



Brandwatch

# Sponsorship and Social Media

A Brandwatch Analysis of Barclays Premier League Sponsorship

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# Executive Summary

# Introduction

Social media has become a valuable and unique indicator of brand perception, campaign success, customer service reputation, consumer opinion and many more business objectives.

In this report, Brandwatch applies that concept within the context of **sports sponsorship**.

Specifically, we've conducted analysis to uncover key insights into **Barclays' title sponsorship of the Premier League** – the UK football league often described as the world's 'most watched league', with a cumulative TV audience of **4.7 billion**.



*Social media activity and conversation is now increasingly becoming a huge part of agencies' and sponsors' evaluation of campaigns. This is mainly due to the fact that a brand's prestige and image is easily built or ruined in an instant with the speed at which ideas and impressions can be developed online.*

***More and more we are seeing social media being included as a significant mechanism for analysis within sponsorship campaigns."***

– Adam Wright,  
Account Executive,  
Leading Sport  
& Entertainment Agency

# Methodology

**What** exactly did we analyse?

Using the Brandwatch analytics and monitoring platform, we tracked online conversation relating to the **Barclays Premier League** 2012/2013 season.

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**What** is the scope of the analysis?

We monitored data in the **United Kingdom** (English language only) and in select **international markets** (using multilingual search strings).

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**When** was the analysis conducted?

We collected data between August 2012 and April 2013 (with the league to conclude in May 2013).

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# Sponsorship aims

The Premier League is described as the world's 'most watched league.' Brands who sponsor the sports event typically anticipate multiple benefits, such as:

- **Brand visibility.** Brand sponsors can benefit by simple association and exposure to the massive viewing audience. Fans typically relate the league with a **sense of excitement and loyalty**. It is this loyalty that sponsors hope to transfer to their own products and services.
- **Global reach.** Though UK-based, the league now has an international focus. Players span **70 nationalities** and matches are broadcast in **212 territories**. Sponsorship of such an international event can help develop brand reputation in **emerging markets**.
- **Added value.** More tangible benefits can include **match tickets** and **rights** to use the Premier League name on select products. Companies may also use sponsorships as the basis of **broader campaigns** (i.e. sports equipment donations to youth groups, health drives, etc).

# Key findings

## Visibility/ **Barclays exposure as the title sponsor was limited**

- Despite having official title rights, Barclays was mentioned in only **one quarter** of Premier League mentions. The brand was **less prominent** in the current season than the previous one, suggesting the need for greater brand input.

## Media types/ **News sites generated the most brand mentions**

- **News sites** were more likely to mention Barclays than other page types, but some key sources failed to reference the brand. **Twitter** boosted sponsorship visibility, with a potential audience of over 30 million. However, Barclays' official league account [@barclaysfooty](#) was not the most visible account and the #BPL hashtag was ambiguous.

