



Kings League: A Netnographic Analysis of the New Generation Football Experience on Social Media

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the transformation of football in the digital age through the example of the Kings League. In today's world, where sport is redefined beyond being merely a physical activity to encompass social, cultural, and digital dimensions, the Kings League represents a remarkable example of the structural changes brought about by digitalization in sports. Broadcasts conducted on platforms such as Twitch, TikTok, YouTube, and Twitter transform the audience from passive consumers into active participants, turning football into a multi-layered cultural experience. Using a netnographic method, the study analyzes the Kings League's social media interactions, revealing its content themes, audience comments, and forms of participation within digital communities. The findings show that the league's innovative format and participatory governance model keep the tension between "spectacle" and "fair competition" constantly alive. Moreover, the integration of digital and traditional media has played a decisive role in expanding the Kings League's audience reach. In conclusion, the Kings League serves as a pioneering laboratory of participatory football in the digital age, offering valuable insights into the future of sports consumption.

Keywords: Kings League, Social Media, Football, Digitalization, Netnography.

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Kings League: Sosyal Medyada Yeni Nesil Futbol Deneyiminin Netnografik Bir Analizi

ÖZ

Bu çalışma, futbolun dijital çağdaki dönüşümünü Kings League örneği üzerinden incelemektedir. Sporun günümüzde yalnızca fiziksel bir etkinlik olmanın ötesine geçerek sosyal, kültürel ve dijital boyutları kapsayacak şekilde yeniden tanımlandığı bir bağlamda, Kings League spor alanında dijitalleşmenin yol açtığı yapısal dönüşümlerin dikkat çekici bir örneğini sunmaktadır. Twitch, TikTok, YouTube ve Twitter gibi platformlar üzerinden gerçekleştirilen yayınlar, izleyiciyi pasif bir tüketici olmaktan çıkararak aktif bir katılımcıya dönüştürmekte ve futbolu çok katmanlı bir kültürel deneyime dönüştürmektedir. Çalışmada netnografik yöntem kullanılarak Kings League'in sosyal medya etkileşimleri analiz edilmiş; içerik temaları, izleyici yorumları ve dijital topluluklar içindeki katılım biçimleri ortaya konmuştur. Bulgular, ligin yenilikçi formatı ve katılımcı yönetim modelinin gösteri ile adil rekabet arasındaki gerilimi sürekli olarak canlı tuttuğunu göstermektedir. Ayrıca dijital ve geleneksel medyanın bütünleşmesi, Kings League'in izleyici kitlesinin genişlemesinde belirleyici bir rol oynamıştır. Sonuç olarak Kings League, dijital çağda katılımcı futbolun öncü bir laboratuvarı olarak spor tüketiminin geleceğine ilişkin önemli ipuçları sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kings League, sosyal medya, futbol, dijitalleşme, netnografi.

Introduction

Sport, as an integral part of modern society, has become an important phenomenon that goes beyond being merely a physical activity, encompassing social, cultural, economic, and political dimensions (Maguire, 2014). In particular, football, as the most popular sport on a global scale, brings millions of people together and reaches vast audiences through mass media (Giulianotti, 2015). Technological advancements and the widespread use of the internet have fundamentally transformed the ways in which sport is consumed and experienced, with digital platforms emerging as the new arena of sport (Hutchins & Rowe, 2012). Within this transformation, digital media function not only as channels of distribution but also as network-based environments in which new forms of participation, identity, and belonging are constructed, reshaping the experiential dimensions of time and space in everyday practices (Aytaş, 2016).

The digital age has led to profound changes in sports consumption habits, and the static structure of traditional football has increasingly failed to meet the expectations of new generations of audiences. Social media and digital platforms are reshaping how viewers engage with sport, offering more interactive, participatory, and immersive experiences. The relationship between sport and the media has long been the focus of research, as mass communication tools have played a crucial role in the dissemination and popularization of sport (Wenner, 1998). However, the rise of the internet and social media has transformed this relationship by enabling fans to actively engage with teams, athletes, and other supporters, rather than remaining passive spectators (Hambrick et al., 2010).

In recent years, new-generation sports experiences that extend beyond traditional broadcasting models have gained prominence on digital platforms. These experiences often include live streaming, interactive content, and social media engagement, encouraging active fan participation and fostering digitally mediated communities. In this context, e-sports and digitally native sports organizations have gained increasing popularity, prompting new debates about the future of sport and fan culture (Jenny et al., 2017).

Kings League represents a notable example of these new forms of football experiences. Broadcast on social media platforms such as Twitch, TikTok, YouTube, and Twitter, Kings League matches stand out through their innovative format, the involvement of well-known football players and streamers, and their strong emphasis on digital interaction. As a digitally adapted version of traditional football, Kings League provides a valuable case for examining the digitalization of sport and the transformation of fan culture. With the shift of sports broadcasting and consumption toward digital platforms, the ways in which sports organizations and fans interact continue to evolve, raising important questions about the future of sport and the dynamics of digital communities.

This study aims to provide important insights into the digitalization of sport and the transformation of fan culture by examining the interactions of the Kings League on social media platforms (Twitch, TikTok, YouTube, and Twitter) through a netnographic approach. The study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the thematic features of the content shared on the official social media accounts of the Kings League (Twitch, TikTok, YouTube, and Twitter)?
2. What are the central themes of the audience comments and interactions on social media platforms (Twitch, TikTok, YouTube, and Twitter) related to the Kings League?
3. What is the Kings League's perception and level of engagement (including participation, sharing, and commenting) within digital communities?

4. In what ways does the Kings League, as a new-generation football experience, differ from the traditional football experience, and how are these differences perceived by digital communities?

The Reshaping of Football: The Rise and Evolution of the Kings League

For centuries, football has been one of the world's most popular sports with its traditional rules and structure. However, the new viewing habits and consumption behaviors brought about by the digital age have required the sports world to adapt to this change. In this context, innovative figures from the sports world, such as Gerard Piqué, have developed innovative projects by rethinking the traditional football format to meet the expectations of modern viewers.

