Research Article

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Instagram Communication of Turkish Basketball Clubs in EuroLeague and Domestic League Games

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Abstract

This study examined how basketball clubs' Instagram communication differed between international and domestic competitions. Ten systematically sampled EuroLeague games per club from Fenerbahçe Beko and Anadolu Efes in the 2025–26 season were matched with the nearest unused Basketball Super League games, yielding 20 game pairs and 40 communication windows. Of 804 posts examined, 595 were assigned to target games. Nine indicators were compared using Wilcoxon signed-rank tests with Holm correction; seven showed significant differences. EuroLeague windows contained more posts and higher proportions of Reels, videos, English or bilingual captions, competition hashtags, and game-moment or player-focused content. Domestic league communication emphasized objective game information. Competition-account tagging and competition-name mentions did not differ significantly. Communication practices varied by competition context.

Keywords: sports communication, Instagram, basketball, EuroLeague, Basketball Super League, social media

1. INTRODUCTION

The widespread adoption of social media has substantially transformed how sport organizations communicate with the public and engage directly with their fans. When traditional media dominated, club visibility depended largely on the editorial decisions of journalists and broadcasters; social media, by contrast, have enabled clubs and other sport organizations to produce their own content and reach their intended audiences directly [1]. At the same time, the reduced dependence on traditional media organizations has created new dependencies on the algorithmic logic of platforms in clubs' communication processes [2]. At the same time, social media have expanded opportunities for interaction, collaboration, and the co-creation of value with fans through sport communication [3].

Instagram, a platform centered on visual content, has become an important channel through which professional sport clubs conduct these communication activities. Clubs use Instagram not only to share game-related information but also to build and strengthen their brand identities [4]. Whereas research on clubs' Instagram communication has been dominated by football, studies focusing on basketball clubs remain more limited. In Turkey, Akyazı [5] examined the Instagram posts of Süper Lig football clubs, and Irmaksoy [6] analyzed the posts of Beşiktaş, Fenerbahçe, and Galatasaray through content analysis. In basketball, Berk and Çelik [7] descriptively examined the Instagram posts of three Turkish basketball clubs over a one-week period, and Opelík, Voráček, Šíma, and Michlová [8] investigated the Instagram communication of four basketball clubs competing in the Czech top division using evidence from posts, stories, and a focus group.

Although these studies contribute to understanding clubs' content and format choices on Instagram, they do not directly address how the same club communicates across different competition contexts. In European basketball, some clubs compete during the same season in both their national leagues and international competitions such as the EuroLeague. Consequently, these clubs publish game-related content from different competitions through the same official Instagram accounts. Differences in the target audiences and international visibility of the competitions, as well as in the digital communication practices required or encouraged by each competition, may give rise to different communication choices in these two competition contexts (as discussed in the Theoretical Framework). This raises the question of whether communication characteristics such as posting frequency, content topic, post format, and caption language differ between competitions.

The research design is also important for such a comparison. Comparisons of different clubs' Instagram activity may be influenced by characteristics such as club size, budget, follower base, and the capacity of communication teams. Indeed, Opelík et al. [8] found that the monthly number of posts of basketball clubs competing in the same league ranged from 17 to 84 in the 2 months examined and related this variation to the clubs' resources and the characteristics of their communication teams. The researchers also noted as a limitation that their study covered only October and April and recommended that future research follow the entire season. In light of these findings, comparing the communication of the same club around games in different competitions offers an approach that can reduce the influence of relatively stable club-specific characteristics. Distributing the selected games systematically across the season may, in turn, help limit the influence of communication practices specific to a particular phase of that season.

The purpose of this study was to examine whether professional basketball clubs' Instagram communication differs between international and domestic competition contexts. The study was conducted on the official Instagram accounts of Fenerbahçe Beko and Anadolu Efes, the only Turkish clubs that competed in the EuroLeague during the 2025–26 season. For each club, 10 EuroLeague games selected systematically across the season were matched with the closest previously unused Basketball Super League (BSL) game, forming a total of 20 game pairs. With this matched design, the clubs' Instagram communication in the two competitions was compared in terms of posting intensity, post format, video use, caption language, content topic, and competition visibility. By focusing on the communication practices of the same club in different competition contexts rather than on differences between clubs, the study aims to contribute methodologically to the literature on basketball communication by combining systematic sampling across the season, a matched comparison design, and formal statistical testing.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Pedersen, Laucella, Miloch, and Fielding [9] defined sport communication as a process in which individuals share symbols and create meaning through interaction in sport, within sport settings, or through sport-related activities. This definition does not restrict sport communication to the reporting activities of sport media; rather, it provides a broad perspective encompassing communication produced by clubs and sport organizations themselves. Social media have markedly expanded the organizational dimension of this scope. Nevertheless, the literature appears to have devoted comparatively limited attention to the organizational perspective: In his review of 153 sport and social media articles published between 2014 and 2023, Abeza [10] found that 43.8% of the articles focused on consumers and only 23.5% on sport organizations.

Studies of club communication indicate that clubs make limited use of the interactive potential of social media. Wang and Zhou [11], who examined 5,561 tweets (Twitter posts) of 30 National Basketball Association (NBA) clubs on Twitter

(now known as X), found that 71.4% of the posts consisted of professional content conveying information and promotion, that 29 clubs relied predominantly on professional content, and that no club followed a community-oriented strategy. Notably, fan-oriented posts received considerably more engagement than promotional posts. A similar picture has been observed in Turkey. Examining the Twitter accounts of Beşiktaş, Fenerbahçe, and Galatasaray, Şimşek and Koçak [12] argued that the clubs used the platform as a one-way bulletin board and avoided interaction. Irmaksoy's [6] findings on the Instagram posts of the same three clubs likewise show that game-related information accounted for 35%–59% of posts and photographs for 71%–84% of post formats.

Content analyses of Instagram show that club posts can be examined along two basic axes: what a post is about and in which format it is presented. Akyazı [5] classified the last 50 posts of each of the 18 Süper Lig football clubs into six topic categories within a sport communication framework: product, game, team, fans, youth academy, and social responsibility. This category set is a pioneering instrument for systematically classifying the Instagram communication of Turkish clubs and was adapted to the basketball context in the present study.