## Global reach/ **Sponsorship gained Barclays exposure in international markets**

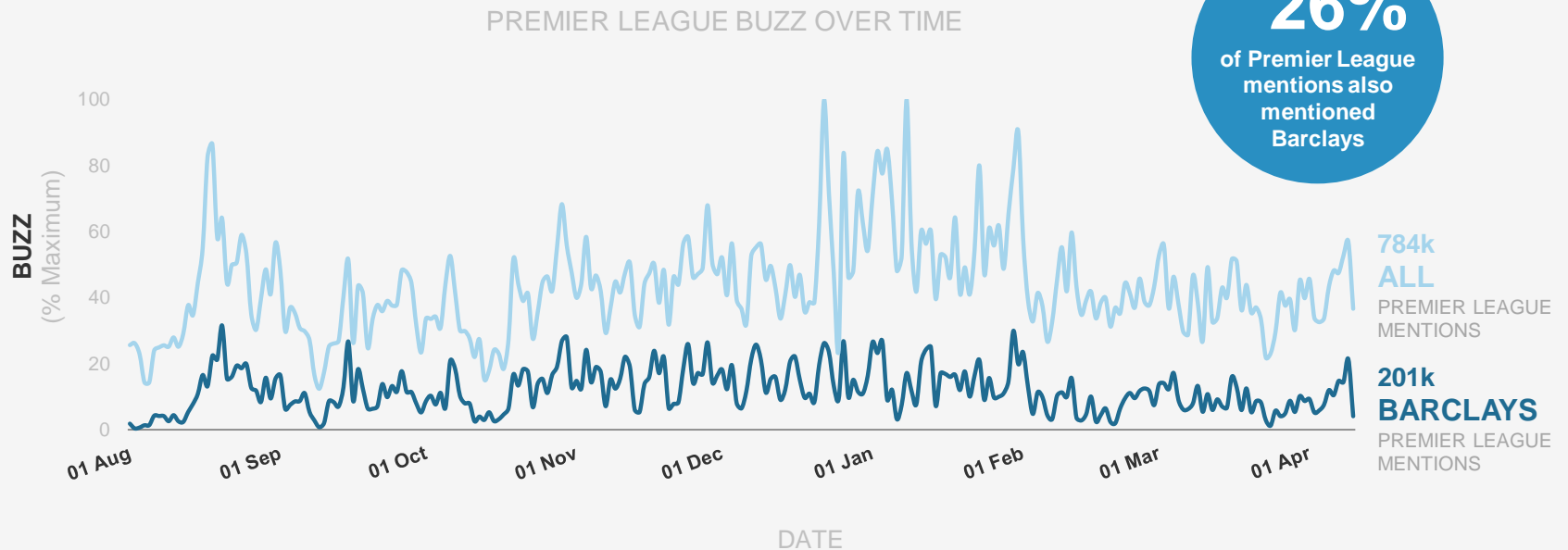
- Analysis revealed engagement in emerging markets. Barclays was discussed overseas in territories marked for brand expansion, including **Africa** and the **Middle East**.



# Title sponsor visibility



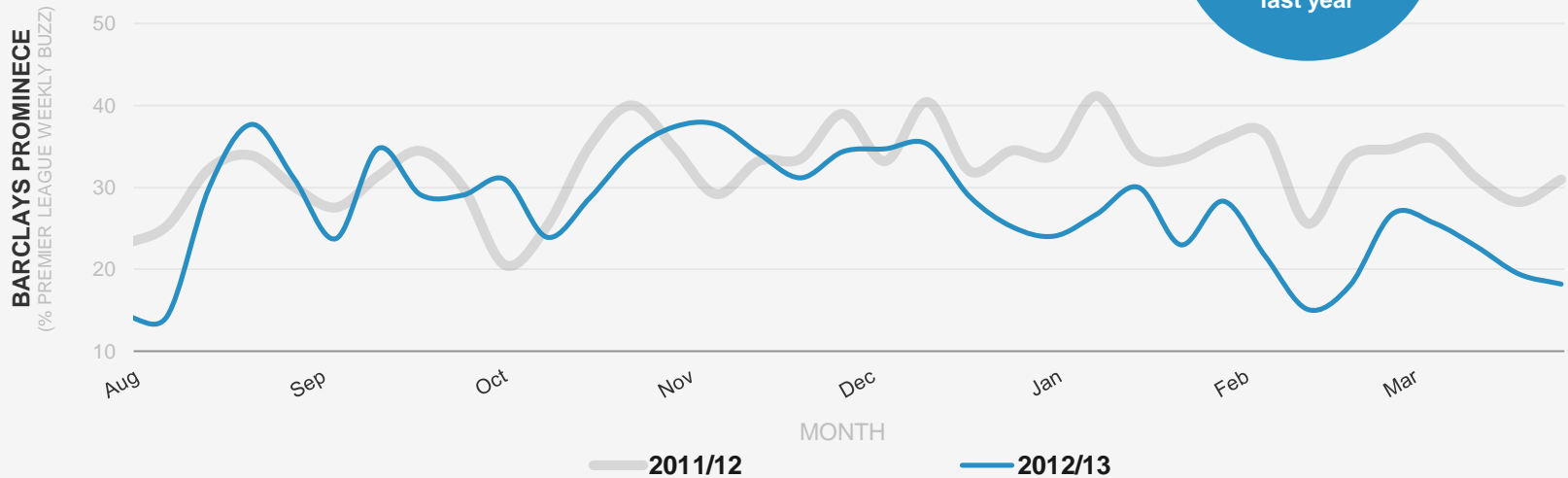
# How much UK conversation related to the Barclays Premier League?



