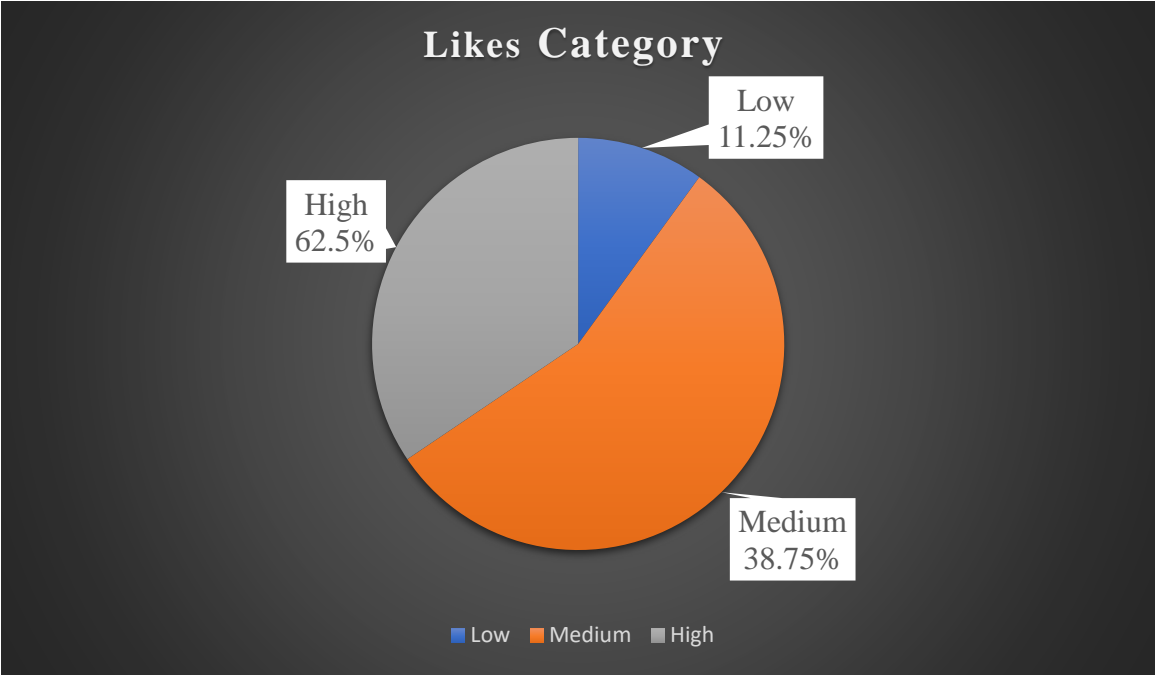
---

<sup>1</sup> OP : CIT.  
<sup>2</sup> OP : CIT.

However, it's worth noting that only a small percentage (11.25%) of tweets fell into the "Low Like Volume" category (8K-16K likes). This is attributed to Romano's established reputation as a reliable source for transfer news, as well as the general interest and passion of football fans in transfer-related content<sup>1</sup>.

Overall, the findings from this table align with existing research on engagement patterns in sports journalism on social media platforms, highlighting the potential influence of factors such as personal branding, event prominence, and audience interests on the level of engagement received by sports journalists' content.

It's important to note that all the tweets with modified players images received high likes number which shows the importance of Visuals.



**Figure 3. Likes Category**

**3.2 Retweets Category:**

This category examines the distribution of retweets, indicating how often users shared Romano's tweets with their own followers.

---

<sup>1</sup> OP : CIT.

The screenshot below shows the tweet that received the fewest retweets for Fabrizio Romano during the 2024 winter transfer window, announcing Japhet Tanganga's loan transfer from Tottenham to Millwall. Notably, this tweet features an original image of the player (Table 1). Additionally, with only 443 retweets, this post was also the least liked (Table3) among the 80 tweets.



**Fabrizio Romano** @Fabri... · 1/18/24 ...

Japhet Tanganga's loan move to Millwall will not include any buy option clause.

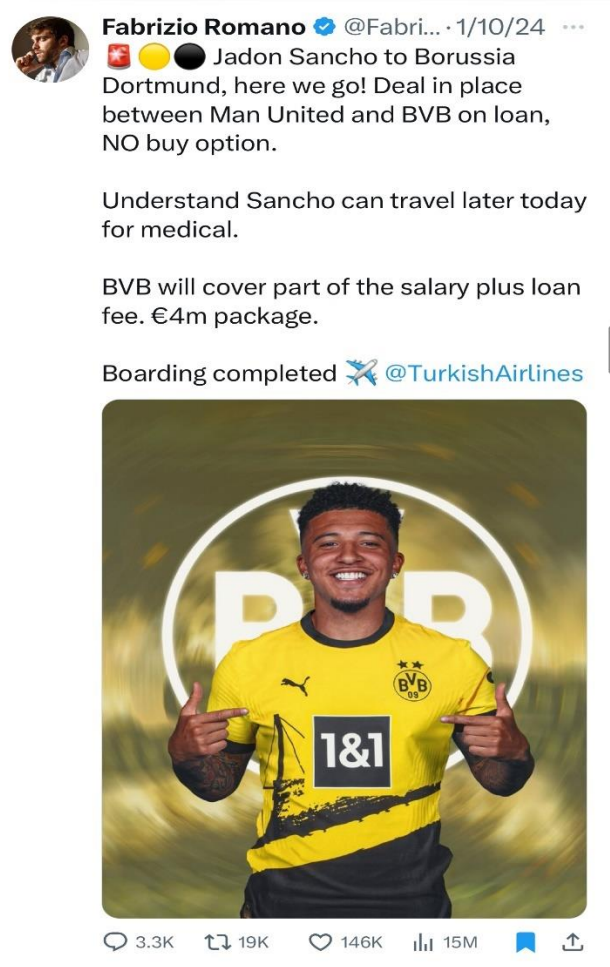
Straight loan until the end of the season from Spurs.

Both Tanganga and Reguilón will be back in June.



252 443 8K 1.1M

Relatively, the tweet with the highest number of retweets is also the tweet with highest number of like: Jadon Sancho's move to Dortmund announcement, with 19K retweets.



**Table 4. Retweets Category**

Number of Retweets	Ratio	Ratio %
Weak 400 – 2K	13	16.25%
Medium 2K- 6K	40	50%
High 6K- 20K	27	33.75%
Total	80	100%

**Analysis of Retweets Category Table:**

The data reveal a compelling engagement pattern, with the majority (50%) of retweets falling into the "Medium" category, suggesting a significant level of active engagement as users consciously shared Fabrizio Romano's content with their respective followers. While not all tweets achieved viral status, as indicated by the "High" retweet volumes, the substantial representation in the medium category underscores the audience's vested interest in Romano's coverage of the 2024 winter transfer window for the top 6 Premier League clubs.

These findings resonate with existing research on social media engagement and content sharing behaviours. Lin et al.'s study on shared attention during media events highlights how specific

topics or events of high interest can lead to varying levels of engagement on platforms like Twitter<sup>1</sup>.

Furthermore, Berger and Milkman's research delves into the factors that contribute to online content going viral, shedding light on the dynamics that may have influenced the "High" retweet volumes observed for a portion of Romano's tweets. Factors such as emotional resonance, practical value, and social currency have played a role in driving the amplified sharing and potential virality of certain content pieces<sup>2</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> Lin, Y. R., Keegan, B., Margolin, D., & Lazer, D. "Rising tides or rising stars?: Dynamics of shared attention on Twitter during media events." *PloS one*, 9(5), e94093 (2014).

<sup>2</sup> Berger, J., & Milkman, K. L. "What makes online content viral?" *Journal of marketing research*, 49(2), 192-205 (2012).

ii. **CONTENT CATEGORY:**

**4. Source Category:**

The "Source Category" focuses on identifying any external sources that Fabrizio Romano cites in his transfer news tweets. This information plays a crucial role in understanding the credibility and transparency of his content.

This category will analyse the presence and nature of any sources mentioned in Romano's tweets. This could include links to news articles or reports, mentions of specific journalists or media outlets or references to official club statements or announcements.

By categorizing the sources, we can gain insights into Romano's information gathering methods and potential biases towards certain sources. This adds context to understanding the information presented in his transfer news tweets.

**Table 5. Source Category**

Type of Tweets	Number of tweets	Tweets%
Sourced	8	10%
Unsourced	72	90%
Total	80	100%

**Analysis of Source Category table:**

The data in Table 3 reveals a surprising fact: only 10% (8 out of 80) of Romano's tweets included citations to sources for the transfer news.


The sources Fabrizio relied on are the following:

**@Plettigoal:** "Florian Plettenberg, better known as 'Plettigoal' on social media, is a German reporter, and moderator for Sky Sports who has become famous for his various takes on all things football. He discusses transfers in and out of Germany and several other topics that revolve around the football world. He is based in München, Bayern, and has made a name for himself for always being up to date with the day-to-day activities of FC Bayern München and all the transfer news associated with the club. <sup>1</sup>"

---

<sup>1</sup> Florian Plettenberg, "Biographies Are Us," <https://biographiesareus.com/florian-plettenberg/> accessed on April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024 at 11:44 AM.

Romano relied on @Plettigoal as a source in the following three tweets:


 **Fabrizio Romano** @FabrizioRomano

🇸🇪 Pierre-Emile Højbjerg will stay at Tottenham until the end of the season, decision has been made.

Despite several discussions with clubs around Europe he was never close to leaving.

Spurs always turned down loan bids, only considered permanent exit.

🗨️ Player's lawyer confirms: "He's staying and he wants to help Spurs", told @Plettigoal.



16:05 · 1/29/24 From Earth · 1.5M Views

44 Bookmarks

♥️ 11K    💬 336

 **Fabrizio Romano** @Fabriz... · 1/6/24 ...


🇸🇪 Tottenham are in talks to sign Timo Werner on loan deal from RB Leipzig, as called by @Plettigoal.