In basketball, a particularly detailed model is that of Opelík et al. [8]. The researchers coded Instagram posts from four Czech National Basketball League clubs using 13 features, including day, time, post type, topic, location tag, tags in captions and photos, hashtags (topic tags), and video; analyzed Stories separately; and complemented their findings with a focus group of eight fans. Three of their findings are important for the present study. First, clubs in the same league differ markedly in number of posts, post format, and topic distribution. Second, clubs follow two different strategic approaches: Some emphasize objective game information such as game invitations and results, whereas the other approach focuses on game moments, highlights, and individual players. Third, clubs do not fully exploit the potential of video formats such as Reels (Instagram's short-video format); the rate at which videos are watched to the end is inversely related to their length, and the authors recommended videos of 10–20 s. Focus group participants also stated that they preferred short videos, especially game highlights, to photographs.

The two strategic approaches identified by Opelík et al. [8] are directly related to the central question of this study. In that study, these approaches were treated as stable preferences that distinguish clubs from one another. Whether the same club switches between the two approaches depending on the competition context remains an open question.

The clearest theoretical basis for expecting club communication to vary by context comes from studies of sport brand associations. Combining the brand knowledge and team brand association frameworks, Parganas, Anagnostopoulos, and Chadwick [13] coded 676 tweets of Liverpool FC on two groups of attributes: product-related attributes (team success, star player, head coach) and non-product-related attributes (brand mark, management, history and tradition, culture and values, event image, sponsor, fans, stadium). Within this framework, event image refers to the league or competition in which a club participates, which itself functions as a brand attribute: Taking part in a particular competition transfers that competition's image to the club's brand. The same study also showed that content distribution is context-sensitive; the share of product-related attributes rose from 54.18% in the preseason to 61.14% during the season.

In this respect, the EuroLeague and the BSL convey different competitive and brand images. The BSL, consisting of 16 clubs, addresses a national audience, whereas the EuroLeague, which featured 20 clubs competing over a 38-round regular season in 2025–26, is a multinational competition with an international audience. Accordingly, within the same week, the same club may communicate with predominantly domestic audiences around BSL games and with a broader international audience around EuroLeague games. In this study, the need to engage an international audience was expected to encourage video-based storytelling and the use of English or bilingual text. However, because no study directly testing this relationship was found in the literature, these expectations were formulated as research questions rather than as hypotheses.

The EuroLeague and BSL contexts differ not only in target audience and event image but also in the institutional frameworks that govern clubs' digital communication. The BSL Management Principles Directive requires clubs to maintain an up-to-date website and social media accounts, to prepare a seasonal communication plan, to publish content and sponsor content determined by the Turkish Basketball Federation on their own digital channels, and to support activities promoting the league [14]. The EuroLeague Bylaws, in turn, require clubs to appoint a digital manager to coordinate digital activities with Euroleague Basketball and require clubs to support central campaigns, products, and services regularly through their official websites and social media platforms. The use of the competition's brand and hashtags, the promotion of central social media activities, the use of verified official accounts, and compliance with the Social Media Guidelines provided to clubs are also subject to formal regulations [15]. Differences between EuroLeague and BSL communication may therefore be related not only to audience characteristics but also to the different digital communication frameworks of the competitions in which clubs operate.

In line with the framework above, the study addressed the following research questions:

RQ1: Does the number of Instagram posts assigned to EuroLeague and BSL games differ?

RQ2: Do post format (single image, carousel [swipeable multi-item post], Reel, and video content) and caption language differ between EuroLeague and BSL games?

RQ3: Do the content topics of posts differ between EuroLeague and BSL games in terms of the proportions of objective game information and of moment- and player-focused content?

RQ4: Do posts about EuroLeague and BSL games differ in tagging the competition account, using competition hashtags, and mentioning the competition name in the caption?

The RQ4 indicators measure the visibility of the competition in posts; they do not by themselves reveal a club's strategy of communicating with an international audience. In this study, orientation toward an international audience is assessed only indirectly, through the caption language indicator (RQ2).

3. METHOD

A quantitative content analysis was used to examine whether professional basketball clubs' Instagram communication differs between international and domestic competition contexts. The study has a matched design that compares the communication practices of the same clubs in two different competitions. Accordingly, posts published on the official Instagram accounts of Fenerbahçe Beko and Anadolu Efes about EuroLeague and BSL games in the 2025–26 season were examined.

Three units were defined. The coding unit was a single Instagram post; each post was recorded as one row in the coding sheet. The unit of analysis was the game communication window; post-level codes were converted into counts and proportions for each game. The unit used for statistical comparisons was the matched game pair. Because each EuroLeague game was matched with a BSL game of the same club, each club was compared with itself across the two competition contexts, which reduces the influence of structural differences between clubs such as size, follower base, and communication team.

The study covered Fenerbahçe Beko and Anadolu Efes, the only Turkish clubs that competed in the EuroLeague during the 2025–26 season. The accounts examined were Anadolu Efes's official Instagram account @anadoluefessk and Fenerbahçe Beko's official Instagram account @fbbasketbol. For each club, 10 EuroLeague games and 10 matched BSL games were examined; the study thus comprised 20 matched game pairs and 40 game communication windows. Sample size was determined by balancing the data collection burden—each post had to be collected, assigned to a game, and coded manually—against a systematic selection spread across the entire season. As all 40 communication windows contained at least one post assigned to the target game, all 20 matched pairs were retained for the analysis. For the indicator of the competition name in captions, however, five pairs showed no difference between EuroLeague and BSL values, so the Wilcoxon test for this indicator was based on 15 pairs; all 20 pairs entered the tests for the other eight indicators. Given the limited number of matched pairs, the study was considered exploratory, and its findings were interpreted by considering effect sizes alongside statistical significance.

To reduce selection bias arising from discretionary choices by the researcher, a predetermined systematic rule was used to select EuroLeague games. The EuroLeague regular season consists of 38 rounds; round number refers to the official round number in the EuroLeague's 2025–26 regular-season schedule, not to the order in which a club actually played its games. For each club, the games of Rounds 1, 5, 9, 13, 17, 22, 26, 30, 34, and 38 were sampled. This rule prevents the selected games from clustering in a particular part of the season and spreads the sample across the season. It was determined in advance that if a selected game was postponed, the postponed game of the same round would be included on the date on which it was actually played, and that if it was canceled or not played during the regular season, the club's game in the next official round would be used.