- The graph above shows the volume of Premier League conversation online. Buzz was greatest at the start of the season in **August**, and again throughout **January** and early **February** 2013. Further analysis would confirm that the dates of the transfer windows are the reason for this.
- The darker blue line reflects the amount of this conversation that referenced the Barclays brand name. As title sponsors, the official competition name is the *Barclays Premier League*. Despite that, the Barclays brand name was only included in **26%** of Premier League mentions.

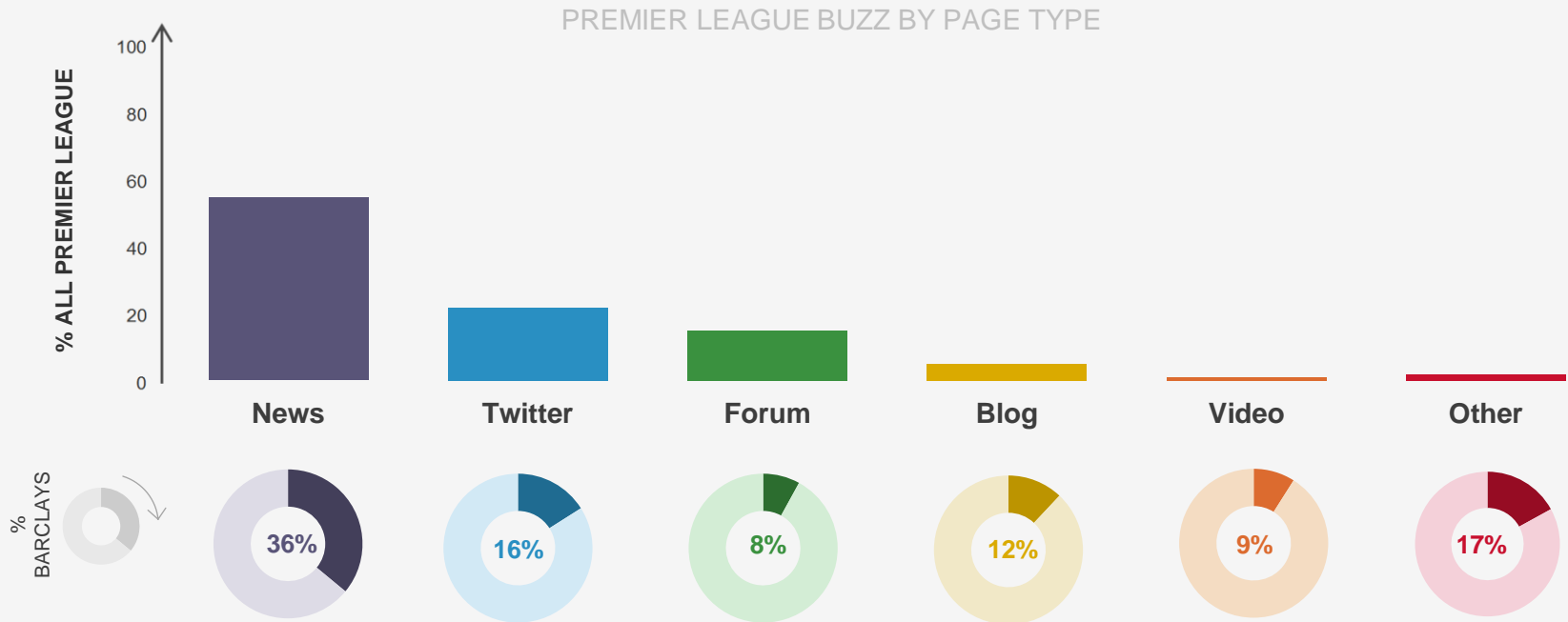
# How did Barclays buzz compare with the previous year?