Negotiations are advancing between the two clubs on loan fee and salary coverage.

Spurs keep working on Dragusin deal while they negotiate for Werner.




💬 723    ↻ 2.8K    ♥️ 31K    📊 3.2M    📌 ⬆️

 **Fabrizio Romano** @Fabri... · 1/11/24 ...

🇸🇪 Bayern are set to sign Eric Dier from Spurs on permanent deal, agreement being sealed — as revealed by @Plettigoal.

Dier, already in Munich to complete the medical tests today. "It's an amazing club", he told SkyDE.

Tuchel will have his new centre back.



💬 773    ↻ 3K    ♥️ 32K    📊 5.3M    📌 ⬆️

**@SkySportDE:** The official Twitter handle of Sky Sport, a German sports media company that provides news, transfers, videos, and reports on various sports, including football, Formula 1, tennis, and more<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> "Sky Sport DE." *Twitter*, n.d., <https://twitter.com/SkySportDE>. Consulted on April 5<sup>th</sup> 2024 at 12:04 AM.

Romano sourced from @SkySportDE twice in the following tweets:



“He needs to play as he wants to go to Euro 2024 and we keep our fingers crossed for him”, told @philippinze24 @SkySportDE.



311 1.1K 21K 1.5M



Dier, already in Munich to complete the medical tests today. “It’s an amazing club”, he told SkyDE.

Tuchel will have his new centre back.



773 3K 32K 5.3M

@**Philippinze24**: A German journalist and reporter for Sky Sport. He is known for his coverage of football, particularly in the Bundesliga and Champions League. Hinze has been involved in several high-profile transfer stories and has provided updates on various football teams, including RB Leipzig and Bayern Munich<sup>1</sup>.

Romano sourced from Philip Hinze just once in the following tweet, this mention came in parallel with the media company he works for @SkySportDE:

<sup>1</sup> Hinze, Philipp. “Autoren bei Sky Sport.” Sky Sport. <https://sport.sky.de/fussball/artikel/autoren-bei-sky-sport-philipp-hinze/12642525/34240> Accessed April 05<sup>th</sup>, 2024 at 12:03 AM.



**Fabrizio Romano** @Fabriz... · 1/6/24 ...

RB Leipzig manager Marco Rose confirms Timo Werner deal: “He wants to go on loan, we wish him all the best”.

“He needs to play as he wants to go to Euro 2024 and we keep our fingers crossed for him”, told @philipphinze24 @SkySportDE.



311 1.1K 21K 1.5M

**@1908nl**: The official twitter handle of 1908.nl which is a platform dedicated to Feyenoord, a professional football club based in Rotterdam, Netherlands. It provides news, updates, and insights related to the club, including player signings, match results, and other relevant information<sup>1</sup>.

As Romano talked about Feyenoord’s interest in Tottenham player Bryan Gil, he sourced from @1908nl once in the tweet below:



**Fabrizio Romano** @Fabriz... · 1/9/24 ...

Feyenoord and Fiorentina are both keen on signing Bryan Gil on loan from Tottenham with potential buy option clause to be discussed.

Feyenoord have added Bryan to their list, as called by @1908nl. Race still open.

It will be up to Spurs, decision in the next days.

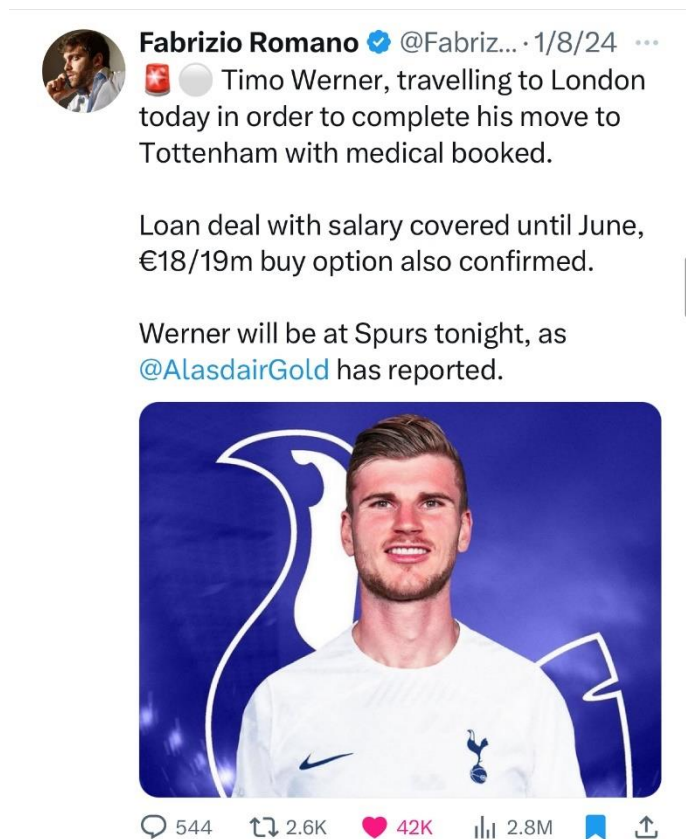


232 595 8.6K 1.3M

<sup>1</sup> 1908.nl. “Altijd. Overal. Feyenoord.” <https://1908.nl/> Accessed on April 05<sup>th</sup>, 2024 at 09:46 AM.

**@Alasdairgold:** Alasdair Gold is a Tottenham Hotspur correspondent known for his work on YouTube. He has a channel called “Alasdair Gold” where he shares videos related to Tottenham Hotspur, including interviews, analysis, and discussions. Before his current role, he served as a sports editor at various newspapers<sup>1</sup>.

Romano sourced from Alasdair Gold in one tweet talking about Timo Werner Travelling to London to complete his move to Tottenham in the following tweet:



**@NizaarKinsella:** Nizaar Kinsella is football journalist for BBC Sport, primarily covering Chelsea FC and the England men’s national team as he provides insights, analysis, and updates related to both teams.

Romano used Nizaar Kinsella as a source when informing about Chelsea’s player Andrey Santos’ potential loan move to Strasbourg in the tweet below:

---

<sup>1</sup> Gold, Alasdair. Twitter profile. <https://twitter.com/AlasdairGold> Accessed on April 05th, 2024. At 12:56.

**Fabrizio Romano** @Fabri... · 1/31/24 ...  
🇸🇩 🇧🇷 Chelsea are seriously considering loan to Strasbourg for Andrey Santos. Internal discussions taking place, also on player side.

🇫🇷 It's expected to be decided soon as Andrey will go on loan in the final 24h, Strasbourg favorite option as @NizaarKinsella called.



332 1K 14K 1.3M

**@MatteMoretto:** An Italian journalist and football transfer expert who works for Relevo, known for his expertise in Spanish football transfer news. He frequently covers transfers involving La Liga clubs and has developed a strong reputation for providing accurate and timely information about player movements and deals within Spanish football<sup>1</sup>.

The following tweet shows Fabrizio relying on Matte Moretto as a source in one tweet, informing about Granada asking United player Facundo Pellistri on loan

**Fabrizio Romano** @Fabri... · 1/16/24 ...  
🇷🇺 🇺🇸 After PSV Eindhoven and LA Galaxy, also Granada have asked for Facundo Pellistri on loan until the end of the season.

Discussions will follow in the next days to decide on next step for Pellistri.

@MatteMoretto 🍌



343 901 12K 4.4M

<sup>1</sup> Moretto, Matteo. "Matteo Moretto's Profile | Relevo Journalist | Muck Rack." <https://muckrack.com/matteo-moretto>. Accessed on April 5th, 2024 at 13:16.

One of the notable observations from the data is that Romano cites explicit sources in a relatively small proportion of his tweets (10%). This finding aligns with the concept of "network gatekeeping" proposed by Barzilai-Nahon, which suggests that influential individuals or entities can act as gatekeepers, controlling the flow of information within their networks. In this context, Romano's extensive network of contacts within the football industry positions him as a gatekeeper, potentially reducing his reliance on traditional media sources or public citations<sup>1</sup>.

Furthermore, the sources Romano does cite, such as @SkySportDE, @Plettigoal, and @NizaarKinsella, are primarily other journalists or media outlets with established reputations in the football industry. This observation resonates with the "intermedia agenda-setting" theory, which posits that media outlets influence each other's coverage and agenda-setting processes<sup>2</sup>. By citing these sources, Romano not only enhances the credibility of his reporting but also participates in the broader agenda-setting dynamics within the football transfer market.

Additionally, the limited use of explicit citations in Romano's tweets could be interpreted through the lens of the "two-step flow of communication" theory. As an influential opinion leader with a vast network of insider contacts, Romano may not heavily rely on traditional media sources, as his audience perceives him as a credible and trusted source of information. This aligns with the concept of "disintermediation"<sup>3</sup>, where influential individuals can bypass traditional media channels and communicate directly with their audiences.

It is also worth considering the potential impact of factors such as the use of private communication channels, the need for expediency in breaking news, and the importance of maintaining confidentiality of sources<sup>4</sup>. These factors could contribute to Romano's selective use of explicit citations, as he navigates the intricate dynamics of the football transfer market.

Furthermore, the analysis of Romano's sourcing practices can be contextualized within the broader discourse on the changing role of sports journalism in the digital age. The rise of social media platforms and the increasing demand for instantaneous news have disrupted traditional journalistic practices, giving rise to new forms of sports reporting and information dissemination<sup>5</sup>. Romano's approach exemplifies this shift, as he leverages his personal

---

<sup>1</sup> Barzilai-Nahon, Karine. "Toward a Theory of Network Gatekeeping: A Framework for Exploring Information Control." *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology* 59, no. 9 (2008): 1493–1512.