Each EuroLeague game was matched with the club's closest previously unused BSL game on the calendar. When the BSL games played before and after a EuroLeague game were equidistant, the later BSL game was selected. Calendar distance was calculated from the dates on which the games were actually played. BSL games used in pilot coding (see Pilot Coding and Coding Process) were excluded from the matching pool. When two EuroLeague games had the same closest BSL game, the EuroLeague game closer to that BSL game was matched with it, and the other EuroLeague game was matched with the next closest unused BSL game. Before coding began, the 40 selected games were entered into a matching plan recording round, date, and opponent information, and all matching decisions were documented in that plan. Game dates used in coding were taken directly from the plan. Pairs belonging to Anadolu Efes were numbered 1–10 and those belonging to Fenerbahçe Beko 11–20. Despite their proximity in time, the sporting contexts of two matched games may still differ. Therefore, home or away status, result (win or loss), and, as a retrospective descriptive indicator of opponent strength, the opponent's final regular-season ranking in the respective competition were recorded for each game in the matching plan and are reported descriptively for EuroLeague and BSL games. Because every sampled game belonged to the regular season, the competition phase was held constant by design. Owing to the small sample, these variables were not entered into a multivariable model; their possible effects are discussed among the limitations, together with the importance of the game within the season and the club's agenda in the relevant week (e.g., injuries, transfers, corporate events).

Data were collected retrospectively from the clubs' publicly accessible official Instagram accounts between October 5

and October 18, 2026. For each game, the communication window was set as a fixed 3-day interval comprising the day before the game, the game day, and the day after the game (−1/0/+1). The window defines the search period within which posts are examined; it does not, by itself, establish that a particular post belongs to the target game.

This distinction is important because EuroLeague and BSL games are played on close dates. For example, the windows of a EuroLeague game played on a Friday and a BSL game played on a Sunday overlap on the Saturday. Every post falling within a window was therefore assessed separately using the game-assignment variable. A post was assigned to the target game if it carried at least one explicit game marker, such as the opponent's name or logo, the score, the date and time of the game, or footage from the game. The city or arena of the target game together with competition context, or a contextual expression such as "the first official game of the season," was also considered a sufficient marker if it uniquely identified a single game; expressions that could correspond to more than one game were not. Posts were classified into three categories: assigned to the target game, unrelated to the target game, and referring to multiple games. Content such as weekly schedule graphics showing two games together was coded as multiple games. The multiple-games code was given only when a post referred to another game in addition to the target game; posts that did not refer to the target game at all and belonged to other games were coded as unrelated. For example, when the day after a EuroLeague game coincided with the day before a BSL game, a post published that day containing only the BSL opponent and tip-off time was assigned to the BSL game; a post about a youth team game or about another EuroLeague game in the same week was considered unrelated for both windows; and a weekly summary showing the result of the target EuroLeague game and the time of the upcoming BSL game in the same graphic was coded as multiple games.

Each post was entered only once in the study data. In accordance with a rule established before coding began, unrelated and multiple-game posts were excluded from the main analyses and were not attributed to either competition; only their aggregate exclusion counts are reported. If such a post fell into two windows, it was entered only once, under the chronologically earlier game; the competition and pair information in that record served only to deduplicate the data and was not used in the analysis. Accordingly, posting intensity was defined as the number of posts assigned to the target game rather than as the number of all posts published within the window.

For each post, the club, competition, pair number, game date, post date, data collection date, and post link were recorded, and a coder note was added where necessary. The position of the post relative to the game day (−1, 0, +1) was computed automatically from the difference between the post date and the game date.

Instagram Stories cannot be collected retrospectively in full because they normally disappear after 24 hours. Instagram Insights data (account statistics), such as reach, saves, and profile activity, are generally available only to authorized account administrators. The study was therefore limited to Instagram posts published on the clubs' profiles (single images, carousels, and Reels). Because follower counts at the time of posting could not be obtained retrospectively, follower-based engagement rates were not calculated.

The coding sheet was adapted to the research questions using prior studies of professional clubs' Instagram communication. Topic categories were adapted from the category set that Akyazı [5] developed for football clubs and from the topics that Opelík et al. [8] identified in basketball clubs' posts. The post format, tagging, and engagement variables drew on the approach of Opelík et al. [8]. In treating the linguistic features of captions as a separate variable, the approach of Karakuş and Karakuş [16] was taken into account; the categories based on the use of Turkish and English were developed for the purpose of this study. The selected variables were deliberately limited to those relevant to the study's EuroLeague–BSL comparison. The final coding sheet consists of six main variables; rows labeled with letters (3a, 5a–5d) are subindicators of the corresponding main variable (see Table 1). The definitions, inclusion and exclusion criteria, and boundary-case rules for the categories are detailed in the following methodological description. The treatment of ambiguous posts, multiple-game references, caption languages, and competition visibility is explained separately to clarify the decision process.

Game assignment (Variable 1) is the first stage of coding. Only posts assigned to the target game were coded on the other variables and included in the main analyses.

Topic (Variable 2) identifies the dominant content of each post with eight categories. Each post was assigned to one dominant topic category. The dominant topic was determined primarily from the main visual element; when several elements carried equal weight, the first sentence of the caption determined the classification. In the statistical comparison, the eight categories were not tested individually. The first three categories were combined as objective game information and the fourth and fifth as moment- and player-focused content; the distribution of the eight categories is presented descriptively. This grouping is intended to measure directly the two strategic approaches identified by Opelík et al. [8].

Decision rules for boundary cases between topic categories were set in advance. Content in which the final score was the main element of the visual was coded as game result, and content in which a selection of photos or videos stood out was coded as game moments and highlights. Content clearly centered on a single player was coded as player- or coach-focused; however, posts showing a player photo on a score graphic in which the score was the main element were coded as game result. This distinction was applied independently of post format: A game photo or video clearly centered on a

single player was coded as player- or coach-focused even if it showed game action, whereas content consisting of different players and actions or focused on the game itself was coded as game moments and highlights. Warm-up, travel, and similar footage without game information was classified as team, behind the scenes, and training. Posts whose dominant element was an awareness campaign, social responsibility, a corporate ceremony, or a commercial campaign were coded as other, even if they carried game information (time, arena, opponent). Posts containing support, commemoration, or a special message directed at a specific player were coded as player- or coach-focused even if the player did not appear; awareness campaigns not tied to a person, as well as pregame shows, mascot, and entertainment events, were coded as other; and content dominated by the fans themselves or by player–fan interaction was coded as fan-focused.

