12-2013

Damage Control: How Scrutinized Professional Athletes Use Twitter to Combat Negative Press

Jeffrey K. Haeger

Follow this and additional works at: http://aquila.usm.edu/honors_theses

Part of the Social Media Commons

Recommended Citation

The University of Southern Mississippi

Damage Control: How Scrutinized Professional Athletes Use Twitter to Combat
Negative Press

by

Jeffrey Kegan Haeger

A Thesis
Submitted to the Honors College of
The University of Southern Mississippi
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirement for the Degree of
Bachelor of Arts
in the Department of Mass Communication and Journalism

December 2013

Approved by

_____
Mary Lou Sheffer, Ph.D., Thesis Adviser
Associate Professor
Broadcast Journalism Sequence Head

_____
Christopher Campbell, Ph.D., Chair
Department of Mass Communication and Journalism

_____
David R. Davies, Ph.D., Dean
Honors College

Abstract

In recent years many elite professional athletes have been criticized in the media for questionable on and off the field behavior. How these athletes use social media to reframe or repair their public images was the focus of this research. Research on social media has grown in recent years, but still remains relatively shallow, making the strong correlation between social media and sport the ideal breeding ground for this exploratory research. This study confined social media use to the way in which two purposefully selected professional athletes - Tiger Woods and Lance Armstrong - use Twitter to self-present and directly communicate with their followers. A quantitative content analysis was conducted to collect data for this research. To quantify the information, 592 Tweets were coded and then analyzed using SPSS. Previous literature (Dittmer, 2010; Hambrick, Frederick & Sanderson, 2013) suggested heavily scrutinized professional athletes used Twitter to promote a personal brand and challenge competing media narratives, in turn compromising the media's role as agenda setter (Cohen, 1963). According to Cassidy (2006), such athletes are overriding the journalist's traditional role as gatekeeper, thus redefining selective exposure's impact in today's changing media landscape (Messing & Westwood, 2012). This study found that elite professional athletes are using this new flow of information to promote images of self that bypass media misrepresentation (Goffman, 1959). This research further concluded that such athletes use Twitter to unhinge their images from the association of negative press, but in fundamentally different ways.

Key Words: Tiger Woods, Lance Armstrong, media, criticism, branding, self-presentation

Dedication

Mary Lou Sheffer, Ph.D.

It took a while, but thank you for sticking it out.

You helped me see it through.

Acknowledgments

I would like to take another moment to thank my adviser, Mary Lou Sheffer, for her unwavering dedication to the completion of this thesis. She is undoubtedly the busiest person I have ever encountered, yet my research always managed to find its way to the top of her to-do list - even if it was at the bottom of her priority food chain. Her guidance and efficiency made the finished product possible. I cannot thank you enough.

In addition, I would also like to show thanks to J.T. Johnson, Ph.D. He came to my aid at a crucial time of the data collection process, making the most complicated statistics seem elementary. You were clutch for me when it counted the most, and I am forever appreciative of your help.

Cory Gunkel is also worthy of a special thanks. While I made the coding process out to be rocket science, he coded his half of the Tweets decisively and efficiently. You were a vital component in the metaphorical ninth inning of this process - thank you.

Lastly, I would like to thank Paula Mathis of the Honors College for keeping my head on straight throughout Senior Honors. There were times I spent more hours sharing my worries with her than I did actually working on my research. Nonetheless, she never lost faith or interest in my endeavors, so I had no choice but to persevere. Thank you, for being the one I feared to disappoint the most.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Illustrations

List of Abbreviations

PGA   Professional Golf Association
NFL   National Football League
NBA   National Basketball Association
MLB   Major League Baseball
NHL   National Hockey League
MLS   Major League Soccer
NCAA   National Collegiate Athletic Association
RT   ReTweet
@   Direct Tweet
#   Hash-tag

Damage Control:
How Scrutinized Professional Athletes
Use Twitter to Combat Negative Press

Introduction

Sport and media share a cyclical relationship that has reciprocally affected each constantly changing entity over the course of their simultaneous evolutions (Lever & Wheeler, 1993). Not only has sport transformed the media, but the media have played a pivotal role in sport's transformation into a commercialized global industry. Professional athletes, such as Tiger Woods (Professional Golf Association) and LeBron James (National Basketball Association), are globally recognizable icons and figures in their respective sports, and the media have played a decisive role in the visibility of these global superstars.