Gerard Piqué has drawn attention not only for the successes he achieved during his professional football career but also for his vision of merging football with digital transformation. Following his retirement, Piqué, through his company Kosmos, has focused on developing innovative projects in the fields of sport and technology (Smith, 2023). As a result of this innovation-driven approach, together with Kosmos CEO Oriol Querol, he designed an alternative football league that challenges the length and static structure of traditional football (Rubio, 2022). With the aim of bringing a new perspective to traditional football, Piqué outlined the concept of a new football league in Spain—called the Kings League (sponsored as Kings League InfoJobs)—which combines attention-grabbing and innovative elements (Smith, 2023). Among the striking features introduced in this new league are hidden joker rules to keep the audience engaged, dodgeball-style penalty kicks, and masked guest star players. The primary motivation behind this distinctive approach lies in observations showing that children and young people often lose interest in traditional football matches after only about ten minutes of active viewing, turning instead to technological devices such as tablets and phones. Thus, Piqué emphasized that the classic 90-minute football match no longer excites younger generations, arguing that football fears change, yet a 0-0 draw is something young audiences struggle to appreciate. For this reason, he stressed that innovations in both the rules and the presentation of football are inevitable (Allnutt, 2024). According to Piqué, more and more spectators prefer to watch matches at home in their pajamas rather than attend stadiums, and if this trend continues, clubs may eventually need to pay fans to fill stadiums. In line with this perspective, Piqué designed a football league capable of maintaining audience attention without distraction while appealing to diverse audiences through multiple digital platforms. To achieve this, the leadership of the newly created clubs was given to well-known retired professional footballers as well as popular Twitch streamers from Spanish-speaking regions (Dik, 2023). In the player selection process, 200 candidates were initially shortlisted, from which 120 footballers were chosen to form 12 teams (Rubio, 2022).

In the new football league, matches can be watched live not only through traditional broadcasters, but also on the social media platforms of both the Kings League and the team presidents. After the league's formation process was completed, brands such as Spotify, Adidas, InfoJobs, Mahou, McDonald's, and Cupra also became sponsors of the Kings League (Pacheco, 2023). On the official website of Kings League InfoJobs, the teams competing in the Spain-based league and their presidents are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Kings League infojobs teams (Spain)

Team Name	President(s)
IK FC	Iker Casillas
El Barrio	Adri Contreas
Kunisports	Kun Agüero
PÍO FC	Rivers
Rayo de Barcelona	Spursito
Ultimate Mostoles	DjMaRiio
XBuyer Team	Hnos. Buyer
Saiyans FC	TheGrefg
Porcinos FC	Ibai Llanos
Los Troncos FC	Perxitaa
Jijantes FC	Gerard Romero
Aniquiladores FC	Juan Guarnizo

This new Spain-based football concept is also actively continuing in the United States and is expected to be held in Italy in 2024. Similarly, the teams operating under the name Americas Kings League Santander on the Kings League's official website, led by famous presidents, are as follows:

Table 2. Americas Kings League Santander Teams (USA)

Team Name	President(s)
Atletico Parceros FC	James Rodriguez, Pelicanger
Galacticos del Caribe	Los Futbolitos, Alofoke
Los Chamos FC	TheDonato, Yolo
Olimpo United	Chicharito
Persas FC	Zeein
Real Titan FC	Germán Garmendia
West Santos FC	WestCOL, Arcángel
Raniza FC	Alana, Barcagamer
Peluche Caligari	Hnos. Monitel
Muchacos FC	Jero Freixas
Los Aliens FC	Castro1021
Club de Cuervos	Mercedes Roa

On the other hand, the Queens League, featuring female footballers, and the Prince Cup, where male children compete, have also been launched in both Spain and the USA, both played with the same rules. Additionally, for the first time, a World Club Cup Tournament was organized in the spring of 2024. The tournament featured teams from Kings League InfoJobs and Americas Kings League Santander, as well as 12 teams invited as joker cards from different countries (Carreño, 2024). The tournament was chaired by famous footballer Zlatan Ibrahimovic. According to information from the official Kings League website, the 12 national teams that participated in the World Club Cup as joker card entries, along with their presidents, are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. 2024 World Club Cup: Joker Teams

Team Name	President(s)
Deptostra FC	Céline Dept, Eden Hazard
Foot2Rue	Amine
G3X FC	Gules
Medello City	Maluma
Stallions	Blur, Totti
UA Steel	Leb1ga, Shevchenko
Youniors F.C.	Younes, Götze
SXB FC	SHoNgxBoNg
Murash FC	Junichi Kato
Limon FC	Elraenn, Arda Turan
Furia F.C.	O Estagiario, Falcao
FIVE FC	Rio Ferdinand, Jeremy Lynch

Between May 26 and June 8, 2024, the tournament was won by Porcinos FC, chaired by Ibai Llanos, achieving a remarkable success. This outcome once again demonstrated that Piqué's vision of transforming football has resonated with wide audiences and successfully captured the interest of new-generation viewers.

The Kings League National Cup, held between January 1 and 12, 2025, followed the Swiss system format and applied the same rules. The tournament featured participation from Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Germany, Italy, Japan, Korea, Mexico, Morocco, Peru, Saudi Arabia, Spain, Turkey, Ukraine, the United States, and Uzbekistan. Teams could enter with one or multiple presidents. In the final, Brazil faced Colombia, with Brazil emerging as the winner.

The Innovative Structure and Rules of the Kings League

Kings League expands the structure and scope of traditional professional football, presenting a freer format through innovative changes. Going beyond the framework of a football league, it introduces radical transformations in the field of sport, reaching not only the football community but also a much wider and more diverse audience through digital platforms and social media. Unlike the static structure of traditional football, Kings League offers viewers a more dynamic, fast-paced, and action-oriented experience. Breaking away from the conventional and predictable organization and format of professional football, the Kings League brings a fresh approach; while maintaining certain classical rules, it enhances the spectacle with innovative modifications and actively involves the audience in the process. Real-time voting during matches enables active fan participation, keeping the level of engagement constantly high. These polls can sharply alter the course of the game, thereby intensifying the excitement of the viewing experience.

In the Kings League's gameplay format, the fundamental rules of traditional football are partially preserved, but numerous new rules and practices have been introduced. These innovations transform football into a more interactive and entertaining experience. For instance, instead of the long-established 90-minute match duration in traditional football, Kings League matches are played in two halves of 20 minutes each (Martin, 2023; Smith, 2023). Additionally, each team competes with seven players. Before every match, both teams' managers select one of the so-called "secret cards," which provide strategic advantages. Considered the most distinctive feature separating Kings League from traditional football, these secret cards can be

activated until the 38th minute and remain valid for four minutes (Calle, 2023). The cards include options such as double goal value, removing an opponent from play, awarding a penalty, stealing the rival's card, and a joker card that allows the selection of any desired advantage. This system significantly boosts the pace and excitement of the game, as it requires instantaneous strategic decisions during the match.