Table 1. *Coding Sheet: Variables, Codes, Use, and Sources*

Variable	Codes	Research question and use	Source
1. Game assignment	1 = assigned to target game; 2 = unrelated to the game; 3 = multiple games	RQ1: number of assigned posts (tested)	Study design
2. Topic	1 = pregame information and invitation; 2 = in-game update; 3 = game result; 4 = game moments and highlights; 5 = player- or coach-focused; 6 = team, behind the scenes, and training; 7 = fan-focused; 8 = other	RQ3: proportions of objective game information (1 + 2 + 3) and of moment- and player-focused content (4 + 5) (tested); eight categories (descriptive)	Akyazı [5]; Opelík et al. [8]
3. Format	1 = single image; 2 = carousel; 3 = Reel	RQ2: proportion of Reels (tested); single image and carousel (descriptive)	Opelík et al. [8]
3a. Contains video	0 = no; 1 = yes	RQ2: proportion of posts containing video (tested)	Opelík et al. [8]
4. Caption language	1 = Turkish (no English); 2 = English (no Turkish); 3 = Turkish and English; 4 = no text; 5 = other language	RQ2: proportion of English or bilingual captions (tested); other categories (descriptive)	Karakuş and Karakuş [16]; study design
5a–5c. Competition visibility	Each 0/1: 5a = account tag; 5b = hashtag; 5c = competition name in caption	RQ4 (tested)	Opelík et al. [8]; Parganas et al. [13]
5d. Design visibility of competition	0 = no; 1 = yes	RQ4 (descriptive)	Study design
6. Engagement	Number of comments; number of reposts; likes hidden (0/1); number of likes	Secondary (descriptive)	Opelík et al. [8]

Note. Rows labeled with letters are subindicators of the corresponding main variable. Operational definitions, inclusion and exclusion criteria, and boundary rules are described in the Method section. RQ = research question.

Format (Variable 3) was coded in three categories: single image, carousel (swipeable multi-item post), and Reel. Because carousel posts may also contain video, whether a post contained at least one video was recorded with a separate binary indicator (3a). The format indicators tested were the proportion of Reels and the proportion of posts containing video; the proportions of single images and carousels are presented descriptively. Because all Reels contain video, the two indicators partially overlap; 3a was kept separate to capture carousel posts that contain video but were not published as Reels. Thus, the proportion of Reels reflects format choice, whereas the proportion of posts containing video reflects the use of video in any format.

Caption language (Variable 4) was coded from the post caption only. Hashtags, account tags, and emojis were not included in the language classification, and the language of text on images was not coded. Coding was based on whether Turkish or English appeared in the caption; the presence of another language did not change the code. Accordingly, a caption containing English and Italian was coded as English, and captions containing neither Turkish nor English were coded as other language. The tested language indicator was the combined proportion of English-only or Turkish–English bilingual captions; the other categories are reported descriptively.

Competition visibility (Variable 5) was measured with four binary indicators: tagging the competition's official account or co-publishing the post with that account (5a), using a hashtag referring to the competition (5b), mentioning the competition's name in the caption (5c), and whether the competition's logo, wordmark (logotype), name, or standard abbreviation appeared within a designed visual element created by the club, such as a graphic, template, title card, or text overlay (5d). Competition markers naturally present in the shooting environment, such as player jerseys, the court, advertising boards, arena signage, and the original score graphic of broadcast footage, were not counted under 5d. Official accounts and hashtags were defined using prespecified, closed lists: for the EuroLeague, the @euroleague and @euroleaguetur accounts and #EuroLeague, #EveryGameMatters, and #RivalrySeries; for the BSL, the @basketsuperligi account and #BasketbolSüperLigi, #TürkiyeSigortaBasketbolSüperLigi, #AvrupanınEnSüperi, and #BSL when it explicitly referred to the league.

Hashtags were not case-sensitive; club slogans and general basketball hashtags were not counted as competition hashtags. For posts assigned to EuroLeague games, the EuroLeague was coded, and for posts assigned to BSL games, the BSL was coded. Indicators 5a, 5b, and 5c were compared statistically; design visibility was evaluated descriptively. The definition of 5d was clarified in the first matched pair of the main data collection, and all previously coded 5d values were reviewed retrospectively according to the new definition.

Engagement (Variable 6) was treated as a secondary, descriptive indicator. For each assigned post, the total number of comments shown in the Instagram interface on the data collection date was recorded; comments and replies were not separated manually. For posts with comments disabled, the comment count was left as missing rather than as zero. The number of reposts shown beside the repost icon was also recorded on that same collection date. If the icon was visible but no number was shown, the value was recorded as zero; if the icon was not displayed at all, the value was treated as missing; the number of shares by direct message was not recorded. Because pilot coding showed that like counts were hidden on all posts, repost counts were added after the pilot and before the main data collection. Whether like counts were hidden was also coded; visible like counts were to be recorded and hidden ones treated as missing rather than as zero. Because the time elapsed between publication and data collection could differ across posts, engagement indicators were not used in the main inferential analyses.

Before the main coding process, the coding sheet was piloted using games outside the main analytical sample. Pilot coding used, for each club, the Round 2 EuroLeague game, which was not part of the sample, and the BSL game matched to it under the same rule—four windows in total. Pilot matching was carried out before the main matching, and the BSL games used in the pilot were removed from the matching pool of the main sample, so that content seen in the pilot did not enter the main sample. Pilot data were kept on a coding sheet separate from the main data set. The pilot specifically assessed the applicability of the boundary rules between topic categories and established an initial list of competition-related hashtags. It was planned that the category set would be reconsidered if the other category exceeded 10% of assigned posts in the pilot; this threshold was not exceeded. The threshold was defined for the pilot only; in the main data, posts coded as other were described by subtype (social responsibility and awareness, commercial and sponsorship, corporate and ceremonial, other). Pilot data were not included in the main analyses and served only to revise the codebook. After the pilot, the category structure and the inferential indicators were locked. In the first pair of the main data collection, an operational clarification was made only to the scope of the descriptive variable 5d, which did not change the category structure or the main tests. When a caption written in a language other than Turkish or English was encountered during coding of the Anadolu Efes posts, an *other language* category, reported only descriptively, was added to the caption-language variable; this category does not enter the numerator of the tested indicator and does not change the main tests. During the main data collection, it was observed that the competitions' official campaign and slogan hashtags (#EveryGameMatters, #RivalrySeries, #AvrupanınEnSüperi) were in use; the closed list of competition hashtags was clarified with these tags, and all assigned posts were rescreened retrospectively with the updated list. None of these tags had been used in posts coded before the clarification. This clarification does not change the definition or the measurement logic of the indicator.

The main data set was coded by a single researcher with the codebook, which had been tested in the pilot and whose operational clarifications during the main data collection were documented in a revision log. After coding was completed, the entire data set was audited for missing and contradictory codes, out-of-window dates, duplicate posts and links, and consistent application of boundary rules, and the inconsistencies detected were corrected according to the codebook rules. The reliability of this initial coding was tested by having a second coder, who had not taken part in the coding process, independently recode part of the data set.