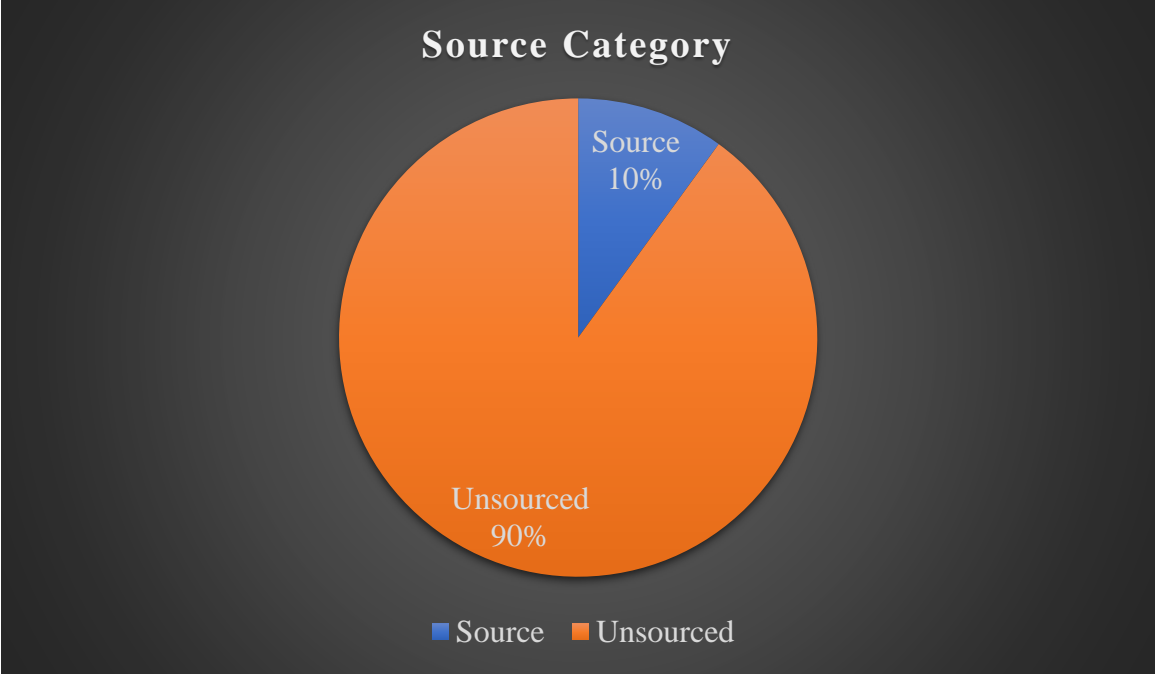
<sup>2</sup> Roberts, Marilyn, and Maxwell McCombs. "Agenda Setting and Political Advertising: Origins of the News Agenda." *Political Communication* 11, no. 3 (1994): 249–262.

<sup>3</sup> Bardoel, Jo, and Mark Deuze. "Network Journalism: Converging Competences of Media Professionals and Professionalism." *Australian Journalism Review* 23, no. 2 (2001): 91–103.

<sup>4</sup> OP: CIT.

<sup>5</sup> OP: CIT.

connections and social media presence to establish himself as a trusted voice in the football transfer market.



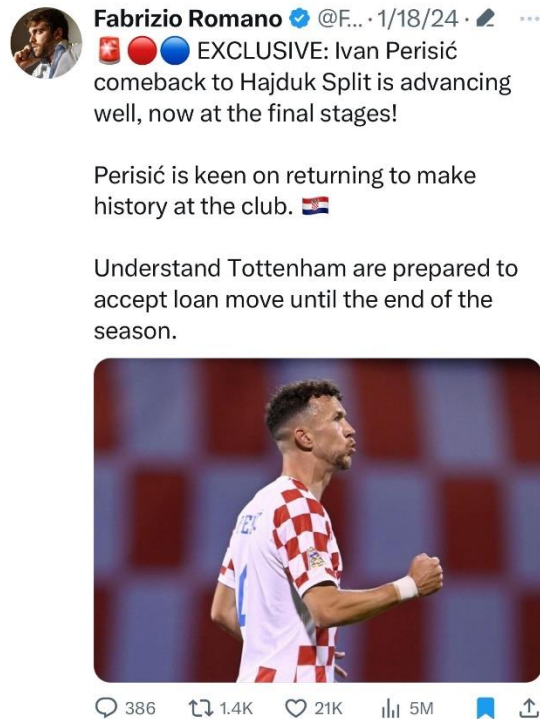
**Figure 3. Source Category**

**5. Terms Category:**

This category dives into the language employed by Fabrizio Romano in his coverage of the football transfer market. By examining the frequency and distribution of specific words and expressions, we can gain a deeper understanding of the narratives and messaging strategies he employs.

To analyse Fabrizio Romano's language use, we identified a set of keywords that he frequently employs. These terms, along with a screenshot of a representative tweet for each term, are presented below:

- **EXCLUSIVE:** This term is used by Romano to indicate that he has exclusive information or is breaking a transfer story before any other source. It highlights his access to insider information and reinforces his credibility as a trusted voice in the football transfer market.



- **HERE WE GO:** Romano's signature phrase, "Here We Go," has become iconic in the world of football transfers. He uses this expression to signal that a transfer deal is essentially complete or imminent, providing a definitive confirmation to his audience. This phrase has become synonymous with Romano's accuracy and reliability in reporting confirmed transfers<sup>1</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> Samuel Waihenya, "Fabrizio Romano Here We Go – Tweet Explained," Soccer Whizz, <https://soccerwhizz.com/fabrizio-romano-here-we-go-explained> Consulted on April 6<sup>th</sup> 2024 at 17:40.

**Fabrizio Romano** @Fabriz... · 1/6/24 ...  
🇸🇰 🇩🇪 Timo Werner to Tottenham, here we go! Deal in place with RB Leipzig, all documents being prepared.

Spurs sign Werner on loan and will also include buy option clause NOT mandatory.

Timo due to travel to London on Saturday then time for medical.

@TurkishAirlines ✈️



2.6K 18K 139K 11M

- OFFICIAL: The term "official" is used by Romano to indicate that a transfer has been officially announced or confirmed by the clubs involved.

**Fabrizio Romano** @Fabri... · 1/19/24 ...  
🇮🇹 🇧🇷 Official: Chelsea recall Cesare Casadei from Leicester loan as he will be part of Pochettino's team.



444 1.9K 34K 2M

- UNDERSTAND: When Romano uses the term "understand," he is implying that he has gained insights or knowledge about a transfer situation through his network of contacts and inside sources. This term suggests that he has access to reliable information, even if the details are not yet officially confirmed.



**Fabrizio Romano** @Fabrizio... · 1/1/24 ...

EXCL: Arsenal are advancing to final stages of negotiations for Takehiro Tomiyasu's new long term contract with salary rise. It's getting closer.

Understand Tomiyasu will not leave Arsenal in January.

He's 100% part of #AFC plans despite links with Italian clubs move.



556 3.9K 40K 4.4M

- CONFIRMED: Similar to "official," the term "confirmed" is used by Romano to indicate that a transfer has been verified and authenticated, usually through official channels or reliable sources.



**Fabrizio Romano** @Fabrizio... · 1/4/24 ...

Official, confirmed. Chelsea talented midfielder Alex Matos joins Huddersfield for the remainder of the season.



383 1.7K 35K 2.1M

- COMPLETED: This term is used by Romano to signify that a transfer deal has been finalized and all the necessary paperwork has been signed.



**Fabrizio Romano** @Fabr... · 1/25/24 ...

Calvin Phillips and West Ham, documents between clubs are now completed.



475 2.1K 42K 2.3M

- **BUY:** This term is used by Romano to indicate a permanent transfer where a club acquires the full playing rights of a player from another club. "Buy" is often used in conjunction with the transfer fee to highlight the financial aspect of the deal.



**Fabrizio Romano** @Fabriz... · 1/8/24 ...

Understand final value of the buy option clause for Timo Werner at Spurs will be €17m.

It's not mandatory and up to Tottenham as they will decide in June about Timo's future.



603 2.7K 52K 3.9M

- LOAN: In the context of football transfers, a "loan" refers to a temporary move where a player is sent to another club for a specified period, typically a season, before returning to their parent club<sup>1</sup>. Romano's frequent use of this term highlights the prevalence of loan deals in the transfer market.



**Fabrizio Romano** @Fabri... · 1/15/24 ...

Hannibal Mejbri, on his way to medical tests with Sevilla as loan deal with €20m buy option clause will be signed today.

After initial verbal agreement with [#MUFC](#), INEOS requested for a potential buy back clause in order to give their approval to the deal last night.



313 1.1K 14K 1.7M

- NEGOTIATIONS: This term refers to the ongoing discussions and bargaining processes between clubs, players, and agents involved in a potential transfer<sup>2</sup>. Romano's use of "negotiations" reflects the complex nature of transfer deals and the various stages of negotiations involved.

---

<sup>1</sup> Dylan Tooby "How Do Soccer Transfers Work?" Progressive Soccer Training. <https://www.progressivesoccertraining.com/how-do-soccer-transfers-work/> accessed on April 05<sup>th</sup>, 2024 at 17:54.

<sup>2</sup> Łukomski, J. On the finalisation of international football transfers and professional football players' contracts. *Int Sports Law J* **20**, (2020). 157–179

**Fabrizio Romano** @Fabrizio... · 1/2/24 ...  
Understand negotiations are underway between Tottenham and Genoa for Radu Dragusin after the agreement on personal terms with Romanian CB.

Spurs confident to advance as contacts continue on daily basis.

No changes on Jean-Clair Todibo deal, almost collapsed.