- *Double goal card:* A team that uses this card gets two points for any goal it scores for a four-minute period. Even if a penalty is awarded during this time, the goal resulting from it is also worth double.
- *Sanction card:* The team that draws this card can remove one player from the opposing team, excluding the goalkeeper. If a team has already used this card and the opposing team subsequently gets a penalty shot card, they can even remove the player who is about to take the penalty from the game.
- *Penalty card:* The team that draws this card is given the right to take a standard penalty. When the penalty is taken, one of the goalkeeper's feet must be on or behind the goal line, and all other players, except for the one taking the penalty, must be behind the halfway line.
- *Penalty shootout card:* This is a non-standard type of penalty. The player takes it by dribbling the ball from the halfway line. The goalkeeper must have one foot on or behind the goal line until the player begins their run.
- *Star player card:* The team that has this card chooses one of its players to be the star player. This player is given an armband to indicate their status, and any goal they score is counted as double. The card loses its validity after the star player scores a goal.
- *Joker card:* The team that draws joker card has the right to choose any of the cards listed above. They can also take a card from the opposing team (Reglamento Oficial, 2024, pp. 18-21).

Kings League matches attract attention with their unique starting format. At the beginning of each game, one player from each team runs from behind their respective goals to try to gain possession of the ball placed at the center of the pitch. Thus, instead of the traditional kickoff, the match begins with a far more dynamic opening. Throughout the game, both teams are allowed unlimited substitutions, a rule that keeps the tempo high while offering coaches greater flexibility in strategy. Players who receive a card must wait for a designated period in the "penalty box" and cannot participate in play during that time. If the match ends in a draw, it proceeds to penalty kicks. These penalties are executed by players dribbling from the halfway line before taking a shot at goal. In addition, both teams have the right to request VAR (Video Assistant Referee) reviews for controversial plays; however, if the request is denied, the team loses its right to challenge again. Each team competes with a 12-player squad. Of these, 11 are permanent members, while the 12th player can be a guest figure such as a former professional footballer, a social media influencer, or a streamer (Dik, 2023). The league's scoring system also has distinctive features. A team that wins in regular time earns three points, while the losing team earns none. In the case of a draw, both teams take five penalty kicks to break the tie. After this shootout, the winning team receives two points and the losing team one point. Another distinctive rule is that play begins with the ball being dropped from a cage above the pitch. In the first minute, teams compete one-on-one, after which the number of players gradually increases: three-on-three in the second minute, four-on-four in the third, five-on-five in the fourth, six-on-six in the fifth, and from that point onward, seven-on-seven. Moreover, ten

seconds before the 18th minute, a countdown begins, and at exactly the 18th minute, play is paused. At this moment, a large die is rolled to determine how many players will remain on the pitch. Another notable feature of the Kings League is the so-called “President’s Penalty.” Between the 5th and 18th minutes and again between the 20th and 38th minutes, team presidents are entitled to take a penalty. If a president is absent from the arena or unable to take the kick, a designated player may perform it instead (Reglamento Oficial, 2024, pp. 7–13, 22–23). Finally, the Kings League organization offers fans an extensive broadcast experience, with cameras placed not only around the field but also inside locker rooms and in the special boxes where presidents watch the matches (Rubio, 2022). This practice allows spectators to follow behind-the-scenes moments and gain live access to the backstage dimension of the competition.

As these rules were being determined, viewers were actively involved in the process, and the regulations were established through polls on social media (Martin, 2023; Smith, 2023).



Figure 1. The dice thrown into the game at minute

18

After all the rules, procedures, teams, and organization were established, matches were initially held every Sunday, and later also on Mondays and Fridays (Rubio, 2022). Traditional football executives looked down on this new type of football, which is intertwined with social media. La Liga President Javier Tebas referred to the Kings League as a "circus" due to the presence of YouTubers and streamers. In response, Piqué and other executives introduced the 12th player rule. Mocking Tebas's criticisms, the XBuyer team invited a player who did not want to reveal his identity and took the field with a player nicknamed Enigma 69, wearing a lucha libre mask. This masked player, fielded as the 12th player, galvanized viewers, and due to his playing style and physique, everyone thought he was Isco, who had once played for Real Madrid. However, Ibai Llanos's statements on his Twitch stream revealed that he was Nano Mesa, a former Cadiz footballer (Pacheco, 2023; Allen W., 2023,).

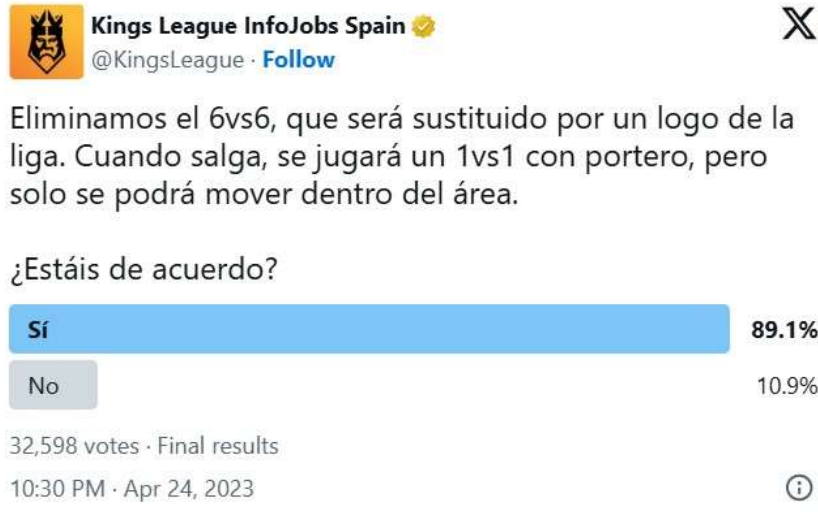


Figure 2. Poll question: "Should the game be started 1v1 with a goalkeeper?"

One of the most striking features of the Kings League is that its matches are broadcast online on social media platforms. While traditional football broadcasts are given to various TV channels through a bidding process, the Kings League is live-streamed for free on platforms like Twitch and YouTube. This allows viewers to easily follow the matches, which in turn increases the league's viewership. The first Final Four of Kings League InfoJobs (the Kings League in Spain) was held at Camp Nou, the home stadium of the La Liga club FC Barcelona. In the stadium, 92,522 spectators watched the matches, while two million people followed it online on Twitch, YouTube, and TikTok (Sanchis, 2023). Providing viewers with this ease of access has helped the Kings League increase its recognition and fan base.