The reliability sample comprised 200 posts (24.9%) selected from the 804 posts through stratified random sampling by game communication window; each window received a share proportional to its number of posts, and at least one post was drawn from every window. Because the sample was drawn independently of the game assignment code, it included posts assigned to the target game, unrelated posts, and multiple-game posts. The second coder was first trained with the codebook on 20 pilot posts outside the main sample; during training, game-assignment decisions agreed for 18 of the 20 posts, and the two posts with differing assignments were discussed using the established codebook criteria. The reliability sample was then coded in random order without access to the researcher's codes. Game assignment and the topic, format, video content, caption language, and competition visibility indicators (5a–5d) were coded; engagement counters, which depend on the data collection date, were not recoded. Cohen's kappa (κ) and percentage agreement were calculated for each variable; the reliability of game assignment was assessed on the whole sample (n = 200), and that of the other variables on the posts both coders had assigned to the target game (n = 146). Agreement was 98.0% for game assignment (κ = .949) and 95.2% for content topic (κ = .940); for format, video content, caption language, and the competition-visibility indicators, κ values ranged from .949 to 1.000. Agreement was also high for the combined indicators tested in the analysis (objective game information, κ = 1.000; moment- and player-focused content, κ = .986; English or bilingual captions, κ = .980). In addition, nine multiple-game posts that had not been drawn into the random sample were coded as

a supplementary boundary-case check, and the game-assignment decisions agreed for seven of them; these posts were not included in the kappa calculation.

After the initial independent codes and κ values had been recorded, the disagreements were resolved by the researcher with reference to the codebook rules and recorded, together with their rationale, in a disagreement-resolution log. In the main sample, 17 fields in 16 posts had been coded differently. Five of these resulted from the second coder's coding of halftime score posts as game results. In three of the four game assignment disagreements, the relationship between the post and the target game required contextual knowledge (the game day mentioned together with the arena, the expression "the first official game of the season," and opposing players warming up in the background); in these posts, the existing codebook rules were applied and the researcher's code was retained. As a result of the record, one code in each of five posts of the main data (topic, format, caption language, competition hashtag, and design visibility) and the game assignment code of one post in the supplementary check were corrected; no change to category definitions was required. All analyses were rerun after the corrections; test statistics, p values, and effect sizes did not change, and only some descriptive values changed slightly.

Post-level codes were summarized for each game communication window, and the number of posts assigned to the game and the proportions of the relevant categories were calculated for each window. EuroLeague–BSL comparisons were made across the 20 matched game pairs. In line with the research questions, nine indicators were compared: the number of posts assigned to the game (RQ1); the proportion of Reels, the proportion of posts containing video, and the proportion of English or bilingual captions (RQ2); the proportion of objective game information and the proportion of moment- and player-focused content (RQ3); and the proportions of competition account tagging, competition hashtag use, and the competition name in captions (RQ4).

The analysis plan specified that a matched pair would be excluded for an individual indicator only if a corresponding communication window contained no posts assigned to the target game; because all 40 windows contained assigned posts, this rule was not applied. The number of valid pairs is reported separately for every statistical test.

EuroLeague values and matched BSL values were compared with the Wilcoxon signed-rank test. Pairs with a zero difference between EuroLeague and BSL values were excluded from the respective test. For each comparison, the number of valid pairs, the median and interquartile range of the EuroLeague and BSL values, the test statistic (W), the p-value, and the effect size expressed as the matched-pairs rank-biserial correlation are reported. Club-level results based on the 10 matched pairs for each of Anadolu Efes and Fenerbahçe Beko are presented descriptively, separately from the main tests.

The nine comparisons were treated as a single family of tests, and the Holm [17] correction was applied to control the Type I error rate arising from multiple comparisons. Both raw and Holm-adjusted p values are reported, and the significance threshold was set at $\alpha = .05$. Because tied ranks were present, p values were computed with the tie-corrected normal approximation and continuity correction. Analyses were performed with the SciPy library (Version 1.18.1) in the Python programming language.

The study was based on corporate posts published on the clubs' public official Instagram accounts. No human participants were recruited, the textual content of user comments was not analyzed, and no personally identifying data were processed; comment, like, and repost counts were recorded only as aggregate numerical values. Because of these characteristics, the study is not considered to require ethics committee approval; the authors should confirm this assessment in accordance with the requirements of the relevant institution and the target journal.

4. RESULTS

In the 40 game communication windows, 804 posts were examined; of these, 197 were classified as unrelated to the target game and 12 as referring to multiple games; these posts were excluded from the primary analyses. The main analyses were based on the 595 Instagram posts assigned to target games, 433 of which belonged to EuroLeague games and 162 to BSL games. Seven of the nine Wilcoxon signed-rank tests conducted across the 20 matched game pairs were statistically significant after Holm correction. No statistically significant overall difference was observed for tagging the official competition account (5a) or mentioning the competition name in the caption (5c). The test results are presented in Table 2.

The number of assigned posts examined under RQ1 differed markedly between EuroLeague and BSL games. A median of 19.5 posts per window was published for EuroLeague games and 7 for the matched BSL games. Thus, the median posting intensity associated with EuroLeague games was approximately 2.8 times the corresponding median for BSL games. Across all 20 matched pairs, more posts were assigned to the EuroLeague game than to the corresponding BSL game. The difference remained significant after Holm correction ($W = 210$, $p_{\mathrm{Holm}} < .001$), and the effect size reached its maximum possible value ($r = 1.00$).

All three indicators examined under RQ2 showed significant differences favoring the EuroLeague. The median proportion of Reels was 29.47% in EuroLeague posts and 0% in the BSL ($W = 185$, $p_{\mathrm{Holm}} = .013$, $r = .76$). Similarly, the median proportion of posts containing video was 30.00% in the EuroLeague and 0% in the BSL ($W = 186$, $p_{\mathrm{Holm}} = .013$,

r = .77). Both indicators suggest that moving-image formats were used more frequently in communication surrounding EuroLeague games.