Ironically, some of the most recognizable professional athletes have turned into hated villains because of poor or regrettable decisions that the media have in turn amplified. Woods, for example, saw his popularity plummet in the midst of an infidelity scandal that began on November 25, 2009 (Farhi, 2010). His reputation was significantly damaged, and he is now often recognized as one of the most disliked athletes in professional sports (Farhi, 2010).

James is another superstar athlete that has received a great deal of public scrutiny, primarily for his heavily scorned decision to leave his home-state Cleveland Cavaliers. After spending his first seven seasons in the NBA with the Cavaliers, the Akron, Ohio native announced his intention to join the Miami Heat via free agency on a nationally televised program called 'The Decision,' on July 8, 2010 (Banagan, 2011). This

publicity stunt received a tremendous amount of backlash and criticism from the media, causing the reigning league MVP's public image to quickly dive into a tailspin (Banagan, 2011). This was the first nationally televised event of its kind, and due to its catastrophic failure, it will presumably be the last. The groundbreaking nature of the event, however, demonstrates the rapid evolution of the media's role in sport. While traditional mass media outlets are primarily responsible for fostering the public outcry that ensued, it was social media, specifically, that in turn amplified the fallout from 'The Decision' (Kanalley, 1).
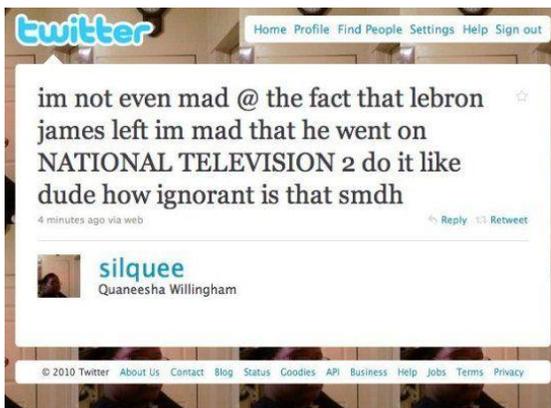
Fans take to Twitter over 'The Decision' (Willingham, 2010).

The rapid evolution of the media and Twitter's growing role in mainstream media, therefore, are the driving forces behind the negative public perception of professional athletes like Woods and James.

Unlike traditional mass media outlets, social media outlets give these heavily scrutinized professional athletes the opportunity to self-present in a manner that combats negative press (Sanderson, 2011). Moreover, these non-traditional outlets provide ways for professional athletes to enhance, or even reshape, their images (Genovese, 2013). According to Dittmer (2010), professional athletes who conduct themselves appropriately on social media have the power to significantly influence their perceptions in the public

domain and mainstream media. Currently inactive NFL wide receiver Chad Johnson

(formerly known as Chad Ochocinco) is one such exemplar, as his on and off the field

antics have been the primary source of scrutiny throughout the course of his career. By

using social media as a self-promotional tool, though, Johnson has greatly repaired his

once damaged reputation (Dittmer, 2010).

   Johnson is just one of many professional athletes to have been criticized in the

media for questionable on and off the field behavior in recent years. How these athletes

use social media to reframe or repair their public images is the focus of this research.

Research on social media has grown in recent years, but still remains relatively shallow,

making the strong correlation between social media and sport the ideal breeding ground

for this exploratory research. This research will holistically enhance the understanding of

Twitter's effects on mass media theory, as well as the impact of Twitter use on the

images of heavily scrutinized professional athletes.

Literature Review

Role of Theory in Social Media

In today's changing media landscape, it is important to understand social media's increasingly enormous impact on the public. To explore this effect, the mass media theories of agenda setting and selective exposure will be used to investigate why using social media as a means of self-promotion has become such an attractive prospect for professional athletes.

Agenda Setting

Agenda setting can be described as the media's power to influence what issues are important (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). According to Littlejohn (2002), however, that description only defines the first level of the theory. Second-level agenda setting refers to important parts of the subjects that the media deem important (Littlejohn, 2002). Agenda setting also houses two fundamental assumptions. Firstly, it assumes that the media filter and shape reality instead of reflect it (Agenda Setting Theory, 2010). Its second tenant assumes, "Media concentration on a few issues and subjects leads the public to perceive those issues as more important than other issues" (Agenda Setting Theory, 2010, p. 1).