BARCLAYS PROMINENCE IN PREMIER LEAGUE CONVERSATION:  
YEAR-ON-YEAR TREND



- As shown above, Barclays' prominence in Premier League conversation has been **lower than the previous season** so far in 2013. 2012/13 season prominence was roughly in keeping with that of the previous season until **January**. From January onwards, Barclays grew proportionately less visible than it had been in 2011/12.
- Social media monitoring allows brands to respond quickly to underperforming areas. In this instance, increased efforts to integrate Barclays' name could help counter the weakening brand association.

# How visible was Barclays across page types?



- Of all Premier League mentions, the majority took place on news sites. Twitter and forum threads were also common, reflecting a strong level of consumer/audience discussion.
- Each pie chart shows how much of this conversation mentioned Barclays. Premier League **news articles** were most likely to mention Barclays (the brand name appeared in 36% of cases). Barclays was least likely to be mentioned in **forum threads**, where fewer than 1 in 10 comments cited the official sponsor.
- This suggests that though the sponsor was integrated into the official league title, it was not adopted by the majority of consumers.

# What were the key news sources for Barclays?

## All Premier League Mentions

SITE	TYPE	MENTIONS	VISITORS/MONTH
<a href="#">DailyMail</a>	National	8591	110,000,000
<a href="#">Football365</a>	Football	8087	2,900,000
<a href="#">BBC</a>	National	6152	550,000,000
<a href="#">Independent</a>	National	4642	11,000,000
<a href="#">Sportinglife</a>	Sport	4316	780,000
<a href="#">Guardian</a>	National	3957	57,000,000
<a href="#">Mirror</a>	National	3805	9,200,000
<a href="#">Sport.co.uk</a>	Sport	3538	300,000
<a href="#">Hereisthecity</a>	Business	3299	n/a
<a href="#">Dailystar</a>	National	3296	1,600,000

## Barclays Premier League Mentions

SITE	TYPE	MENTIONS	VISITORS/MONTH
<a href="#">Dailymail</a>	National	3517	110,000,000
<a href="#">Football365</a>	Football	2419	2,900,000
<a href="#">Sportinglife</a>	Sport	2225	780,000
<a href="#">Sport.co.uk</a>	Sport	1627	300,000
<a href="#">BelfastTelegraph</a>	Regional	1248	2,300,000
<a href="#">MSNsport</a>	Sport	1192	343,536,000
<a href="#">Independent</a>	National	1069	11,000,000
<a href="#">Dailystar</a>	National	985	1,600,000
<a href="#">HarrowTimes</a>	Local	982	n/a
<a href="#">Daily Echo</a>	Regional	978	700,000

- The tables above list the top news sources for the Premier League, and those that mention the Barclays brand name most, respectively.
- In table one, red-tinted sources are those that were 'top ten' sources for the Premier League, but not for the Barclays brand. In table two, green-tinted sites are those that were especially prominent for Barclays.
- This type of top level analysis reveals which sites are **not adopting the official sponsor name** (*Barclays Premier League*) and which sources are most likely to **link the brand and the event**.

# How did Twitter impact sponsorship efficacy?

**30.9m**  
Twitter users potentially reached by mentions of Barclays & the Premier League

“ Just won premier league tickets from Barclays [...] get some code with my bank statement and typed it into the cash machine and said I was a winner lol”



**TWITTER**  
[@MAACCCAA](#)

“ Congratulations to #BPL fans and the newly crowned X Factor finalists Jahmene, Christopher and James! ”



**TWITTER**  
[@JAHMENEDOUGLAS](#)

“ Major culprit of breaching SA apartheid was Barclays Bank – but now socially accepted as sponsors of Premier League! ”