Table 2. *Paired Comparison of EuroLeague and BSL Game Communication Indicators*

RQ	Indicator	n	EuroLeague	BSL	W	p	p_{Holm}	r
RQ1	Assigned posts	20	19.50 (12.50–27.75)	7.00 (5.00–10.50)	210	< .001	< .001	1.00
RQ2	Reels	20	29.47 (17.34–38.08)	0.00 (0.00–15.71)	185	.003	.013	.76
RQ2	Posts containing video	20	30.00 (20.37–38.38)	0.00 (0.00–17.50)	186	.003	.013	.77
RQ2	English or bilingual	20	22.06 (13.35–29.56)	0.00 (0.00–1.79)	208	< .001	< .001	.98
RQ3	Objective game information	20	24.81 (22.41–32.33)	50.00 (40.00–50.00)	0	< .001	< .001	−1.00
RQ3	Moment- and player-focused	20	52.63 (47.46–67.50)	50.00 (37.69–50.00)	188	.002	.012	.79
RQ4	Competition account tag	20	10.26 (6.16–12.66)	12.50 (0.00–20.00)	102.5	.941	.941	−.02
RQ4	Competition hashtag	20	37.43 (9.77–75.25)	0.00 (0.00–11.67)	179	.006	.018	.70
RQ4	Competition name in caption	15	8.55 (3.95–11.70)	6.25 (0.00–22.22)	41	.293	.587	−.32

Note. Values are medians (Q1–Q3); all indicators except assigned posts are percentages of assigned posts. n = number of valid pairs; W = sum of positive ranks for the EuroLeague − BSL difference. Positive matched-pairs rank-biserial correlations (r) indicate differences favoring the EuroLeague, and negative values indicate differences favoring the BSL. The Holm correction was applied jointly to all nine comparisons. RQ = research question.

The difference in caption language was especially pronounced across the two competition contexts. The median proportion of English or Turkish–English bilingual captions was 22.06% for EuroLeague games and 0% for BSL games. This proportion was higher on the EuroLeague side in 19 of the 20 pairs. The difference remained significant after Holm correction (W = 208, $p_{\text{Holm}} < .001$) and showed a very large effect size (r = .98).

The RQ3 results show that content composition differed between the two competition contexts. The median proportion of objective game information, formed by combining the pregame information and invitation, in-game update, and game result categories, was 24.81% in the EuroLeague and 50.00% in the BSL. In all 20 pairs, the proportion of objective game information was higher on the BSL side. This difference was statistically significant (W = 0, $p_{\text{Holm}} < .001$), and the effect size reached its maximum possible value in the direction of the BSL (r = −1.00).

By contrast, for the combined indicator of game moments and highlights and player- or coach-focused content, the EuroLeague median was 52.63% and the BSL median 50.00%. Although the medians were close, the proportion was higher on the EuroLeague side in 16 of the 20 pairs when the paired structure was taken into account. The Wilcoxon test showed this difference to be significant (W = 188, $p_{\text{Holm}} = .012$, r = .79). Thus, compared with BSL communication, EuroLeague communication placed relatively less emphasis on objective game information and relatively greater emphasis on game moments and individual players.

Of the three indicators evaluated under RQ4, an overall significant difference was found only for competition hashtag use. The median proportion of competition hashtag use was 37.43% for EuroLeague games and 0% for BSL games (W = 179, $p_{\text{Holm}} = .018$, r = .70).

By contrast, the difference between the EuroLeague (10.26%) and BSL (12.50%) in tagging the competition's official account was not statistically significant (W = 102.5, $p_{\text{Holm}} = .941$, r = −.02). For the competition name in captions, the difference was not statistically significant either, although the EuroLeague median was 8.55% and the BSL median 6.25% (W = 41, $p_{\text{Holm}} = .587$, r = −.32). For this indicator, EuroLeague and BSL values were identical in five pairs, so the test was based on 15 pairs.

To show the club-level patterns behind the combined results, the median values for Anadolu Efes and Fenerbahçe Beko were also examined descriptively (see Table 3). No separate inferential tests were applied to these comparisons.

The club-level results reveal contrasting patterns, particularly for the competition-visibility indicators. At Anadolu Efes, tagging of the official competition account was higher in the BSL (median 20.00% vs. 8.85%), whereas the opposite pattern was observed at Fenerbahçe Beko, with a EuroLeague median of 11.40% and a BSL median of 0%. For the competition name in captions, Fenerbahçe Beko's BSL median (22.22%) was above its EuroLeague median (10.98%). The overall EuroLeague advantage in competition hashtag use was also not evenly distributed between the clubs: Whereas the two competitions were at similar levels at Anadolu Efes, the median proportion was 75.50% in Fenerbahçe Beko's EuroLeague posts and 0% in its BSL posts.

The indicators designated as descriptive in the Method section are reported at the level of assigned posts in Table 4. In the distribution of the eight topic categories, the most frequent category in both competitions was player- or coach-focused content (EuroLeague, 37.6%; BSL, 32.1%). The proportion of game result posts was markedly higher in the BSL

(16.7%) than in the EuroLeague (5.5%). Fan-focused content remained very limited in both contexts (three posts in the EuroLeague, none in the BSL). Of the 40 posts coded as other, 37 belonged to EuroLeague games; of these, 14 were commercial and sponsorship content, 8 corporate and ceremonial content, 5 social responsibility and awareness content, and 10 other content (pregame shows, mascot, and arena atmosphere). Of the three other posts in the BSL, two were corporate and ceremonial content and one was social responsibility and awareness content.

Table 3. *Club-Level Descriptive Distribution of EuroLeague and BSL Indicators*

Indicator	Anadolu Efes EuroLeague	Anadolu Efes BSL	Fenerbahçe Beko EuroLeague	Fenerbahçe Beko BSL
Assigned posts	12.00 (10.00–16.75)	5.00 (4.25–6.00)	28.50 (22.75–37.25)	9.50 (8.25–12.75)
Reels	30.00 (19.19–40.50)	0.00 (0.00–0.00)	27.81 (15.66–35.86)	14.84 (10.28–20.83)
Posts containing video	30.00 (23.48–40.50)	0.00 (0.00–0.00)	29.47 (16.79–35.86)	16.03 (11.90–21.67)
English or bilingual	21.54 (11.46–28.88)	0.00 (0.00–0.00)	23.38 (18.89–32.32)	0.00 (0.00–8.04)
Objective game information	26.54 (20.26–32.50)	50.00 (50.00–50.00)	24.81 (23.42–31.89)	43.06 (33.44–48.61)
Moment- and player-focused	68.33 (62.78–70.44)	50.00 (50.00–50.00)	48.15 (45.00–51.97)	35.38 (25.89–48.21)
Competition account tag	8.85 (5.97–10.83)	20.00 (16.67–23.75)	11.40 (10.13–14.40)	0.00 (0.00–0.00)
Competition hashtag	9.55 (6.61–11.88)	12.50 (0.00–20.00)	75.50 (69.61–78.29)	0.00 (0.00–0.00)
Competition name in caption	2.63 (0.00–9.42)	0.00 (0.00–0.00)	10.98 (8.27–13.52)	22.22 (17.86–27.68)

Note. Values are medians (Q1–Q3); all indicators except assigned posts are percentages. Each club contributed 10 matched game pairs. Club-level values are descriptive; no significance tests were applied.