Figure 3. The mysterious player from the XBuyer team, Enigma 69.

Social Media Integration and Digital Broadcasting

The Kings League, by making maximum use of the digital opportunities required by the age, transcends the boundaries of traditional football and has become a structure that shapes popular culture. In particular, broadcasts carried out through social media platforms enhance interaction with young audiences and sports enthusiasts; thus, the league transforms into a continuous environment of communication and engagement rather than being limited to the game on the field (Inal, 2024). Among the prominent digital strategies are the live broadcasting of matches on various social networks and the inclusion of famous football players as well as popular content creators. For example, in this initiative developed by Gerard Piqué, the participation of well-known figures such as Sergio Agüero and Iker Casillas, along with content creators with large social media followings, facilitates the Kings League's reach to a broad audience (Dik, 2023; Smith, 2023). This multifaceted content creator ecosystem increases viewer engagement with the league and generates a constant element of curiosity.

By choosing social media as its main broadcasting medium, the Kings League achieved 238 million views on TikTok in 2023, surpassing established leagues such as the Premier League, Bundesliga, La Liga, and Ligue 1 (Pacheco, 2023). This statistic is regarded as one of the most concrete indicators of the digital success the Kings League has achieved in a short time. In addition, the unique digital strategies developed for the league's matches aim to increase audience participation and viewing time. Indeed, during the Kings League InfoJobs (Spain) stage, the first-round matches reached an average of 450,000 viewers, the second round an average of 558,000, and the third round more than one million, demonstrating striking growth (Inal, 2024).

Thanks to its success on digital platforms, traditional television channels have also started to show interest in the Kings League. The broadcasting of the playoff final by Televisió de Catalunya (TV3) is considered one of the first concrete steps of this interest. Following this, Gerard Piqué made an agreement with Media España, leading the way for the Kings League InfoJobs and Queens League matches to be broadcast on the channel Cuatro (Inal, 2024). Thus, by being featured not only on digital platforms but also on traditional television media, the Kings League has greatly expanded its ability to reach different demographic groups. On the other hand, TVTOP España data has revealed that a total of 2.02 million viewers followed the Kings League InfoJobs final on Twitch, TikTok, and the official accounts of the club presidents (Villar & Acosta, 2023). This multifaceted strategy, which has a presence on both social platforms heavily preferred by young users and on traditional television broadcasts, is considered one of the main factors in increasing the league's popularity.

The intensive use of social media platforms and high follower numbers allow Kings League administrators to maintain continuous communication with their target audience. For instance, a wide range of content-including league schedules, match highlights, and off-field activities of players and presidents-is regularly shared on platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. This approach provides a level of transparency and participation rarely seen in traditional sports leagues, reinforcing the innovative structure of the Kings League (Pacheco, 2023). International events, such as the Kings League World Cup, are also broadcast live through digital channels, reaching a global audience. For example, the opening matches of the World Cup, held in Mexico between May 26 and June 8, were followed in real time by more than 90,000 viewers. The tournament final, held at BBVA Stadium in Monterrey (known as the Steel Giant) was attended by 51,237 spectators in person, while online broadcasts reached millions, making it one of the most widely viewed events in the league's history (Kings League Official Website, 2024; Pacheco, 2023).

The Kings League's social media integration and digital broadcasting strategies have enabled it to reach wide audiences in a short period of time. By maintaining a strong presence both on social media platforms that attract younger generations and on traditional television channels, the league demonstrates that the sports experience can be enriched not only on the field but also off the field. Consequently, the Kings League model serves as an example of innovative approaches in sports broadcasting, audience engagement, and digital marketing.

Method

The method of this study is based on netnography, which allows for in-depth analysis of digital communities and social media platforms. Netnography provides a qualitative approach to examining the behaviors and interactions of communities that emerge in digital environments (Kozinets, 2020). This method is particularly suitable for understanding a social media-centered sports event such as the Kings League. With its innovative structure and effective use of digital platforms, the Kings League stands out as a notable case in digital football culture. The netnographic investigation was designed to understand the Kings League's interactions with audiences on social media platforms, the perceptions of viewers, and the formation of digital communities. The official social media accounts of the Kings League (Twitch, TikTok, YouTube, and Twitter), along with audience comments and interactions on these platforms, were identified as the primary data sources. Comments, polls, viewership statistics, and Kings League-related hashtags shared via social media were examined, and the collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis to reveal the perceptions of digital communities regarding the Kings League and their level of engagement.

In the netnography method, the focus was placed on data collected from digital platforms. The primary data consisted of posts shared on the official social media accounts of the Kings League, audience comments, and engagement metrics on these platforms. These data were analyzed through viewers' comments and reactions (Pacheco, 2023). As a secondary data source, articles, news texts, and social media content related to the Kings League were examined in an academic context (Allen P., 2023; Reglamento Oficial, 2024). The main limitations of this study include the fact that data on the Kings League were predominantly collected from digital environments, and the lack of demographic information when attempting to compare with traditional football audiences.

Findings

In this section of the study, the comments on Kings League's Instagram and X accounts will be examined within the framework of the following themes: explanations of rules and format, pre-match promotions, in-game summaries, post-match analyses, club- and player-focused content, and interaction and engagement content.

Rules And Format Explanations



Figure 4. Which playoff option do you like the most?

-Number 4 is by far the best.

-Option 2, and 4 aren't bad either, but having 10 out of 12 teams advance seems a bit too much... Plus, the kids get tired.

-The fourth option is the best; it will be a great show.

-Option 4 is definitely the best, especially since it rewards the first-place team in each round.

-The beauty of the NBA is that the champion is on the court from the very first minute. Option 4 makes the regular season irrelevant, which kills competitiveness. I think the best option is Option 3, which gives advantages to the teams finishing at the top.

-Option 4 is great! These playoffs are producing amazing matches.

-I think Option 4 is the worst. Because if almost all teams advance to the next round, the league matches lose all meaning.

Comments on social media reveal different perspectives regarding the Kings League playoff format. A significant portion of fans consider the fourth option by far the best, emphasizing that this format would increase competitiveness, fairly reward the first-place team in each round, and enhance the viewing experience. However, some viewers argue that this option, by advancing most teams to the next round, could be too exhausting for players and would make the regular season irrelevant, thereby diminishing the significance of competition. While some comments view the fourth option positively because it would create "amazing matches," others express concern that "league matches would lose their meaning." This divergence indicates that some fans prioritize spectacle and entertainment, whereas others value fairness, the seriousness of competition, and the integrity of the sport.