**TWITTER**  
[@MRTRICKYTREE](#)

- 
- Twitter was a considerable platform for Barclays chat, reaching a potential 30+ million users so far in connection with the Premier League.
  - The key owned account, [@barclaysfooty](#), generated buzz with Twitter competitions. The account also integrated with other **current UK events** (as in the second example above, which is an [@barclaysfooty](#) RT).
  - However, the most frequent publicity source was [@barclaysleague](#), an **unofficial** author. Despite claiming non-official status, [@barclaysleague](#) has 115k followers: 38% **more followers** than the official account.
- 
- The official account frequently used the hashtag **#BPL** to mark Barclays Premier League tweets. However, this hashtag was not exclusive to the league. Authors also used the hashtag to refer to [Boston Public Library](#), [Blackpool](#) and the [Twenty20 cricket league](#). An exclusive hashtag could help deliver greater clarity on Twitter.

# How did conversation develop in forum threads?

FORUM	TYPE	PL MENTIONS
<a href="#">Lfconline</a>	Team	2751
<a href="#">Footballfancast</a>	Football	2696
<a href="#">Wearetherangersboys</a>	Team	2211
<a href="#">Cardiffcityforum</a>	Team	2033
<a href="#">Forestforum</a>	Team	1817
<a href="#">YahooAnswers</a>	General	1652
<a href="#">Footballforums</a>	Football	1231
<a href="#">Bluemoon-mcfc</a>	Team	1200
<a href="#">Est1892</a>	Team	1035
<a href="#">Planetswans</a>	Team	941



- The top ten UK Premier League forums (by Premier League mentions) are listed above, alongside a topic cloud of all forum conversation. Mentions were often **team-specific**, but also extended to **broader sports events**. The UEFA Europa League, for example, featured alongside the Premier League in conversation.
- **Sky Sports**, an official broadcaster, also features in the topic cloud above. A 2005 study found that the Premier League was a key motivating factor behind Sky Sports subscriptions. By identifying brands and figures associated with a particular event, companies can make more informed investments in sponsorship deals.
- In the current data, Sky Sports featured in forums as a source of online information, including match results and interviews. This was an example of a brand strengthening their presence with an online offering. Televised footage was supplemented with game insights which provided a more **integrated service** for Sky Sports viewers.



Global reach

# The Barclays Premier League

generated mixed levels of **international interest**

“I am watching Barclays Premier League, Man City vs. Everton...”



**TWITTER**

DHAHRAN, SAUDI ARABIA

“The Space for Sport project has been made possible through fantastic collaboration between [...] the Barclays Premier League and the Western Cape Department of Cultural Affairs and Sport.”



**BLOG**

SOUTH AFRICA

“Torres now have 6 goals in the Barclays Premier League. #CFC”