406 1.7K 26K 6.4M

- SIGN: When Romano uses the term "sign," he is indicating that a player has agreed to join a new club, usually referring to the final stage of a transfer where contracts are signed<sup>1</sup>.

**Fabrizio Romano** @Fabrizio... · 1/2/24 ...  
Borussia Dortmund have made fresh approach to sign Jadon Sancho on loan deal from Man United, as called by @SkySportDE.

Discussions taking place but it depends on Man United now — accept loan or it won't be possible for BVB to proceed.

BVB, working on Sancho and new LB.



792 3.5K 44K 3.5M

---

<sup>1</sup> OP: CIT.

- DEAL: This term is a broad reference to a transfer agreement or arrangement between clubs and players<sup>1</sup>. It is the most frequently used term by Romano, highlighting the central focus on transfer deals in his coverage.



Understand it will also include an option to buy clause in June for #WHUFC.

Medical tests booked on Wednesday.

@TurkishAirlines ✈️



1.9K 12K 101K 16M

- CONTRACT: In the context of football transfers, a "contract" refers to the legal agreement that binds a player to a club for a specified duration, outlining the terms of employment and compensation<sup>2</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> OP: CIT.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.



**Fabrizio Romano** @Fabr... · 1/22/24 ...

  West Ham and Man City are in direct contact for Calvin Phillips. More will follow this week as West Ham want to insist on this one.

Barça are currently not working on this deal, as stated in the morning.



 548  1.8K  32K  6.5M  

- PROPOSAL: A "proposal" is an initial offer or suggestion made by a club to a player or another club regarding a potential transfer<sup>1</sup>. Romano's use of this term reflects the early stages of transfer negotiations.

---

<sup>1</sup> OP: CIT.



**Fabrizio Romano** @Fabrizio... · 1/2/24 ...

Radu Dragusin has accepted all details of Tottenham contract proposal as personal terms have been agreed, as revealed last week.

Despite public statements on new deal, he's now waiting for Spurs.

Spurs and Genoa remain in talks to get the deal done very soon



449 2K 24K 2.7M

- Talks: This term refers to the ongoing dialogues and conversations between clubs, players, and agents regarding a potential transfer. It suggests that negotiations are active and ongoing<sup>1</sup>.



**Fabrizio Romano** @Fabriz... · 1/6/24 ...

EXCL: Everton are trying to hijack Sevilla loan move for Hannibal Mejbri as contacts are taking place today.

Hannibal picked Sevilla over Freiburg and OL — still in talks with Man United, nothing done... but Everton are now also showing interest.

Up to Hannibal now.



693 2.9K 30K 8.7M

---

<sup>1</sup> OP: CIT.

- FEE: In the context of football transfers, a "fee" typically refers to the transfer fee or the amount of money paid by one club to another for the acquisition of a player<sup>1</sup>.



**Fabrizio Romano** @F... · 1/10/24 ·

Understand these are final details of Radu Dragusin deal between Spurs and Genoa.

● €25m fixed fee.

● €5m add-ons, now very easy to reach.

● Spence on loan with salary paid by [#THFC](#).

💡 Genoa signed Dragusin for bit more than €5m plus add-ons in August... top deal.



Spurs Global

519 2.1K 32K 3.4M

- SALARY: The term "salary" refers to the compensation or wages that a player will receive from their new club as part of the transfer agreement<sup>2</sup>.




---

<sup>1</sup> OP: CIT.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.



**Fabrizio Romano**  @Fabri... · 1/11/24 ...

   Djed Spence, undergoing medical tests as new Genoa player. Tottenham have already sent all documents to complete loan transfer.

Buy option worth €10m, not mandatory and up to the club in June. Spurs will cover 100% of the salary as part of Dragusin agreement.



 234  549  10K  1M  

Romano's use of these terms reflects the various stages and complexities involved in the football transfer market. By employing a diverse range of vocabulary, he can effectively communicate the nuances of transfer deals, negotiations, and contractual agreements to his audience, further solidifying his position as a credible and knowledgeable source in this domain.

**Table 6: Terms Use Category**

Terms	Repetitions	Mentions %
EXCLUSIVE	5	2.01%
HERE WE GO	7	2.81%
OFFICIAL	4	1.61%
UNDERSTAND	6	2.41%
CONFIRMED	5	2.01%
COMPLETED	5	2.01%
BUY	10	4.02%
LOAN	41	16.47%
NEGOTIATIONS	21	8.43%
SIGN	17	6.83%
DEAL	69	27.71%
CONTRACT	13	5.22%
PROPOSAL	17	6.83%
DISCUSSIONS	7	2.81%
FEE	10	4.02%
SALARY	8	3.21%
Total	260	100%

**Analysis of Terms Category Table:**

One of the most prominent observations is Romano's frequent use of terms such as "Here We Go!", this expression became his brand, reinforcing his position as a trusted source within the football community. As highlighted in the literature review, sports journalists must uphold key occupational values like objectivity, impartiality, and public service to enhance their professional standing<sup>1</sup>. By employing these definitive terms, Romano establishes himself as credible voice in the transfer market, effectively differentiating himself from bloggers and solidifying his journalistic authority in the digital age<sup>2</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> OP: CIT.  
<sup>2</sup> OP: CIT

Furthermore, the use of terms like "Exclusive" and "Understand" suggests that Romano has access to insider information and reliable sources within the football industry. This aligns with the notion of sports journalists serving as opinion leaders, as described in the two-step flow of communication theory<sup>1</sup>. By positioning himself as an opinion leader with privileged access to transfer information, Romano can effectively shape public discourse and influence perceptions surrounding specific transfer deals<sup>2</sup>.

The frequent occurrence of terms such as "Negotiations," "Proposal," "Talks," and "Fee" reflects the complex nature of transfer deals and the various stages involved in the negotiation process<sup>3</sup>. Romano's use of this diverse vocabulary allows him to effectively communicate the nuances and intricacies of transfer agreements to his audience, further solidifying his expertise in this domain.

Notably, the term "Deal" appears with the highest frequency (27.71%), indicating the significant focus on confirmed transfers and completed agreements in Romano's coverage. This emphasis on factual reporting and official announcements can be seen as a counterbalance to the widespread speculation and misinformation that often characterize transfer news coverage, as highlighted in the literature review<sup>4</sup>.

Moreover, the substantial use of terms like "Sign" (6.83%) also reflects the focus on confirmed transfers and completed agreements in Romano's coverage. This finding aligns with existing research suggesting that transfer news and rumours tend to occupy a central position in the agenda-setting of sports media outlets, particularly during the highly anticipated transfer windows<sup>5</sup>.

It is important to note that while Romano's language use exhibits elements of professionalism and credibility, the literature review also highlights the tension between traditional journalistic norms and the demands of personal branding and influencing in the digital age<sup>67</sup>. Romano's coverage of the transfer market incorporates aspects of both traditional journalism and

---

<sup>1</sup> OP: CIT

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> OP: CIT

<sup>4</sup> OP: CIT.

<sup>5</sup> OP: CIT

<sup>6</sup> Lee Molyneux and Avery Holton, "Branding (Health) Journalism: Perceptions, Practices, and Emerging Norms," *Digital Journalism* 3, no. 2 (2015): 225-242;

<sup>7</sup> Celine Brems et al., "Personal Branding on Twitter: How Employed and Freelance Journalists Stage Themselves on Social Media," *Digital Journalism* 5, no. 4 (2017): 443-459.

influencer marketing, potentially blurring the lines between editorial content and advertising practices<sup>1</sup>.

Overall, the analysis of Fabrizio Romano's language use in his coverage of the 2024 winter transfer window for the top six Premier League clubs aligns with existing research on sports journalism, personal branding, and the two-step flow of communication theory. It highlights his efforts to establish credibility, expertise, and influence within the football community, while navigating the complexities of the digital media landscape and the evolving dynamics of sports journalism in the age of social media.

### 6. Club Mentions Category:

This section investigates the frequency with which Fabrizio Romano mentioned the "Big Six" within his coverage of the January 2024 transfer window on X. This analysis aims to quantify the distribution of club mentions and potentially shed light on factors influencing Romano's content focus during this period.

**Table 7: Club mentions Category**

Club	No. of mentions	Mention %
Arsenal	1	1.25%
Chelsea	16	20%
Liverpool	2	2.5%
Manchester City	7	8.75%
Manchester United	15	18.75%
Tottenham	39	48.75%
Total	80	100%

### Analysis of Club Mentions Category Table:

The stark disparity in Fabrizio Romano's coverage of the "Big Six" Premier League clubs during the January 2024 transfer window on X aligns with several key findings from the literature review. The data reveals a clear bias, with Tottenham Hotspur receiving the highest coverage

---

<sup>1</sup> Brooke Erin Duffy, "Social Media Influencers," in *The International Encyclopedia of Gender, Media, and Communication*, ed. Karen Ross et al. (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2020), 1-4.

(48.75%), followed by Chelsea (20%), Manchester United (18.75%), while Arsenal (1.25%) and Liverpool (2.5%) received significantly less attention.