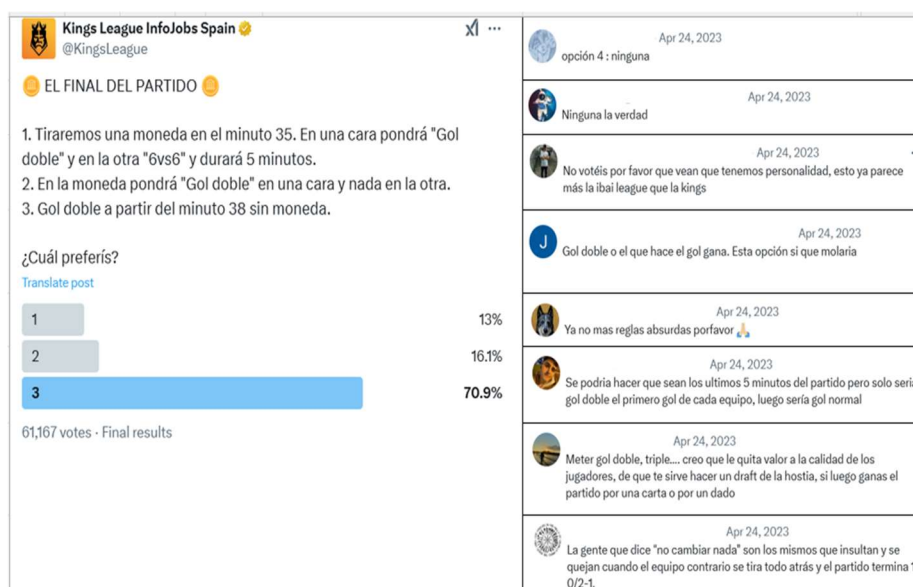


Figure 5. 1-At the 35th minute, we will flip a coin. One side will read “Double Goal,” and the other side will read “6vs6.” This will last for 5 minutes. 2- One side of the coin will say “Double Goal,” while the other side will have nothing written on it. 3-After the 38th minute, every goal scored will count as two goals.

-Option 4: none of the above

-Really, none of them

-Don't vote; let them see our own character. This has become like the Ibai League, it doesn't resemble the Kings League at all.

-“Double goal” or “the team that scores wins.” This option would be great.

-Please put an end to these ridiculous rules!

-In the last 5 minutes of the match, only the first goal scored should count double; subsequent goals should count normally.

-Doubling or tripling goals... I think it devalues the players' quality. What's the point of building a strong squad if the match is going to be decided by a dice roll or a card?

-Those who say “don't change anything” are the same people who complain and insult when the opposing team passes everything back and the match ends 1-0 or 2-1.

Comments shared on social media indicate that innovative rules proposed in the Kings League, such as “double goal” and “6v6,” are met with controversy among viewers. Some fans explicitly state that they do not like any of the options, arguing that such rules undermine the league’s original character and, using the analogy of the “Ibai League,” suggest that the organization is beginning to lose its identity. Some commentators note that options like “double goal” or “counting the first goal scored as double” could add excitement to the match, while others emphasize that these changes overshadow player quality and reduce football to chance elements, such as dice rolls or cards, thereby devaluing the fundamental logic of the game. Criticism is particularly strong regarding rule changes implemented in the final minutes of a match, which are seen as undermining achievements based on effort and strategy. Consequently, these discussions reveal that while part of the audience welcomes innovations as elements of

entertainment and surprise, another segment prioritizes the seriousness of football and the preservation of fair competition.

Pre-Match Announcements



Figure 6. Instagram post of the match schedule for Sunday, December 1

-How many days left?

-Come on, Barrio.

-Ibai got very tired with the league stuff, and this time he won't be there?

-@xbuyerteam do it @ultimatemostolescf let's go Mostoleta.

-We'll do our best to beat Pio (Los Troncos FC fan).

-I hope XBuyer wins, but Porcinos is very strong, come on XBuyer.

-Why has Mostoles been playing so late recently, even against amateur Spanish teams?

This post, which highlights the impact of pre-match promotions on fans, reflects their excitement and expectations regarding the matches. In the comments, some fans are seen eagerly counting down the time until the game, while others express direct support for their favorite teams. For example, phrases like “Come on, Barrio” or “We’ll do our best to beat Pio” clearly demonstrate fan loyalty and a sense of competition. In addition, statements such as “Ibai is exhausted with league matters-won’t it happen this time?” show that viewers closely follow not only the teams but also the figure of the president. Moreover, criticism regarding Mostoles playing their match late at night reveals that fans express opinions not only about support but also about scheduling and organization.



Figure 7. Match Time Announcement: Saiyans FC vs. Porcinos FC

-I always trust you (Saiyans FC fan).

-We will never give up (Saiyans FC fan).

-I'm a Porcino, but with all due respect, I wish the Saiyan fans and their club a good match. I hope it will be a balanced game and that the best team wins.

-Now we are stronger than ever, let's go.

-Even though Sergi Gesti left and we missed out on Jero and David, our confidence is intact. Let's go Saiyans.

-I'm a SAIYANS fan, but to be realistic, PORCINOS will 100% win and score a lot of goals.

-Come on @porcinofc.ig let's keep up our good momentum.

These comments reflect fan perception and interaction ahead of the match between Saiyans FC and Porcinos FC. Saiyans supporters display a strong sense of loyalty and motivation with expressions such as “I always trust you” and “We will never give up.” Despite the team experiencing player losses, remarks like “our trust is complete” demonstrate that the fans are keeping their morale high and remain in collective solidarity. Porcinos supporters, on the other hand, have shown a respectful attitude towards their rivals, wishing for a balanced match—highlighting sportsmanship and fair play as key aspects of their fan culture. At the same time, a more realistic and critical approach can also be observed in some comments. For instance, when a Saiyans fan states, “PORCINOS will 100% win,” it reflects an acknowledgment of the rival’s strength, showing that alongside loyalty, rational evaluations are also made.