Single images were the most frequently used format in both competitions, but their proportion was higher in the BSL (74.1%) than in the EuroLeague (56.8%). The *other language* caption category occurred in only three EuroLeague posts. Unlike the tested competition-visibility indicators, visual-design visibility of the competition (5d) occurred more frequently in BSL posts (56.8%) than in EuroLeague posts (44.1%).

Table 4. *Descriptive Distribution of Assigned Posts by Competition*

Indicator	EuroLeague	BSL
Topic: pregame information and invitation	76 (17.6)	31 (19.1)
Topic: in-game update	10 (2.3)	10 (6.2)
Topic: game result	24 (5.5)	27 (16.7)
Topic: game moments and highlights	66 (15.2)	17 (10.5)
Topic: player- or coach-focused	163 (37.6)	52 (32.1)
Topic: team, behind the scenes, and training	54 (12.5)	22 (13.6)
Topic: fan-focused	3 (0.7)	0 (0.0)
Topic: other	37 (8.5)	3 (1.9)
Format: single image	246 (56.8)	120 (74.1)
Format: carousel	61 (14.1)	19 (11.7)
Format: Reel	126 (29.1)	23 (14.2)
Contains video	131 (30.3)	24 (14.8)
Language: Turkish (no English)	300 (69.3)	148 (91.4)
Language: English (no Turkish)	102 (23.6)	9 (5.6)
Language: Turkish and English	9 (2.1)	1 (0.6)
Language: no text	19 (4.4)	4 (2.5)
Language: other language	3 (0.7)	0 (0.0)
Design visibility of competition (5d)	191 (44.1)	92 (56.8)
Comments, Mdn (Q1–Q3)	34 (15–73)	39.5 (21–79.75)
Reposts, Mdn (Q1–Q3)	10 (3–24)	9 (3–17)

Note. Values are n (%) of assigned posts (EuroLeague n = 433; BSL n = 162) unless noted. Post-level values; see Table 2 for paired tests. Comments exclude four posts with comments disabled.

Like counts could not be reported because they were hidden on all 595 assigned posts. Comment and repost counts reflect the counters on the data collection date and were therefore evaluated only descriptively; the medians of comments and reposts were at similar levels in the two competitions.

The contextual characteristics of the matched games also differed across the two competitions. Of the 20 EuroLeague games in the sample, 13 were played at home, 6 away, and 1 at a neutral venue (nominal home game); 11 ended in wins and 9 in losses. Of the 20 matched BSL games, 8 were played at home and 12 away; 13 ended in wins and 7 in losses.

The median final regular-season ranking of the opponents was 11.5 in the EuroLeague (20 teams) and 10 in the BSL (16 teams).

5. DISCUSSION

The findings indicate that professional basketball clubs' Instagram communication reflects not only a club's general communication approach but also the competition context within which the club operates. Matching EuroLeague and BSL games played by the same club on close dates showed that EuroLeague games were supported by more intensive content production and that the use of Reels and video, English or bilingual captions, and competition hashtags was higher in this context. By contrast, the relative weight of objective game information was higher in communication about BSL games. The consistent direction of most differences across matched pairs, together with their persistence after Holm correction, suggests that the patterns are unlikely to be attributable solely to temporary circumstances surrounding individual games.

The finding on content topics is particularly noteworthy. Opelík et al. [8] identified two different communication approaches in basketball clubs' social media use, one emphasizing objective information such as game invitations and results and the other emphasizing game moments, highlights, and players. In this study, these two approaches emerged not as fixed characteristics that distinguish clubs but as variable forms of communication used by the same club in different competition environments. The higher share of objective game information in the BSL suggests that the basic informational function is more prominent in national league communication, whereas in the EuroLeague the game is presented more comprehensively, not only through its result or schedule but also through player-centred stories, memorable moments, and visual storytelling. In this respect, the competition context appears to be related not only to how much content a club produces but also to what kind of content it foregrounds.

The results on post format support this interpretation. The higher use of Reels and of posts containing video for EuroLeague games indicates that communication in the international competition context leans toward a structure based more on moving images. Opelík et al. [8] noted that short videos and game highlights are engaging content for fans, yet clubs do not make full use of the potential of video formats such as Reels. The findings of this study show that video use may vary with the competition context rather than being merely a general club preference. The distinction between EuroLeague and BSL communication therefore concerns both the volume of content produced and the formats through which that content is presented on Instagram.

Caption language is one of the clearest indicators of this differentiation. The proportion of English-only or Turkish–English bilingual captions was higher for EuroLeague games in 19 of the 20 matched pairs. This result is consistent with the expectation, stated in the theoretical framework, that competing in a multinational competition may lead clubs to address a wider audience beyond the national one. It should be emphasized, however, that caption language alone is not evidence of an international communication strategy; in this study, language was treated only as an indirect indicator of orientation toward an international audience. Nevertheless, the zero median in the BSL windows and the consistent direction of the difference in almost all pairs point to a highly consistent relationship between competition context and language choice.

The findings on competition visibility reveal a more complex picture than the other indicators. Although competition hashtag use was higher for EuroLeague games, no overall statistically significant difference was found for tagging the official competition account or for mentioning the competition name in captions. Theoretically, the competition in which a club takes part can function as a brand association of the club through event image [13]. In addition, both the EuroLeague and the BSL define institutional expectations and obligations regarding clubs' digital communication. Whereas the BSL Management Principles Directive regulates clubs' social media presence, communication planning, and the publication of TBF-determined content on digital channels [14], the EuroLeague Bylaws require clubs to support central campaigns and products on social media, to use the competition's brand and hashtags as specified, to maintain verified official accounts, and to comply with the social media guidelines [15]. The higher use of competition hashtags in the EuroLeague is consistent with this institutional framework; however, because the study did not directly test the effect of these regulations on clubs' posting behavior, it cannot be argued that the observed difference stems from these obligations.

Indeed, the club-level descriptive results indicate that different communication routines lie behind the 5a and 5c indicators, which were not significant in the combined analysis. Anadolu Efes tagged the official league account more often in its BSL content, whereas at Fenerbahçe Beko this practice was more prominent in EuroLeague content. Fenerbahçe Beko, in turn, mentioned the competition name in captions more often in its BSL posts than in its EuroLeague posts. The overall EuroLeague advantage in competition hashtag use stemmed largely from Fenerbahçe Beko's intensive hashtag use in its EuroLeague communication. Rather than generalizing that competition visibility is simply greater in the international competition, it therefore seems more appropriate to evaluate how a competition is made visible together with club-specific communication preferences and routines.

