

PULSAR*



How Fulham use Pulsar to reveal insights in fanbase composition & behavior

Case Study – Fulham FC

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Challenge

The 2021/22 season saw a period of renewal and change for Fulham FC, both on and off the pitch. The Cottagers, London's oldest club, began the season as a freshly relegated team. They finished it, however, as EFL Champions – putting together a vein of form almost unequalled across Europe in their march back to the Premier League.

The club was also active away from the pitch. As well as bringing in a new Front of Shirt sponsor and releasing new kit designs, the club also engaged in transfer dealings, in and out, that placed it at the centre of online discussion both in the UK and abroad.

As a result, the Fulham online fandom was neither a monolith, nor static. Instead, the club's success on the pitch – and decisions off it – saw a wide range of individuals and communities engaging in conversations about the club online.

The challenge, then, to Fulham's commercial team was how to unlock a greater understanding of the audiences who populate this ever-changing environment, and how their perspectives, behaviors and affinities shift over the season.



Understanding our audience is a key driver for commercial success. Through Pulsar, we have been able to develop a nuanced understanding of our dynamic and growing online fanbase, from mapping out the key audience segments in this ecosystem, to real-time analytics tracking the online conversations around the Club, players and sponsors.



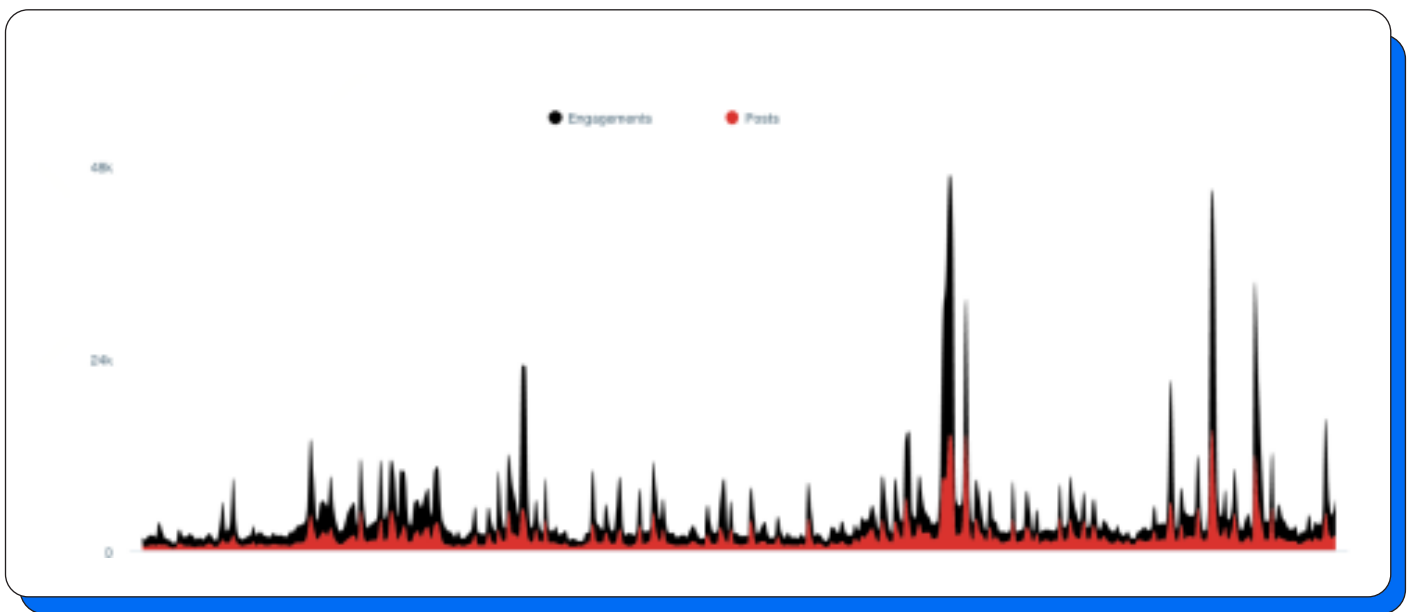
Tim Griffith
Head of Strategy
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Solution

To understand how people's fandom of the team took shape, the team tracked a number of different Fulham-related terms and phrases across Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, Reddit, TikTok, News and Google Search.

On the most basic level, this enabled them to track the ebbs and flows in conversation, and match spikes across platforms to events, such as the Fulham team making disabled fan Rhys Porter a honorary squad member, or when the signing of Muniz from Flamengo boosted the club's standing in Brazil.