Match Highlights

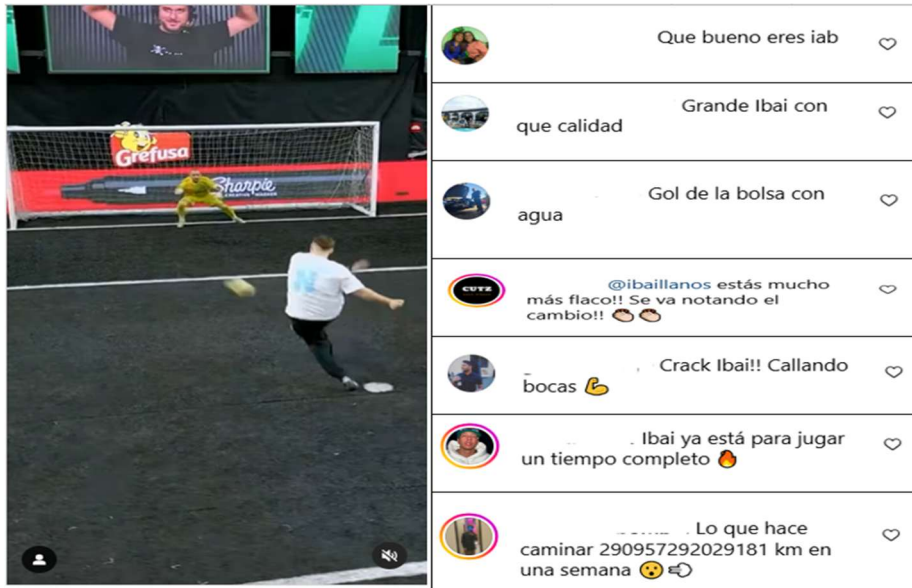


Figure 8. Ibai Llanos is taking the president penalty for Porcinos FC

-How good you are, Iab

-How good Ibai is, his quality is undeniable

-A complete lucky goal

-You've gotten much slimmer! The change is very noticeable (about Ibai Llanos)

-Ibai the king! He shut everyone up

-Ibai is now ready to play full-time

-At this speed, he could even surpass the Galaxy.

In the post where Ibai Llanos' presidential penalty for Porcinos FC was shared, a large part of the audience responded positively with expressions such as "Ibai, you're so good" and "King Ibai! He silenced them," praising his performance. This indicates that fans develop a strong sense of attachment not only to players but also to team presidents. At the same time, comments like "A complete lucky goal" suggest that some viewers saw the play as controversial and attributed the success to luck. Additionally, remarks such as "You've gotten much slimmer! The change is very noticeable" show that fans pay attention not only to athletic performance but also to the president's physical appearance. Such comments demonstrate that on social media, sports content is evaluated not only based on technical performance but also through personal image and elements of popular culture.



Figure 9. The golden goal scored by Juanma Gonzalez

-The effort you put in every day may not always bring you everything you want, but it gets you closer to your goal. This time football gave you what you deserved. Amazing match, my friend! @juanmaglez22

-Juanma is always on my team, we're aiming for the second championship

-You're amazing, Juan Manuel, what a huge talent

-Great, Gacela! @juanmaglez22 see you in the semifinals

-You really deserved this, brother, I'm so happy for you

-Juanma deserved this, he definitely worked hard and put in a lot of effort. Congratulations!

-If it weren't for the golden goal, you wouldn't have had a chance to get here (against XBuyer team)

-The only way for me to win is to have @xbuyerteam players (comment from a Jjiantes fan, referring to the effectiveness of players taken from XBuyer team in the match)

Most of the comments clearly reflecting the impact of Juanma Gonzalez's golden goal on fans strongly praise Juanma's success and emphasize that his effort has paid off. Expressions such as "The effort you put in every day gets you closer to your goal" or "He worked hard and deserved it" indicate that fans view football not merely as a spectacle but as a process closely tied to effort, perseverance, and fairness. Additionally, comments like "Juanma is always on my team" and "We're aiming for the second championship" demonstrate that fans embrace the player as an individual value beyond the identity of any club. Fans praising Juanma for his "talent" and "hard work" also reinforce his personal charisma and influence over supporters. On the other hand, some critical remarks are noteworthy. Statements such as "If it weren't for the golden goal, you wouldn't have had a chance to get here" suggest that this achievement partly depended on the game format and included an element of luck. Similarly, the comment "The only way for me to win is to have XBuyer players" highlights the impact of transfers or player changes on the match outcome.

Post-Match Analyses

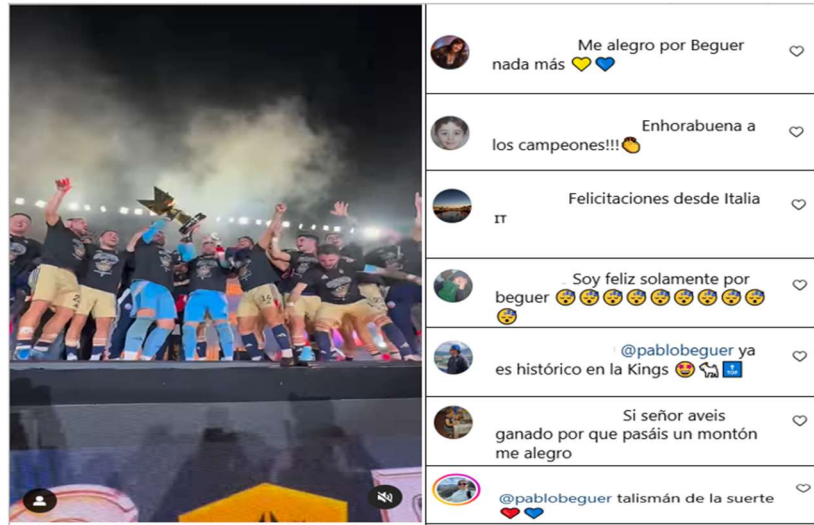


Figure 10. Jijantes FC Cup Ceremony

I'm happy only for Beuger, not for anything else.

-Congratulations to the champions.

-My congratulations from Italy.

-I'm happy only for Beguer.

-Pablo Beguer has now become a legend in Kings.

-Yes sir, you won because you worked hard, I'm very happy.

-@pablobeguer lucky charm.

A striking feature of these comments, reflecting the social media reactions to Jijantes FC's trophy ceremony, is that fans largely focused on an individual player, Pablo Beguer, rather than the team's overall success. The repeated statement "I'm happy only for Beguer" indicates that viewers symbolically associate the achievement with a personal level. Expressions such as "Pablo Beguer has now become a legend in Kings" and "@pablobeguer lucky charm" show that fans regard Beguer not just as a player, but as a symbol of the club's identity and success. At the same time, comments like "Congratulations to the champions" and "My congratulations from Italy" demonstrate the geographical diversity of the fanbase and indicate that the trophy was followed on an international scale.