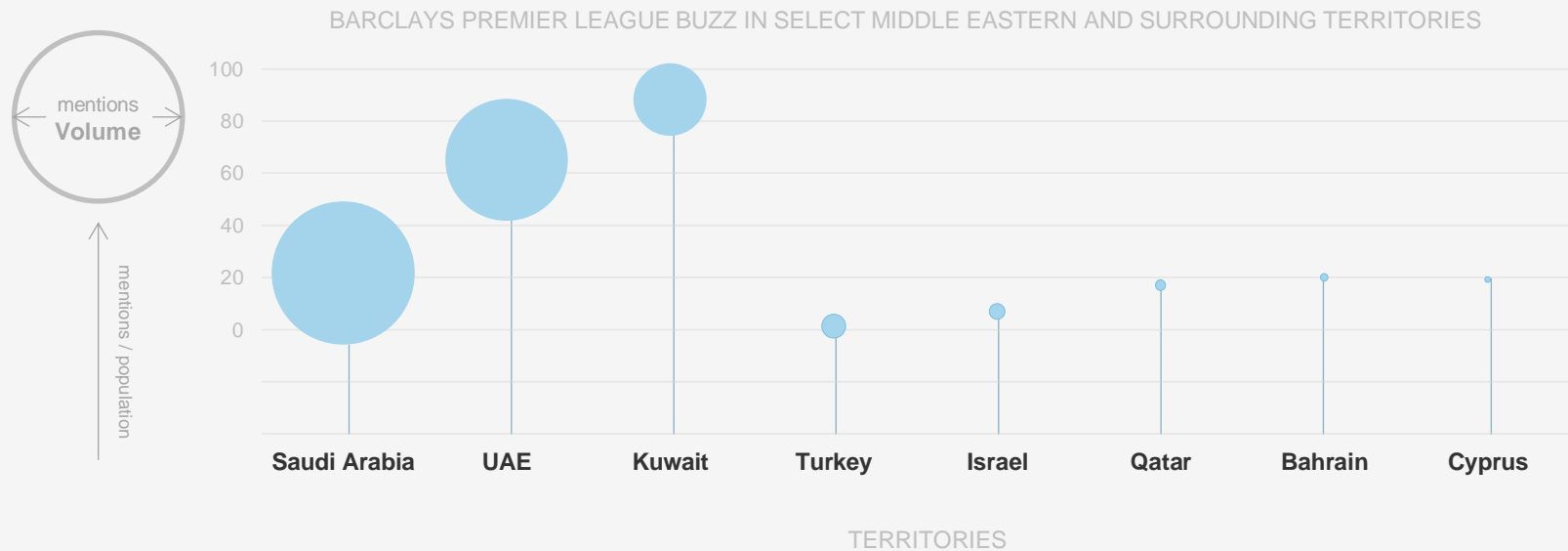
**TWITTER**

KUWAIT

- Premier League sponsorship extends beyond UK audiences. With broadcasts in 212 territories, the league is a **global event** and this is matched in potential exposure.
- Matt Appleby, sponsorship director at Barclays, commented: “the Barclays Premier League increases our brand awareness globally and, importantly, in markets where our brand is still growing such as the Middle East and Africa”. Last year the company reported that they were seeking a 25% revenue rise in these regions.
- We analysed select markets in **Africa**, the **Middle East** and surrounding territories. As demonstrated by the examples above, the Premier League had international impact. However, analysis revealed that this was not evenly distributed among markets.