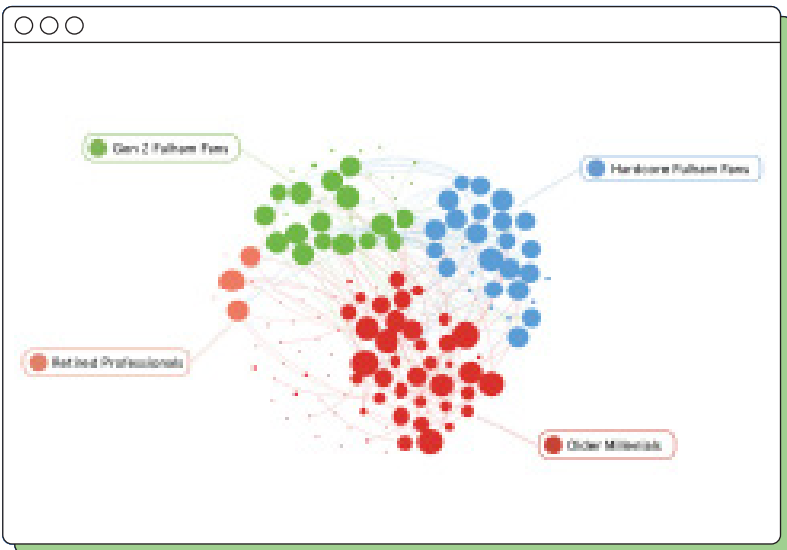
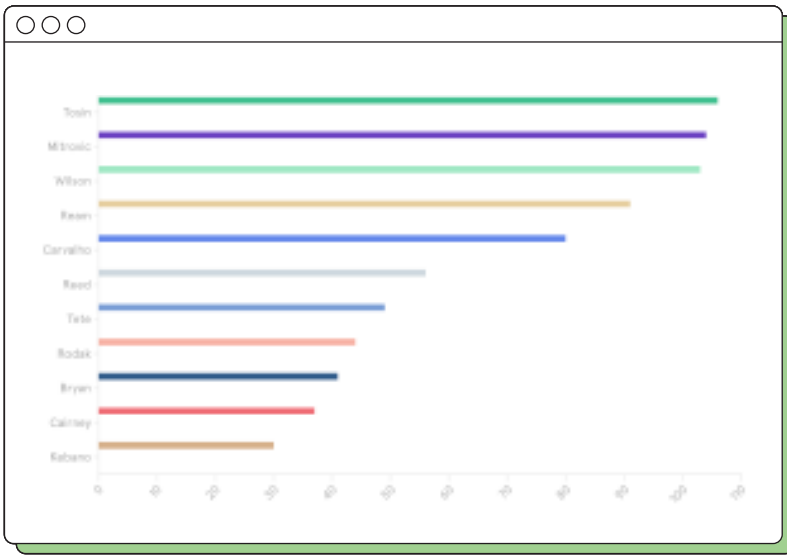
It also opened the door into a deeper understanding of who exactly makes up the Fulham fandom.

Traditional demographic data would flatten out and oversimplify the nature of the dynamic, growing audiences who interact with the club. Using Pulsar's Communities tool, the Fulham team were able to segment their fanbase according to their online behaviors and affinities.

Because one group of Fulham fans are, of course, very different to another. The team can isolate and explore what it means to be a South American fan, a new fan, or a fan with a certain job type listed on their profile.

This approach also allows them to take a closer look at the type of diehard Fulham fan who has either the club name, a related hashtag, or even a player name featured in their bios. You can see this audience, and their focus on different players, above.





Visualising the team's most engaged with fans – and how their attention is split among members of the starting 11



Given that this group tends to live locally and boasts a stronger shared history with the club, it makes sense to direct different messaging to the group, and listen out for different behavioral and engagement signals. But even within such a group, there is variation. The Retired Professional, for instance, displays very different frames of reference and types of behavior to either their Gen Z equivalents, or the absolute hardcore of fans.

In addition to being a useful tool when it comes to messaging, this kind of insight also has a commercial application – specifically when looking at the reactions to different sponsorships and partnerships.



This data intelligence has applications across numerous business functions to inform strategy and decision-making.



So the team could listen out for the initial reaction to their change in sponsor, for example, and discover the nuances and shifts within a predominately positive fanbase reaction. This ranged from the conversations that Fulham were themselves driving on Instagram and Twitter, to in-depth subreddits mapping out the team's various commercial partners.

Not that the partner or sponsor needs to have a largescale public announcement for the team to uncover actionable insight. As part of the Communities tool's functionality, it's possible to view the differing affinities each has for any of the club's longstanding commercial partners on an audience by audience basis.

Sports clubs are able to generate the kind of social engagement and rapid growth that's the envy of other industries. Maintaining a thorough understanding of a highly changeable space, however, brings its own forms of challenges for the clubs' insights, marketing and commercial teams. And it's by baking an insight-led approach into club activities across departments that Tim and team continue to ensure the starting 11's success is shared beyond the four corners of the Craven Cottage pitch.



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