Figure 11. Porcinos' elimination from the playoffs.

-Throughout the league, the referees always favored one side. This is the result when justice is served today. What a joy.

-It seems the project doesn't work without help or easy support.

-The best sports project, hahaha.

-They already considered themselves winners, and that's how they always fall when they lose their humility.

-It's a joy to see them like this.

-Keep your heads up, guys @porcinosfc.ig. You are world champions and in the top 2 of an incredible split. You didn't deserve this ending, but that's what football is like. Porcinos is always at the top.

-I absolutely loved this.

The user comments in this post reflect reactions to Porcinos FC's elimination from the playoffs. The comments are polarized, with one group of viewers viewing the elimination as justice being served, and welcoming it. Expressions such as "The referees always favored one side, and this is the result now that justice has been served" and "They already considered themselves winners, and that's how they always fall when they lose their humility" show that the segment of viewers who believe Porcinos achieved its success through unfair advantages has developed a strong critical narrative.

On the other hand, the support of the team's loyal fans is prominent. Comments like "Keep your heads up, guys" and "you are world champions and in the top 2 of an incredible split" reveal that fans view this defeat as a natural part of football and continue to defend their team with an encouraging tone. Furthermore, sarcastic comments like "The best sports project, hahaha" reflect the existence of a segment that is critical of the Kings League's innovative structure. This shows that Porcinos' success is not merely a team issue, but is also debated in terms of the league's overall reputation and perception.

Club- and Player-Centric Content

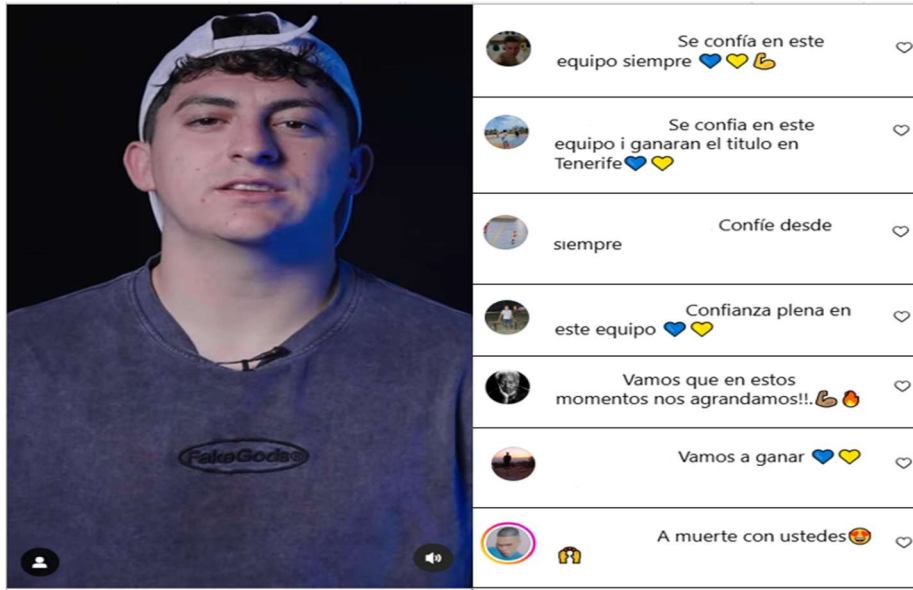


Figure 12. XBuyer President's Motivational Speech During Playoff Week

-This team can always be trusted.

-This team will be champions, we believe it! They will lift the cup in Tenerife.

-I've always believed.

-I trust this team completely.

-We're getting even stronger now.

-Come on, we're going to win!

-I'm with you all the way.

The common theme that stands out in the comments is the fans' trust and belief in the team. Phrases like "This team can always be trusted," "I've always believed," and "I trust this team completely" show that fans have a strong sense of belonging and loyalty. Additionally, comments like "This team will be champions, they will lift the cup in Tenerife" and "Come on, we're going to win!" show that fans are not only supporting their team, but are also expressing definite expectations for the future. This demonstrates that motivational speeches do not just create a symbolic effect, but also strengthen the fans' hopes and expectations.



Figure 13. Nadir Louah becomes the first Golden Crown finalist

-The best.

-Aniquiladores FC's number 13 is our secret weapon.

-And he's not even called up to the national team, hahaha.

-Mediocre players, their job is easy just because they picked players from Barcelona.

-They were the first to be eliminated from the playoffs, it was already expected.

-The biggest Aniquiladores fan, how smart is it to secretly play for the other team.

-He should definitely win, there is no other option (I'm from UM (Ultimate Mostoles)).

In these comments reflecting Nadir Louah's status as the first Golden Crown finalist, some fans praise Louah with phrases like "The best" and "Aniquiladores FC's secret weapon," showing that they view his individual performance as a determining factor in their team's success. These types of comments reflect that Louah is positioned as a hero figure within the team. In contrast, phrases like "he's not even called up to the national team" or "mediocre players" present a critical perspective and show that the player's success is being belittled. This shows that fans are engaging in discussions not only through positive support but also through criticisms based on rivalry and jealousy. Some comments also carry an ironic or humorous tone. Phrases like "The biggest Aniquiladores fan, how smart is it to secretly play for the other team" reveal that the rivalry is also discussed in a sarcastic manner. Furthermore, the comment "He should definitely win, there is no other option" shows that Louah is considered worthy of success even by viewers who support different teams.

Interactive and Participatory Content



Figure 14. When the Kings League's YouTube channel reaches 1 million subscribers, it will hold a giveaway for a ball signed by Lamine Yamal.

-I've subscribed to both channels and turned on notifications. I've been following for years, I hope they consider me.

-I hope I win.

-The worst gift.

-I've been a Kings League subscriber on YouTube since the Spanish teams and presidents were introduced, for real.

-I want it.

-I'm ready.

-It would've been better if they had given a team to Xokas (Twitch streamer).

These comments reflect viewers' reactions to the Lamine Yamal signed ball giveaway, which was organized when the Kings League's YouTube channel reached 1 million subscribers. The majority of participants express their direct involvement and a strong desire to win. Phrases like "I've subscribed to both channels and turned on notifications" and "I hope I win" show that viewers are actively participating in these campaigns and are highly motivated. In contrast, comments like "The worst gift" reveal that the giveaway was not met with the same excitement by the entire audience, and that some viewers did not find the prize valuable enough. The use of phrases like "I've been following for years" by long-term followers highlights how the identity of a loyal viewer is often emphasized on social media. Furthermore, the comment "It would have been better if they had given a team to Xokas" shifts the topic away from the giveaway and makes a humorous reference to the league's relationship with content creators. This shows that the campaign has transformed from a simple prize distribution into a space for interaction where fans express their humor, criticism, and sense of belonging.