A different pattern emerged for the visual-design visibility of the competition (5d): The proportion of this indicator was descriptively higher in BSL posts (56.8%) than in EuroLeague posts (44.1%). This finding suggests that evaluating

competition visibility only through account tags, hashtags, or caption text is insufficient and that forms of visibility may differ between competitions and clubs. However, because 5d was not included in the inferential analyses, this difference should be interpreted at a descriptive level.

This also underscores the importance of the study design. If the clubs had been compared only with one another, Fenerbahçe Beko's intensive use of the EuroLeague hashtag, for example, might have been interpreted as a general characteristic of EuroLeague communication. The design, which examined the same club's communication in two competitions through matched games, made it possible to partially separate club-specific practices from common patterns related to the competition context. This is important with respect to the problem that motivated the study, namely, that structural differences between clubs such as budget, follower base, and communication team may affect comparisons.

The clubs' respective sporting performances during the 2025–26 season should also be considered when interpreting these findings. Fenerbahçe Beko finished the regular season fourth in the EuroLeague and first in the BSL, whereas Anadolu Efes finished 19th in the EuroLeague and fourth in the BSL. Sporting success is one of the contextual factors that may affect the perceived importance of games, fan interest, and a club's willingness to produce content. Nevertheless, the present results do not form a picture that can be explained by level of success alone. In particular, despite a relatively unsuccessful EuroLeague season, Anadolu Efes produced more posts for EuroLeague games than for BSL games, used Reels, video, and English at higher rates, and built its content more around game moments and players. This pattern suggests that, although sporting performance may influence communication choices, the EuroLeague–BSL distinction may also have a contextual effect independent of sporting success. The study design, however, does not allow these two effects to be separated causally.

6. LIMITATIONS

The findings should be interpreted in light of several methodological and contextual limitations. First, the study covers only Fenerbahçe Beko and Anadolu Efes and a single season. Although the two clubs constituted all Turkish clubs in the 2025–26 EuroLeague, findings based on two clubs cannot be generalized directly to clubs in other countries, other seasons, or other basketball competitions.

Second, the main sample consists of 20 matched game pairs. Although systematic game selection spread the sample across the season, the limited number of matched pairs constrained the feasibility of separate club-level inferential analyses. Club-level results were therefore evaluated descriptively, and the principal comparisons were conducted using the 20 matched pairs pooled across both clubs. In addition, because some BSL windows contained only four to six assigned posts, proportions in these windows could change markedly with a single post. Given the exploratory nature of the study, effect sizes and the consistency of direction across pairs were considered alongside statistical significance.

Third, the entire main data set was coded by a single researcher; the second coder independently coded only the reliability sample of 200 posts. Although κ values ranged from .940 to 1.000 across all variables in the reliability sample, some of the game assignment disagreements stemmed from the need for contextual knowledge about the club, the game schedule, and the players to establish the relationship between a post and the target game. The disagreements were resolved by the primary researcher, so researcher-related classification effects cannot be ruled out entirely for posts outside the reliability sample, particularly for variables requiring interpretation such as game assignment and content topic. To reduce this risk, pilot coding was conducted, category boundaries were defined in a detailed codebook, operational clarifications were documented in a revision log, and, after coding was completed, the entire data set was audited again for missing, contradictory, and rule-inconsistent codes.

Fourth, the study covers only single images, carousels, and Reels published on the clubs' Instagram profiles. Story content, which normally disappears after 24 hours, could not be obtained retrospectively in its entirety and was not analyzed. In addition, because Instagram Insights data were not accessible and historical follower counts were unknown, reach, impressions, and follower-based engagement rates could not be calculated. The study therefore compares the content produced by the clubs but does not directly measure how that content was received or engaged with by fans.

Finally, although the matched games were selected to be close in time, it is not possible to equalize all contextual conditions, such as home or away status, result, opponent strength, the importance of the game within the season, and injuries, transfers, or corporate events in the same week. Indeed, 13 of the EuroLeague games in the sample were played at home, 6 away, and 1 at a neutral venue, whereas 8 of the BSL games were played at home and 12 away. This imbalance means that differences in venue could partly account for the observed EuroLeague–BSL differences in indicators such as posting intensity. These variables were recorded descriptively in the matching plan but were not included in a multivariable model because of the limited sample. Future studies with larger samples of seasons and clubs could examine the independent effects of these factors.

7. CONCLUSION

This study compared the Instagram communication of Fenerbahçe Beko and Anadolu Efes in the 2025–26 season in the EuroLeague and Basketball Super League contexts through matched games. The findings show that the social media communication of the same club can vary systematically with the competition in which it plays. Markedly more posts were assigned to EuroLeague games than to BSL games, and the use of Reels, video, and English or bilingual captions was higher in the EuroLeague context. In terms of content structure, objective game information carried greater weight in the BSL, whereas game moments and player- and coach-focused content came to the fore in the EuroLeague.

These results show that it is not sufficient to regard professional sport clubs' social media strategy solely as a club-specific and unchanging communication preference. The observation that the same club altered its posting volume, formats, language choices, and topic distribution across domestic and international games suggests that competition context may be an important consideration in club communication. An important contribution of the study lies in its comparative design: Examining the same club's communication in two competitions through matched games, rather than comparing clubs with one another, made it possible to partially disentangle club-specific communication habits from differences related to the competition context. This approach offers a complementary methodological response to the problem of structural differences between clubs affecting comparisons.

The findings concerning competition visibility, however, require a more cautious and differentiated interpretation. Although competition hashtags were used more intensively in the EuroLeague, no overall statistically significant difference was found for tagging the official competition account or for mentioning the competition name in captions. The club-level results showed that these indicators could vary in different directions at Fenerbahçe Beko and Anadolu Efes. Competition visibility should therefore be regarded not as a uniform outcome of international or national competition but as a practice shaped jointly by the competition's communication expectations and club-specific social media routines.

In practical terms, the findings suggest that professional sport clubs can develop context-sensitive communication plans that take into account the target audience, the nature of the competition, and the format options offered by the platform, rather than automatically maintaining the same content strategy across different competition environments. Greater use of video and multilingual communication in international competitions may serve the aim of reaching a wider audience. The findings further indicate that domestic league communication relies more heavily on basic game information and that video use is comparatively limited in this context; clubs could also exploit the possibilities offered by moving images and player-focused content in national league games. Future research could test the persistence of these patterns by covering more clubs from different countries and more than one season and could examine the independent effect of competition context in more detail by including sporting success, opponent strength, and game importance in the model.

Author Contributions

Both authors contributed equally to the study and manuscript preparation, reviewed and approved the final version, and accept responsibility for the work.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no competing interests.

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Data Availability

Data sharing is not applicable to this article.

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