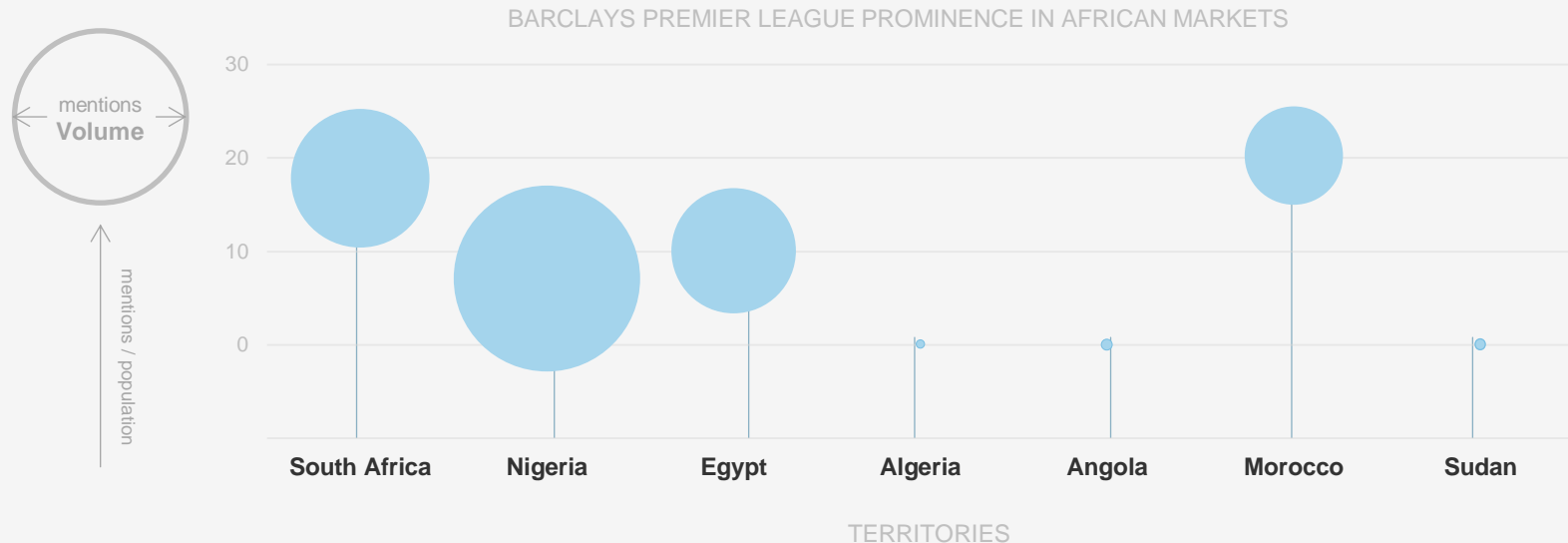


# The Barclays Premier League in the Middle East and surrounding territories



- In the chart above, Barclays Premier League buzz is shown across a range of territories. The y axis is a measure of *engagement* in each market (i.e. the conversation volume accounting for population differences) and the size of each marker represents absolute *volumes* of mentions.
- **Saudi** and the **UAE** attracted large volumes of mentions. However, audiences were more engaged in **Kuwait** than in **Qatar**, and this contrasted with the current placement of **Barclays offices**. Doha is listed as a key office location, while Kuwait (generating more Barclays buzz) contained no equivalent office.