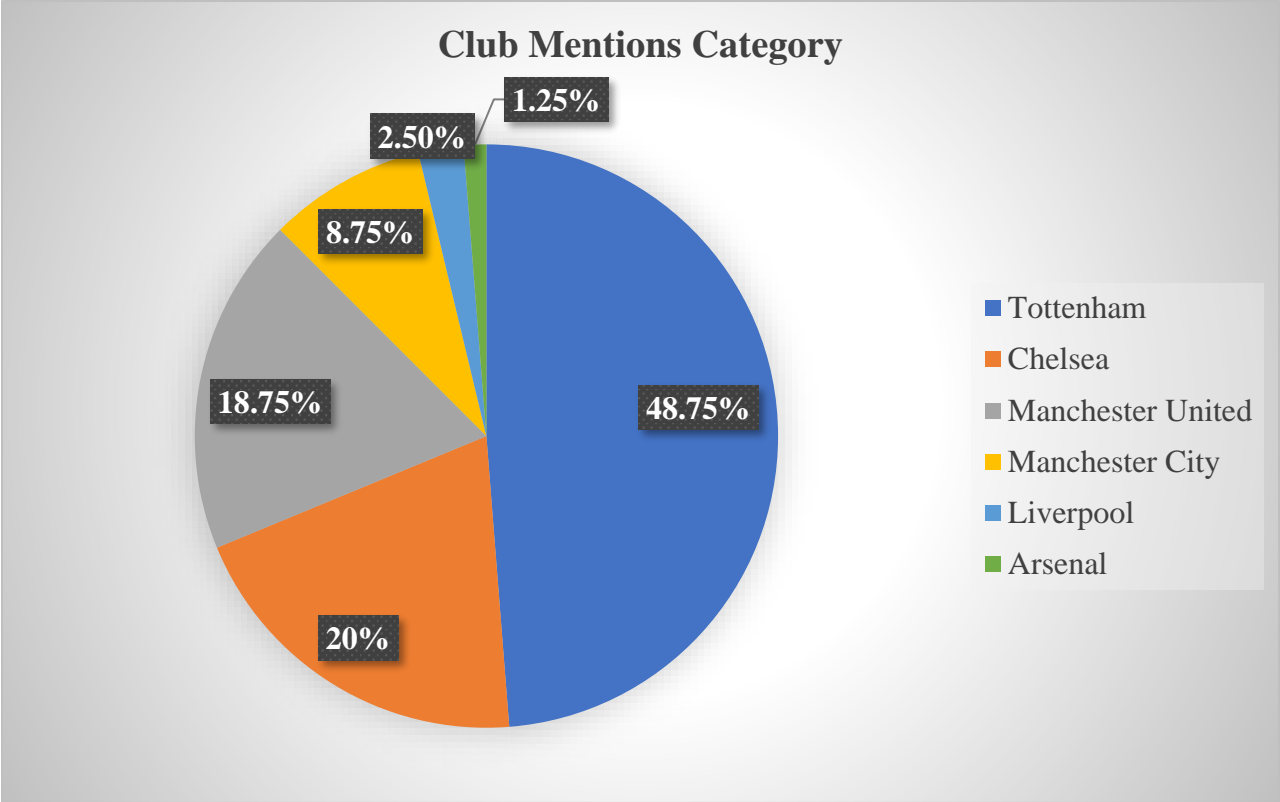
The prominence of Tottenham Hotspur in Romano's coverage is likely driven by the club's active involvement in five transfer deals, both incoming and outgoing, during the January 2024 window. This observation aligns with the hypothesis that "Sports Journalists' activity on social media is relatively driven by newsworthy developments within the clubs themselves". Romano's focus on Tottenham reflects his role as an opinion leader, prioritizing coverage of clubs with significant transfer activities during the period in question.

Conversely, the limited coverage of Arsenal and Liverpool can be attributed to their relatively subdued transfer activity during the same window. Even for these less active clubs, significant transfer rumours have surfaced. However, Romano's decision not to report on these rumours could be influenced by various factors, such as perceived credibility, relevance, or potential impact on his personal brand and influence<sup>1</sup>.

In conclusion, the Club Mentions Category findings can be contextualized within the broader landscape of sports journalism and the influential role played by opinion leaders in shaping discourse on social media platforms. The analysis highlights the need for continued research into the factors driving content prioritization and the potential implications for diversity and plurality in sports coverage.

---

<sup>1</sup> OP: CIT



**Figure 5. Club Mentions Category**

**7. Completed Transfers Category**

This category investigates the number of tweets posted by Fabrizio Romano in covering the 15 completed transfers that the 6 clubs made during the transfer window.

**Table 8. Completed Transfers Category**

Player	No. mentions	Mention %
Radu Dragusin	9	15.7%
Timo Werner	6	10.5%
Eric Dier	6	10.5%
Sergio Reguilón	6	10.5%
Jadon Sancho	6	10.5%
Hannibal Mejbri	4	7%
Andrey Santos	4	7%

David Datro	4	7%
Kalvin Philips	3	5.3%
Ivan Perisic	3	5.3%
Armando Broja	2	3.5%
Ian Maatsen	1	1.8%
Cesare Casadei	1	1.8%
Donny Van De Beek	1	1.8%
Alex Matos	1	1.8%
Total	57	100%

This table summarizes all the completed transfers for the top 6 clubs during the 2024 winter transfer window as covered by Fabrizio Romano. From the table, we observe that 57 out of 80 tweets pertained to completed transfers, while the remaining tweets covered renewals, other clubs showing interest in players, and incomplete transfers. Notably, all 15 deals Romano announced as finalized were indeed completed.

#### **Club-Specific Highlights:**

- Tottenham:
  - Incoming Players:
    - Radu Dragusin’s transfer from Genoa to Tottenham received significant coverage, with nine tweets.
    - Werner’s move from Leipzig to Chelsea was highlighted in six tweets.
  - Departures:
    - Eric Dier’s move to Bayern Munich was mentioned in six tweets.
    - Sergio Reguilon’s transfer to Brentford also received six mentions.
    - Ivan Perisic’s move to Hajduk Split was covered in three tweets.
- Manchester United: Although Manchester United made no new acquisitions or loans in January, they had notable departures:
  - Sergio Reguilon’s departure due to a break clause activation was covered with six tweets (13%).
  - Jadon Sancho’s loan move to Borussia Dortmund also received six mentions.
  - Hannibal Mejbri’s transfer to Sevilla had four tweets.

- Donny Van De Beek's switch to Eintracht Frankfurt was officially announced with just one tweet.
- Chelsea:
  - Andrey Santos's loan to Strasbourg was covered by Romano in four tweets.
  - David Datro's loan to Burnley was covered by Fabrizio in four tweets.
  - Alex Matos' loan to Huddersfield was revealed in one tweet.
  - Armando Broja joined Fulham for loan too and this transfer was covered in two tweets.
  - Cesare Casadei joined the club after being recalled from Leicester loan, with only one tweet.
  - Ian Maatsen's loan to Borussia Dortmund was also covered in a single tweet.
- Manchester City:
  - Calvin Phillips was loaned to West Ham United, garnering three tweets.
- Arsenal and Liverpool:
  - Neither club made any signings during the January transfer window.

### **Analysis of Completed Transfers Category:**

The two-step flow of communication theory posits that information flows from mass media to opinion leaders, who then interpret and disseminate the information to their respective social circles<sup>1</sup>. In this context, Fabrizio Romano can be considered an opinion leader in the realm of football transfer news. His extensive coverage of completed transfers, dedicating an average of 3.8 tweets per transfer, reflects his role as an influential and credible source of information for football fans and enthusiasts.

Romano's thorough coverage of completed transfers, comprising 71.25% of his tweets during the 2024 winter transfer window, aligns with the findings of Reed and Harrison and Rojas-Torrijos and Mello, who observed a prevalence of unsourced transfer rumours over sourced news (Table 5). By focusing on credible and confirmed deals, Romano establishes himself as a reliable source of information, counteracting the proliferation of misinformation and speculation that often characterizes the football transfer market<sup>23</sup>.

The high number of tweets dedicated to certain transfers, such as Radu Dragusin's move to Tottenham (9 tweets) and Timo Werner's transfer to Chelsea (6 tweets), suggests that Romano

---

<sup>1</sup> Lazarsfeld, Paul F, Bernard Berelson, and Hazel Gaudet. *The People's Choice*. 1948.

<sup>2</sup> OP: CIT.

<sup>3</sup> OP: CIT

recognizes the audience's interest and engagement with these high-profile deals. This aligns with Cable and Mottershead's observation that sports media outlets often prioritize content that appeals to their audiences and generates traffic, potentially contributing to the "clickbait culture"<sup>1</sup>.

However, Romano's comprehensive coverage of completed transfers across all six clubs, including less prominent deals like Alex Matos' loan to Huddersfield and Ian Maatsen's move to Borussia Dortmund, demonstrates a commitment to providing comprehensive and balanced reporting, rather than solely focusing on the most sensational or high-profile transfers.

This balanced approach aligns with the professional values of sports journalism, such as objectivity, impartiality, and public service<sup>2</sup>, and contributes to enhancing the professional standing of sports journalism, which has often been perceived as a "toy department"<sup>3</sup>. Furthermore, Romano's ability to break news and provide exclusive updates on completed transfers, as evidenced by the fact that all 15 deals he announced as finalized were indeed completed, reinforces his credibility and influence as an opinion leader in the football transfer market. This is consistent with Moritz and Mirer's observation that scoops are now predominantly associated with a select few elite practitioners who possess exceptional contacts and expertise.

Overall, Fabrizio Romano's coverage of completed transfers during the 2024 winter transfer window reflects his influential role as an opinion leader in the realm of football transfer news. His focus on credible and confirmed deals, balanced reporting across all clubs, and ability to break news and provide exclusive updates contribute to enhancing the professional standing of sports journalism and counteracting the proliferation of misinformation in the football transfer market.

---

<sup>1</sup> OP : CIT

<sup>2</sup> OP : CIT

<sup>3</sup> OP : CIT

## Discussion of Results

The findings from the content analysis of Fabrizio Romano's coverage during the 2024 winter transfer window for the top six Premier League clubs on 'X' provide a nuanced understanding of how social media impacts sports journalism. This discussion delves into the analysis results across various categories, linking these findings to the existing literature review and addressing Research Sub-Question 3: How does Fabrizio Romano use 'X' to cover the transfer market?