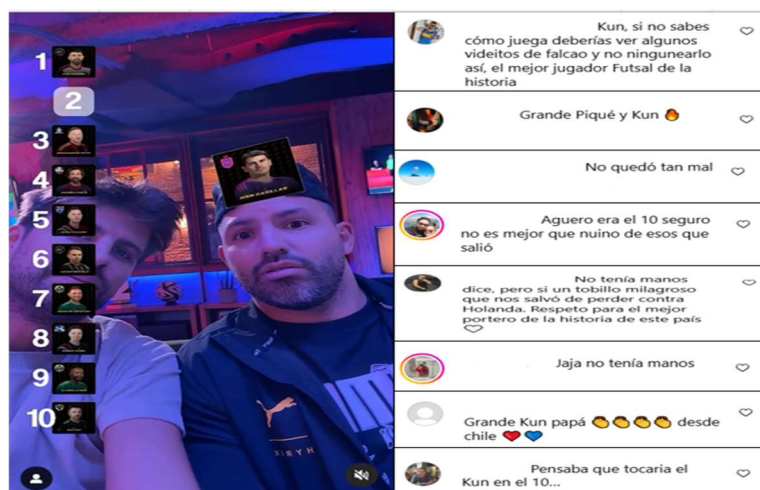


Figure 15. In the video, Piqué and Kun Agüero list the footballers emerging from the filter.

- Kun, if you don't know how Falcao plays, you should watch some videos and not belittle him like that. He's the best futsal player in history.

-Piqué and Kun are great.

-It wasn't that bad.

-Agüero was a number 10, he's definitely no better than the ones who came out.

-He says he had no hands, but he had a miraculous wrist that saved us from losing against the Netherlands. Respect to the best goalkeeper in this country's history. (In response to Piqué's comment about Iker Casillas having 'no hands').

-Haha I have no hands.

-You're awesome, Kun! Love from Chile.

-I thought Kun would play as a number 10.

In the comments reflecting social media reactions to Piqué and Kun Agüero ranking the players who appeared through the filter in the video, some fans specifically criticized Agüero's dismissive attitude toward Falcao and emphasized that the value of players should be respected more, reminding others of Falcao's importance in futsal history. At the same time, phrases like "Piqué and Kun are great" and "You're awesome, Kun! Love from Chile" show that viewers positively evaluate the two personalities' popularity and the energy they bring to the video. Some of the comments, however, have a critical tone; comments like "Agüero was a number 10, he's definitely no better than the ones who came out" reveal that the ranking is not considered fair. Comments on Piqué's "you have no hands" remark are particularly noteworthy. One viewer commented on this through Casillas, reminding others of the goalkeeper's importance in the country's football history and ironically stating that "he had a miraculous wrist," thus bringing to the forefront the memorable performances of footballers. This shows that fans are not only consuming entertaining content, but are also making evaluations based on football history and their personal memories.

Conclusion

The Kings League's digital-first structure is not merely a new broadcast format but a participatory sports ecosystem that fundamentally transforms the fan experience. The interaction practices observed throughout the netnographic analysis show that the viewer has evolved from a content consumer into a collaborative agent in the construction of rules and narrative. This, in turn, has transformed football from being limited to 40 minutes on the field into a multi-layered cultural experience. The questions formulated in line with the research's objective have made visible the Kings League's content themes, commenting practices, and perceived level of interaction on digital platforms, and have systematically revealed in which

ways the league differs from traditional football. In terms of rules and format, innovations like the Kings League's gradual expansion from 1v1 to 7v7 in the first five minutes, the stop/dice roll mechanic at the 18th minute, the president's penalty, and secret cards increase the rhythm of the game and turn the spectator into a co-creator of real-time decisions. These elements, by making the game fast, surprising, and strategic, elevate the entertainment value (especially with the game-changing effects of cards like the double goal) and also trigger a tension in the viewer discourse between spectacle vs. fair competition. The comments gathered in the findings section explicitly confirmed this tension; while one segment praised the high tempo and dramatic turns, another took a critical stance regarding the meaning of the regular season and the value of hard work and quality. The league's governance logic is participatory: a part of the regulations and rules is shaped together with viewers through social media polls. This both strengthens a sense of belonging and legitimizes the area of discussion, as viewer feedback becomes the main input for the continuous improvement of the format. Social media integration and multi-platform broadcasting have extraordinarily expanded the Kings League's reach. The free and simultaneous broadcasting of matches on Twitch, YouTube, and TikTok has lowered barriers, while the hybrid viewership of the Final Four at Camp Nou, which combined 92,522 spectators and millions online, demonstrated the model's scalability. The league's performance, which surpassed established leagues with 238 million views on TikTok in 2023, points to a strategy that generates not just visibility, but also sustainable viewer interest. In a parallel development, the door that opened to traditional channels like TV3 and Cuatro has proven that a digital-traditional synergy is both possible and efficient.

The thematic findings show that viewer discourse spans a wide spectrum. Under pre-match promotions, enthusiasm, countdowns, respect for the opponent, and criticism of programming or organization appear simultaneously. This shows that the fan is positioned not only as a supportive but also as a monitoring/critical subject. In the context of rules and format explanations, the divide is evident between those who positively approach high dramatization and those who emphasize sporting integrity and fairness. This divide keeps the league's need to balance the entertainment economy with competitive legitimacy on the agenda. The content architecture opens up not only the field but also the behind the scenes, including locker rooms and president areas, to broadcasting, making the sports narrative continuous and 24/7. Show elements like the 12th player make curiosity and discussability permanent. This design deepens the viewer's emotional investment while also increasing the league's story density. The Kings League is a “participatory football” laboratory of the digital age: rewriting the rules in favor of game tempo and narrative dramatization; co-governance through polls, 24/7 multi-channel content; integrated broadcasting of both on-stage and behind-the-scenes action, and hybrid distribution provide a strong framework for the future of sports consumption. The sustainability of this framework, however, depends on the balance established between entertainment/ratings and fairness/integrity, and on the transparent sharing of this balance.

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