# The Barclays Premier League in African markets

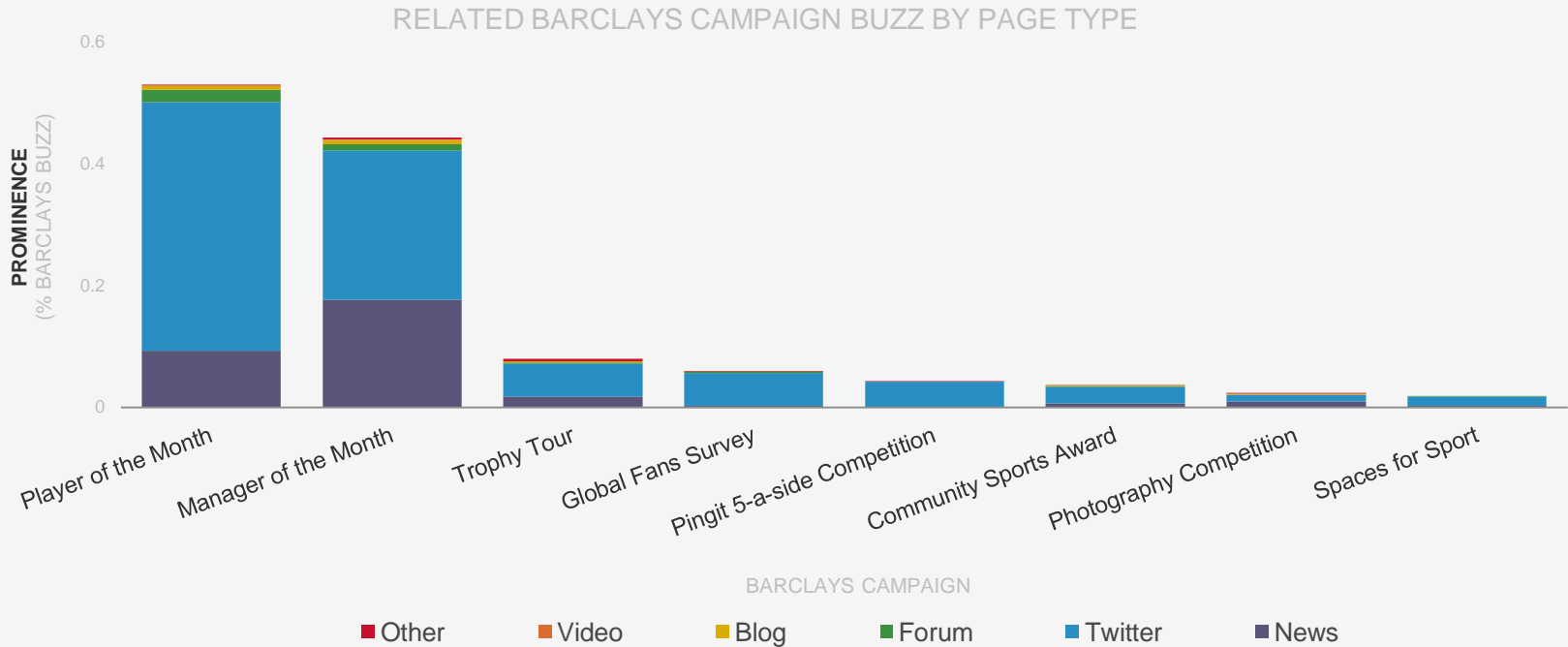


- A similar trend can be seen in select African markets. **South Africa**, a hub of Barclays activity, also showed comparatively **high levels of interest** in the Premier League. Though less engaged as a whole, **Nigeria** generated the most mentions online.
- Algeria, Angola and Sudan were much scarcer sources of Barclays Premier League buzz. **Morocco** produced almost as much buzz as **Egypt**, but (accounting for population differences) contained **more engaged audiences**.
- Barclays hope to benefit from the international exposure of the Premier League. The data here shows that sponsorship impact varies considerably between countries. Social media monitoring can indicate underperforming markets, as well as those outside a brand's focus but with audiences willing to engage.



Added value

# Barclays sponsorship was a springboard for a series of related campaigns



- Barclays used the Premier League as the centre of a much broader range of campaigns. These helped to consolidate brand image, with sports awards and competitions strengthening positive associations between Barclays and sports.
- Regular features (monthly awards) generated the most buzz online. This suggests that campaigns with an element of regularity often attract the interest of online communities. Both the branded 'Manager of the Month' and 'Player of the Month' awards further boosted Barclays coverage, especially among Twitter users.

# Conclusions

# Conclusions

## Findings

Title sponsors **Barclays** were mentioned in only **26%** of all online Premier League conversation.



Sponsor prominence varied between **page types**: Barclays was most strongly associated on news sites.



The **#BPL hashtag** was not used exclusively by fans of the Barclays Premier League.



## Implications & Takeaways

Many common sponsorship aims can be effectively measured using media analysis. For Barclays, greater uptake of its brand name in the official Premier League title would signify greater acceptance among fans.

While Barclays' name was prominent on news sites, it was less visible on Twitter and in forum threads. This indicates that sponsorship was not **resonating** as strongly **with consumers** (despite being cited in official sources).

To improve this, Barclays could consider more targeted content that engages consumers on other channels.

Though '#BPL' was concise, the acronym was also used to refer to other sports, places and activities. An **exclusive hashtag** could bring cohesion to Premier League conversation online – and increased visibility and prominence.

# Conclusions

## Findings

The Premier League was a springboard for a range of related **Barclays campaigns**.



**Overseas engagement** revealed opportunities for the sponsor.



## Implications & Takeaways

Ticket competitions and the trophy tour grew the brand's Twitter presence. This was an example of sponsorship strengthened by a **network of events**, each reinforcing Barclays' **positive association** with competitive sports.

Barclays aimed to strengthen their **visibility in Africa and the Middle East**. In markets such as Kuwait and Morocco, authors were more likely to mention the Premier League sponsor than in territories where Barclays had a more established presence.

# Thank you

We hope this report about **sponsorship and social media** has provided new insight into the value of social analysis in measuring results against focused business goals.

We work with clients in a wide range of industries with varying needs in order to provide **in-depth analysis of the conversation** they care about, in order to realise the power of social media and analytics.

## For more information

To find out how Brandwatch can help your business conduct similar analysis, contact us today:

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## About Brandwatch

*Brandwatch is one of the world's leading providers of social media monitoring and analysis.*

*More than 700 global brands and agencies use Brandwatch solutions, relying on the real-time social media coverage and highly reliable, spam-free data we provide to monitor online conversations around their brand interests, glean business insights through deep data analysis, conduct market research, predict market trends, and engage with customers and prospects.*

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