The content analysis revealed that 81.25% of Romano's tweets incorporated original player images, while 18.75% featured modified images. This significant use of original visuals aligns with Niles<sup>1</sup> observation that sports journalists often employ unaltered images to maintain authenticity and credibility. The strategic use of modified images, particularly for completed transfers, enhances storytelling and engagement, echoing Boyle's assertion that visual elements can heighten audience anticipation and interaction.

Romano's use of hashtags was observed in 17.5% of his tweets. This selective application of hashtags, primarily club-specific ones, suggests a targeted approach to engagement, which diverges from Sheffer and Schultz's<sup>2</sup> broader findings on extensive hashtag usage to increase visibility. Romano's strategy supports Adornato's findings that targeted social media use can boost journalist credibility and audience engagement by focusing on specific, relevant topics that resonate with followers.

Romano's frequent use of key terms and expressions, such as his trademark phrase "Here We Go," reinforces his credibility and expertise in the transfer market. This practice aligns with Molyneux and Holton's<sup>3</sup> insights into personal branding, where subjective and emotionally engaging language fosters a stronger connection with the audience. Romano's consistent use of "Here We Go" has become synonymous with his reporting, effectively branding his updates as reliable and authoritative. This aligns with the concept of personal branding discussed by Molyneux and Holton<sup>4</sup>, highlighting how journalists can use specific language and expressions to create a distinct, recognizable brand identity that resonates with their audience. This branding not only enhances Romano's credibility but also establishes his voice as a leading source of transfer news, supporting his role as an opinion leader in the digital age.

---

<sup>1</sup> OP : CIT.

<sup>2</sup> OP : CIT.

<sup>3</sup> OP : CIT.

<sup>4</sup> OP : CIT.

The analysis indicates that Romano cited sources such as other journalists, agents, and official club announcements in only 10% of his tweets. This low percentage suggests that Romano relies more heavily on personal sources and inside information, underscoring the importance of networking in his journalistic practice. This reliance on personal sources demonstrates Romano's deep integration into the football transfer network, allowing him to provide timely and exclusive information. This finding aligns with the literature on the critical role of networking in journalism, as emphasized by Reed and Harrison<sup>1</sup>, who note that strong professional networks are essential for obtaining and verifying information in a fast-paced media environment.

Romano's tweets exhibited high levels of engagement, evidenced by significant numbers of likes, retweets, and comments. This active audience interaction supports Adornato's<sup>2</sup> claim that journalists who engage with their followers on social media are perceived as more credible and receive higher audience ratings. The content analysis demonstrates that Romano's strategic use of visuals, language, hashtags, and his reliance on personal and inside sources not only bolsters his credibility but also maximizes audience interaction and reach.

In the category of club mentions, Tottenham was the most mentioned club due to their activity in the transfer window with five transfers. Conversely, Arsenal and Liverpool were the least mentioned, despite rumours and their large followings. This indicates Romano's focus on credibility and preference for covering ongoing transfers rather than rumours. This approach aligns with the findings of Sheffer and Schultz<sup>3</sup>, who note that extensive rumour coverage can undermine journalistic credibility. By prioritizing verifiable information and ongoing transfers, Romano maintains his reputation for accuracy and reliability, which is crucial in building and sustaining a credible journalistic brand.

In the completed transfers category, Romano's thorough coverage, comprising 71.25% of his tweets during the 2024 winter transfer window, emphasizes his focus on credible and confirmed deals, counteracting the prevalence of misinformation and speculation. Romano's high number of tweets on transfers like Radu Dragusin to Tottenham (9 tweets) and Timo Werner to Chelsea (6 tweets) aligns with audience interest and engagement, reflecting Cable and Mottershead's observation of content prioritization for traffic generation.

---

<sup>1</sup> OP : CIT

<sup>2</sup> OP : CIT

<sup>3</sup> OP : CIT

Romano's coverage of all six clubs, including less prominent deals like Alex Matos' loan to Huddersfield and Ian Maatsen's move to Borussia Dortmund, demonstrates a commitment to balanced reporting, aligning with professional journalism values of objectivity and impartiality. This approach enhances the professional standing of sports journalism. Romano's ability to break news and provide exclusive updates, with all 15 announced deals being completed, reinforces his credibility and influence as an opinion leader, consistent with Moritz and Mirer's<sup>1</sup> observation of elite practitioners with exceptional contacts and expertise.

▪ **Testing the Research Hypotheses:**

The study's hypotheses were formulated to explore how social media shaped the methods of sports journalists' coverage of the football transfer market. The findings from the content analysis provide empirical evidence to test these hypotheses:

- Hypothesis 1: The use of specific language and expressions by sports journalists on social media platforms helps them create a brand for themselves.

- Romano's frequent use of the key phrase "Here We Go" as a signature term reinforces his credibility and personal brand, supporting this hypothesis. His consistent language use aligns with Molyneux and Holton's findings on personal branding, demonstrating how specific expressions can create a recognizable and authoritative brand identity.

- Hypothesis 2: Sports journalists' activity on social media is driven by newsworthy developments within the clubs themselves.

- Romano's club mentions showed a higher frequency of tweets about Tottenham, who were the most active with five transfers, while Arsenal was mentioned in only one tweet out of 80 due to their lack of activity during the transfer window.

- Hypothesis 3: Sports journalists leverage visual elements, particularly player images, on social media platforms to increase audience engagement and interest in transfer news.

- The significant use of original and modified player images in Romano's tweets supports this hypothesis. The findings align with Boyle's assertion that visual storytelling enhances audience

---

<sup>1</sup> OP : CIT.

engagement and interest, demonstrating how visual elements are effectively used to communicate transfer developments.

- **Information Flow in the Digital Age: Traditional vs. Digital Freelance Journalism**

The table below illustrates a new model of information flow in the coverage of the football transfer market, significantly impacted by social media. By comparing the traditional Two-Step Flow of Communication with the modern Digital Freelance Journalism, the table highlights how social media platforms have transformed the dynamics of sports journalism. This transformation is evident in the shift from mass media and opinion leaders to freelance journalists who engage directly with audiences through digital platforms. The impact of social media is reflected in various aspects such as content distribution, audience engagement, credibility maintenance, and personal branding, showcasing a more interactive and immediate form of journalism in the digital age.

**Table 8: The Modelling of the Two Step Flow of Communication Theory based on our Research.**

<b>Aspects</b>	<b>Traditional Two-Step Flow of Communication</b>	<b>Digital Freelance Journalism</b>
<b>Primary Actors</b>	Mass Media, Opinion Leaders, General Public	Digital Platforms, Freelance Journalists, Audiences
<b>Information Flow</b>	Mass Media -> Opinion Leaders -> Public	Freelance Journalists -> Digital Platforms -> Audiences
<b>Source of Credibility</b>	Established media outlets	Personal branding and direct engagement
<b>Content Distribution</b>	Broadcast, then spread by opinion leaders	Direct posting on social media platforms
<b>Audience Engagement</b>	Indirect, through opinion leaders	Direct, interactive, and real-time
<b>Branding</b>	Institutional branding	Personal branding
<b>Feedback Mechanism</b>	Delayed and mediated	Immediate and direct through social media

## General Conclusion

This dissertation set out to explore the impact of social media on sports journalists' coverage of the football transfer market, specifically analysing the practices of the freelance journalist Fabrizio Romano during the 2024 winter transfer window for the top six Premier League clubs on 'X'. Through a comprehensive literature review and detailed content analysis, the study aimed to answer key research questions related to the dynamics of modern sports journalism in the digital age.

The literature review provided a foundational understanding of how social media has revolutionized sports journalism. It highlighted key theories and concepts, including the Two-Step Flow of Communication, which traditionally described the flow of information from mass media to the public via opinion leaders. The review also discussed the rise of digital media and its impact on journalistic practices, emphasizing the importance of personal branding, direct audience engagement, and the shift from institutional credibility to individual credibility.

The findings from the content analysis of Fabrizio Romano's tweets revealed significant insights into his use of social media to cover the transfer market. Romano's strategic use of visuals, language, hashtags, and sourcing practices demonstrates a nuanced approach that leverages the interactive and immediate nature of digital platforms. The frequent use of original and modified player images not only maintained authenticity but also enhanced storytelling, aligning with the assertion that visual elements can heighten audience engagement and anticipation.

Romano's selective use of hashtags and targeted mentions of specific clubs, such as the high frequency of mentions for Tottenham due to their active transfer window, contrasted with the minimal mentions of Arsenal and Liverpool, underscores his focus on credibility and relevance. This strategy aligns with the targeted social media use highlighted in the literature, emphasizing the importance of engaging specific fanbases with relevant content.

The analysis of Romano's language, particularly his trademark phrase "Here We Go," highlighted the role of personal branding in establishing credibility and audience trust. This consistent use of language helped create a recognizable and authoritative brand identity, which is crucial in maintaining a strong personal brand in the digital age.

Moreover, the study found that Romano's reliance on personal sources and inside information, with only 10% of his tweets citing other journalists or official sources, underscores the importance of networking in modern sports journalism. This deep integration into the football transfer network allows him to provide timely and exclusive updates, reinforcing his role as an opinion leader.

Romano's comprehensive coverage of completed transfers, which accounted for 71.25% of his tweets, highlights his commitment to providing credible and verified information. This focus on confirmed deals over rumours aligns with the professional values of sports journalism, such as objectivity and impartiality, and counters the proliferation of misinformation in the transfer market.

Testing the research hypotheses, the study confirmed that the use of specific language and expressions helps sports journalists create a personal brand, that journalistic activity on social media is driven by actual club developments, and that visual elements are crucial for increasing audience engagement and interest in transfer news.

The impact of social media on sports journalism is evident in the emergence of a new model of information flow and a new form of journalism. This model, characterized by freelance sports journalists like Fabrizio Romano who develop their own personal brands, marks a departure from the traditional Two-Step Flow of Communication. In this modern digital freelance journalism model, independent journalists engage directly with their audiences through social media platforms. This shift emphasizes personal branding, immediate feedback, and direct audience interaction, showcasing the transformative impact of social media on the coverage of the football transfer market.

In conclusion, this dissertation demonstrates that social media has profoundly impacted sports journalism, transforming the way journalists like Fabrizio Romano cover the football transfer market. The findings illustrate a shift towards a more interactive, immediate, and personalized form of journalism, where credibility is built through direct audience engagement and strategic content use. The integration of theoretical perspectives from the literature review with practical insights from the content analysis provides a comprehensive understanding of the evolving nature of sports journalism. This study sets the stage for future research on the role of digital platforms in shaping journalistic practices and highlights the critical importance of adaptability, credibility, and audience engagement in the digital age.

## References

### • Citation of a Book:

- Abbott, Andrew, *The Systems of Professions: An Essay on the Division of Expert Labour*, 1st ed, Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 1988.
- Aldridge, Meryl and Evetts, Julia, *Rethinking the concept of professionalism: The case of journalism*, *British Journal of Sociology*, 2003, Vol.54, No.1, pp. 547–64.
- Boyle, Raymond. "*Sports Journalism: Context and Issues, 1st ed.*" London: Sage. (2006).
- Bradshaw, Tom and Minogue, Daragh, *Sports Journalism: The State of Play, 1st ed*, Abingdon: Routledge. 2020.
- Comm, Joel. *Twitter Power: How to Dominate Your Market One Tweet at a Time*. Hoboken, N.J.: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2009.
- Domeneghetti, Roger, *Insights on Reporting Sports in the Digital Age*, 1ed, London: Routledge, 2021.
- Gernon, Alan. *The Transfer Market: The Insider Stories*. Pitch Publishing Ltd, 2019
- Hutchins, Brett and Rowe, David, *Sport Beyond Television: The Internet, Digital Media and the Rise of Networked Sport*, 1st ed, London: Routledge. 2012.
- Kovach, Bill and Rosenstiel, Tom, *The Elements of Journalism: What Newspeople Should Know and the Public Should Expect*, 2ed, New York: Three Rivers Press, 2007.
- Li, Charlene, and Josh Bernoff. *Groundswell: Winning in a World Transformed by Social Technologies*. Boston: Harvard Business Press, 2008
- Plaisance, Patrick Lee, *Media Ethics. Key Principles for Responsible Practice*, 2ed, Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2013.
- Rosenberg, Howard, and Charles S. Feldman. 2008. *No Time to Think; The Menace of Media Speed and the 24-Hour News Cycle*. New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group, ISBN 9780826429315.
- Webster, James G., *The Marketplace of Attention: How Audiences Take Shape in a Digital Age*, Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2014.

### • Citation of a Book Chapter:

- Barzilai-Nahon, Karine. "*Toward a Theory of Network Gatekeeping: A Framework for Exploring Information Control.*" *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology* 59, no. 9 (2008): 1493–1512.

- Bardoel, Jo, and Mark Deuze. "*Network Journalism: Converging Competences of Media Professionals and Professionalism.*" *Australian Journalism Review* 23, no. 2 (2001): 91–103.
- Bradshaw, Tom, *Benefit or burden? Social media and moral complexities confronting sports journalists, extract from collective book (s.dir) Domeneghetti, Roger*, London: Routledge, 2021, p 10.
- Cable, Jonathan and Mottershead, Glyn, *Can I click it? Yes, you can: Sport journalism, Twitter and clickbait*, *Ethical Space: The International Journal of Communication Ethics*, 2018, Vol.15, No.1, pp. 69–80.
- Duffy, Brooke Erin, *Social media influencers, in The International Encyclopedia of Gender, Media, and Communication (s.dir) Ross, Karen, Bachmann, Ingrid, Cardo, Valentina, Moorti, Sujata, and Scarcelli, Cosimo Marco*, Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2020, pp. 1–4.
- English, Peter, *Sports journalism*, in *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Communication (s.dir) Nussbaum, Jon*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018, pp. 1–18.
- McEnnis, Simon, *Sports journalism and cultural authority in the digital age*, extract from collective book (s.dir) Burdsey, Dan, Carter, Thomas, and Doidge, Mark, *Transforming Sport: Knowledges, Practices and Structures*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2018, pp. 207–19.
- McEnnis, Simon, *Sports journalism and cultural authority in the digital age*, in *Transforming Sport: Knowledges, Practices and Structures (s.dir) Burdsey, Dan, Carter, Thomas, and Doidge, Mark*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2018, pp. 207–19.
- Moritz, Brian and Mirer, Michael, *The end of the scoop scoreboard: Boundary work and breaking news in sports journalism*, extract from collective book (s.dir) Domeneghetti, Roger, *Insights on Reporting Sports in the Digital Age*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2021, pp. 138–54.
- Moritz, Brian & Mirer, Michael, *The end of the scoop scoreboard. Boundary work and breaking news in sports journalism*, extract from collective book (s.dir) Domeneghetti, Roger, London: Routledge, 2021, pp. 138–54.
- Moritz, Brian & Mirer, Michael, *The end of the scoop scoreboard. Boundary work and breaking news in sports journalism*, extract from collective book (s.dir) Domeneghetti, Roger, London: Routledge, 2021, p 139.
- Oelrichs, Inga, *Adoption of Innovations in Digital Sports Journalism: The Use of Twitter by German Sports Journalists*, extract from collective book (s.dir) *Communication & Sport*, Newcastle upon Tyne: SAGE, 2020.

- Roberts, Marilyn, and Maxwell McCombs. "Agenda Setting and Political Advertising: Origins of the News Agenda." *Political Communication* 11, no. 3 (1994): 249–262.

- **Citation of a Journal Article:**

- Antunovic, Dunja, "We wouldn't say it to their faces": Online harassment, women sports journalists and feminism, *Feminist Media Studies*, 2019, volume 19, pp. 428–42.
- Bentivegna, S., & Marchetti, R. Journalists at a crossroads: Are traditional norms and practices challenged by Twitter? *Journalism*, 19(2), (2018). 270–290.
- Berger, J., & Milkman, K. L. "What makes online content viral?" *Journal of marketing research*, 49(2), 192-205 (2012).
- Boyd, D., & Ellison, N. "Social Network Sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship." *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, (2008) 13(1), 210-230
- Carr, C. T., & Hayes, R. A. social media: Defining, developing, and divining. *Atlantic Journal of Communication*, (2015), 23(1), 46–65.
- Creech, B., & Mendelson, A. L. Imagining the journalist of the future: Technological visions of journalism education and news work. *The Communication Review*, (2015). 18(2), 142–165.
- Edosomwan, S. O. The history of social media and its impact on business. *The Journal of Applied Management & Entrepreneurship* (2011), 16(3):79-91, 3-9
- Ekström, Mats, and Seth C. Lewis. 2020. Epistemologies of digital journalism and the study of misinformation. *New Media & Society* 22: 205–12.
- English, Peter, Twitter's diffusion in sports journalism: Role models, laggards and followers of the social media innovation, *New Media & Society*, 2016, 18, 484–501.
- Forde, Shawn and Wilson, Brian, Radical sports journalism? Reflections on 'alternative' approaches to covering sport-related social issues, *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 2018, Vol.35, No.1, pp. 66–75.
- Frish, Y., & Greenbaum, D. Is social media a cesspool of misinformation? Clearing a path for patient-friendly safe spaces online. *The American Journal of Bioethics: AJOB*, (2017). 17(3), 19–21.
- Harper, R. A. The Social Media Revolution: Exploring the impact on journalism and news media organizations. *Inquiries Journal*, (2010), [202].
- Hayes, Arthur & Singer, Jane & Ceppos, Jerry, Shifting Roles, Enduring Values: The Credible Journalist in a Digital Age, *Journal of Mass Media Ethics*, 2007, 22, 262–79.

- Junco, R., Heiberger, G., & Loken, E. The effect of Twitter on college student engagement and grades. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning*, (2011), 27, 119-132.
- Klose, K. Notes from a new dean. *American Journalism Review*, (2009). 31(3), 2.
- Lasorsa, D. L., Lewis, S. C., & Holton, A. E. Normalizing Twitter: Journalism practice in an emerging communication space. *Journalism Studies*, (2012). 13(1), 19–36.
- Lazarsfeld, Paul F, Bernard Berelson, and Hazel Gaudet. 1948. *The People's Choice*.
- Lewis, S. C., & Molyneux, L. A decade of research on social media and journalism: Assumptions, blind spots, and a way forward. *Media and Communication*, (2018). 6(4), 11–23.
- Lin, Y. R., Keegan, B., Margolin, D., & Lazer, D. "Rising tides or rising stars?: Dynamics of shared attention on Twitter during media events." *PloS one*, 9(5), e94093 (2014).
- McEnnis, Simon. 2023. "There He Goes: The Influencer–Sports Journalism of Fabrizio Romano on Twitter and Its Implications for Professionalism" *Journalism and Media* 4, no. 2: 430-444.
- McEnnis, Simon, *Following the action: How live bloggers are reimagining the professional ideology of sports journalism*, *Journalism Practice*, 2016, volume 10, pp. 967–82.
- McEnnis, Simon, *Playing on the same pitch: Attitudes of sports journalists towards fan bloggers*, *Digital Journalism*, 2017, Vol.5, No.1, pp. 549–66.
- O'Hallarn, Brendan. "Sport, Twitter Hashtags and the Public Sphere" (2016). Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), Dissertation, Human Movement Sciences, Old Dominion University, DOI: 10.25777/t2zk-yq36
- Olausson, Ulrika, *The celebrified journalist: Journalistic self-promotion and branding in celebrity constructions on Twitter*, *Journalism Studies*, 2018, Vol.19, No.1, pp. 2379–99.
- Pegoraro, Ann. "Twitter as Disruptive Innovation in Sport Communication." *Communication & Sport* 2014. (2): 132–37.
- Podger, Pamela J. "The Limits of Control." *American Journalism Review* 31.4 (2009): P33-37.
- Price, John, Farrington, Neil, and Hall, Lee, *Changing the game? The impact of Twitter on relationships between football clubs, supporters and the sports media*, *Soccer & Society*, 2013, volume 14, pp. 446–61.
- Reed, Sada, *American sports writers' social media use and its influence on professionalism*, *Journalism Practice*, 2013, Vol.7, No.1, pp. 555–71.

- Rojas-Torrijos, Jose Luis, and Matheus Simoes Mello. "Football Misinformation Matrix: A Comparative Study of 2020 Winter Transfer News in Four European Sports Media Outlets." *Journalism and Media* 2, no. 1 (2021): 625-40.
- Rowe, David, Sports journalism and the FIFA scandal: Personalisation, co-optation and investigation, *Communication & Sport*, 2017, Vol.5, No.1, pp. 515–33.
- Schultz, Brad & Sheffer, Mary Lou, An Exploratory Study of How Twitter Is Affecting Sports Journalism, *International Journal of Sport Communication*, 2010, 3, 226–39.
- Sears, Kyle, "Twitter's Impact on Sports Journalism Practice: Where a New Medium Meets and Old Art." Thesis, Georgia State University, 2011.
- Shermak, Jeremy L., Scoring live tweets on the beat: Examining Twitter engagement in sports newspaper beat reporters' live coverage, *Digital Journalism*, 2018, volume 6, pp. 118–36.
- Sherwood, Merryn and Nicholson, Matthew, Web 2.0 platforms and the work of newspaper sport journalists, *Journalism*, 2013, volume 14, pp. 942–59.
- Sherwood, Merryn, Nicholson, Matthew, and Marjoribanks, Tim, Access, agenda building and information subsidies: Media relations in professional sport, *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, 2017, Vol.52, No.1, pp. 992–1007.
- Sherwood, Merryn, Nicholson, Matthew, and Marjoribanks, Tim, Controlling the message and the medium? The impact of sports organisations' digital and social channels on media access, *Digital Journalism*, 2017, Vol.5, No.1, pp. 513–31.
- Thorson, Emily, Belief echoes: The persistent effects of corrected misinformation, *Political Communication*, 2016, volume 33, pp. 460–80.
- Vosoughi, Soroush, Roy, Deb, and Aral, Sinan, The spread of true and false news online, *Science*, 2018, volume 359, pp. 1146–51.
- Waisbord, Silvio, Truth is What Happens to News: On Journalism, Fake News, and Post-Truth, *Journalism Studies*, 2018, 19, 1866–78.
- Weaver, D. H., Willnat, L. Changes in U.S. journalism: How do journalists think about social media? *Journalism Practice*, (2016). 10(7), 844–855.
- Weimann, G. On the importance of marginality: One more step into the two-step flow of communication, *American Sociological Review*, 1982, Vol. 47, No. 6, p.764-773.

• **Citation of an Article Published on the Internet:**

- 1908.nl. "Altijd. Overal. Feyenoord." <https://1908.nl/> Accessed on April 05th, 2024 at 09:46 AM.
- Beckett, Charlie, Towards an emotionally networked journalism (long read version), Polis | LSE's Journalism and Society Think Tank, <https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/polis/2017/08/31/sense-and-sensibility-towards-an-emotionally-networked-journalism> , Accessed on April 24th, 2024, 09:41 AM.
- Borders, B. (2009). A brief history of social media. <http://socialmediarockstar.com/history-of-social-media> Retrieved December 05, 2010,
- Cambridge University Press. "Definition of Social Media." Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/learner-english/social-media> Consulted on February 04th 2024 at 09:26 AM.
- Chadwick, Simon. 2013. The Science behind Football Transfer Rumours. The Conversation. Available online: <https://theconversation.com/the-science-behind-football-transfer-rumours-16293> (accessed on January 13st, 2024 at 10:42 AM).
- Dylan Tooby "How Do Soccer Transfers Work?" Progressive Soccer Training. <https://www.progressivesoccertraining.com/how-do-soccer-transfers-work> accessed on April 05th, 2024 at 17:54.
- Florian Plettenberg, "Biographies Are Us," <https://biographiesareus.com/florian-plettenberg/> accessed on April 5th, 2024 at 11:44 AM.
- Gold, Alasdair. Twitter profile. <https://twitter.com/AlasdairGold> Accessed on April 05th, 2024. At 12:56.
- Hassan Muhammad, Content Analysis – Methods, Types and Examples, Research Method <https://researchmethod.net/content-analysis/> Consulted on April 22nd 2024 at 14:37 PM.
- Hinze, Philipp. "Autoren bei Sky Sport." Sky Sport. <https://sport.sky.de/fussball/artikel/autoren-bei-sky-sport-philipp-hinze/12642525/34240> Accessed April 05th, 2024 at 12:03 AM.
- Indeed Editorial Team. "What Is Field Research? Definition, Methods and Examples." Indeed Career Guide, 22 May 2023, <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/what-is-field-research> . Accessed on April 23th, 2024 at 03:43 PM.
- Investopedia. "Sample." Investopedia, <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/s/sample.asp> . Consulted on April 22nd 2024 at 03:50 PM.

- Jones, Dean, ‘Here We Go!’ What it’s Like to Be a Transfer window Superstar Reporter, Bleacher Report, <https://bleacherreport.com/articles/2899366-here-we-go-whats-it-like-to-be-a-transfer-window-superstar-reporter> , consulted on April 24th, 2024, 10:35 AM.
- Kolodny, Lora. “Musk Says Twitter Now X Is Moving to Monthly Subscriptions.” CNBC. <https://www.cnbc.com/2023/09/18/musk-says-twitter-now-x-is-moving-to-monthly-subscriptions.html> Consulted on March 04th 2024 at 10:48 AM.
- Moretto, Matteo. “Matteo Moretto’s Profile | Relevo Journalist | Muck Rack.” <https://muckrack.com/matteo-moretto> . Accessed on April 5th, 2024 at 13:16.
- Nielsen, Rasmus Kleis and Graves, Lucas, News You Don’t Believe: Audience Perspectives on Fake news, Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, <https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/our-research/news-you-dont-believe-audience-perspectives-fake-news> , consulted on March 26th, 2024 at 09:43 AM.
- Niles, Nicole. "SMG: What's Changed about Sports Journalism: Social Media and Expectations." National Sports Journalism Center, <https://nsjc.mediaschool.indiana.edu/smg-whats-changed-about-sports-journalism-social-media-and-expectations/> . Consulted on March 28st, 2024 at 02:33 PM.
- Parker, Sam. “Exploring Visual Storytelling Impact on LinkedIn Pulse.” Medium. <https://medium.com/@samparkerxo/exploring-visual-storytelling-impact-on-linkedin-pulse-4b2520f6fb44> Consulted on April 22nd, 2024 at 07:05 AM.
- Postelnicu, Monica. Two-step flow model of communication, Encyclopedia Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/two-step-flow-model-of-communication> , consulted on April 7, 2024, at 03:21 AM.
- Rosenblatt, A. Two-way communication is the new journalism. <https://medium.com/@arosenblatt21/two-way-communication-is-the-new-journalism-1e4962b10c22> Consulted on April. 15th 2024 at 10:22 AM.
- Samuel Waihenya, “Fabrizio Romano Here We Go – Tweet Explained,” Soccer Whizz, <https://soccerwhizz.com/fabrizio-romano-here-we-go-explained> Consulted on April 6th 2024 at 17:40.
- Silverman, Craig, Lies, Damn Lies, and Viral Content: Examining the Role of News Websites, New York: Tow Center for Digital Journalism, <https://academiccommons.columbia.edu/doi/10.7916/D8Q81RHH> , consulted on March 26th, 2024 at 09:14 AM.

- Sky Sport DE." Twitter, n.d., <https://twitter.com/SkySportDE> . Consulted on April 5th 2024 at 12:04 AM.
- Smith, Rory, Behind the Curtain of Soccer's Prophet of the Deal, New York Times, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/24/sports/soccer/fabrizio-romano-transfer-rumors.html> consulted on April 23, 2024, 12:00 at AM.
- Smith, Rory, Behind the Curtain of Soccer's Prophet of the Deal, New York Times, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/24/sports/soccer/fabrizio-romano-transfer-rumors.html> , consulted on April 24th, 2024, 10:41 AM.
- Smith, Rory, The Original Fake News: Soccer Transfers, The New York Times, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/07/13/sports/soccer/premier-league-transfers-window.html> , consulted on March 26th, 2024 at 09:08 AM.
- Sprung, Shlomo, "Here We Go!" Meet Fabrizio Romano, Soccer's Answer to Woj and Shams, Boardroom, <https://boardroom.tv/fabrizio-romano-here-we-go> , consulted on April 24th, 2024 at 10:55 AM.
- Stanton, John, January Transfer Window? Can You Believe Gossip Column Rumours? BBC, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/football/37975118> , Accessed on April 23th, 2024, at 12:36 AM.
- Wagner, K. Three Major Ways Social Media is Changing Journalism <https://medium.com/analyzing-media-bias-case-studies/the-weaponization-of-social-media-d8c0d5664b14> Illuminate, Santa Clara University. Consulted on April, 18th 2024 at 10:36AM.
- Watson, Ian. "Man City Sixth in Premier League Five-year Net Spend Table Behind Newcastle." Football365, 20 May 2024, <https://www.football365.com/news/transfers-premier-league-five-year-net-spend-man-utd-man-city> . Consulted on February 16th, 2024 at 09:56 AM.