The roots of the agenda setting theory are highly political (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). In 1922, two-time Pulitzer Prize winner Walter Lippmann was concerned that the media had the power to influence the public to think a certain way (Agenda Setting Theory, 2010). McCombs and Shaw investigated this in the 1970s, by closely examining the United States presidential elections of 1968, 1972, and 1976. Their research concluded that the messages portrayed in the media throughout these presidential

campaigns significantly influenced what the public believed to be the major issues of the ensuing elections (McCombs & Shaw, 1972).

Agenda setting theory is not solely limited to the political sphere, though. In a study that examines Woods' aforementioned infidelity scandal using second-level agenda setting, Kozman (2012) muses, "Similar to politics and public affairs, sports also have witnessed the agenda-setting power of the media" (p. 5). Over a 17 day period following the scandal, Kozman discovered that 89.5% of stories found on an online search query about Woods, were directly related to the scandal. According to Sanderson (2010), that statistic demonstrates the agenda setting power of the media in an unprecedented fashion. He claims, "Perhaps no athlete has experienced more intense media scrutiny for his private behavior than. . . Woods" (p. 439).

Today, agenda setting theory is adapting alongside traditional mass media outlets. In an effort to survive, traditional newsrooms have embraced the newsroom blog as an alternative vehicle for news delivery (Meraz, 2008). This rapidly growing phenomenon allows news outlets to relay information to audiences efficiently and accurately. The public domain, therefore, is still heavily influenced by the agenda setting theory, as social media outlets set agendas in correspondence with those of traditional mass media outlets.

Forty years later, the relevancy of agenda setting theory is still best summarized by Cohen (1963). He states, "The press may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about" (p. 13).

Selective Exposure

Unlike agenda setting theory, selective exposure theory has more to do with the consumer and less to do with the press. Selective exposure occurs when a media outlet matches the beliefs and predispositions of an audience (Stroud, 2008). This tendency of favoring information that reinforces pre-existing views and avoids contradictory information, is one that has increasingly polarized Americans along partisan lines. These contradictory beliefs created the need for news outlets with various opinions, and this diverse school of thought successfully created an effective democracy in America (Messing & Westwood, 2011).

Klapper (1960) asserts, "The tendency of people to expose themselves to mass communications in accord with their existing opinions and interests and to avoid unsympathetic material, has been widely demonstrated" (p. 19-20). Over time, however, news consumption became more habitual than intentional (Messing & Westwood, 2012). Selective exposure theory only returned to the forefront in conjunction with the rise of non-traditional forms of media (Messing & Westwood, 2012). According to Messing and Westwood (2012), "Much of the literature on polarization and selective exposure presumes that the internet exacerbates the fragmentation of the media and the citizenry" (p. 1). However Messing and Westwood (2012) argue that such literature "ignores how the widespread use of social media changes news consumption" (p. 1).

Selective exposure's effect on traditional forms of mass media is well documented, but social media now has the capacity to reshape how selective exposure impacts news consumption altogether. The rapid growth of social media has led to a potential paradigm shift (Sheffer & Schultz, 2010), as it is now just as easy to access

news on Facebook or Twitter as it is to obtain the same information on news media outlets such as NYTimes.com or WashingtonPost.com (Messing & Westwood, 2011).

Messing and Westwood (2011) charge, "Recognizing the extent to which people enjoy sharing news content, social media services developed technology designed to make it as easy as possible to share news with their online social networks" (p. 4). With the emergence of social media as a primary source of news, many consumers no longer passively accept what is presented in mainstream media. Messing and Westwood (2012) conclude, "The relationship between social media and news consumption must now be considered to be a fundamental part of our media environment" (p. 3).

Self-Presentation

This new flow of information opens a gateway for athletes and fans to link directly. In this new role, athletes can form and maintain their public images. This method of self-presentation was first explored by Erving Goffman in his formative piece, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Goffman (1959) postulates that people operate as performers, expressing their identities through verbal and non-verbal communication to depict the most authentic images to their audiences. Furthermore, people present images of self-based on their expectations of audiences' desires (Bortree, 2005).

With the advent of the internet, self-presentation's influence on social media outlets has been more recently examined (Rosenberg & Egbert, 2011; Van Der Heidi, D'Angelo & Schumaker, 2012; Vitak, 2012). As it relates to this study, those social media channels are valuable to athletes engaging in the image repair process. Those athletes have control over the images they convey to their fans, as well as the ability to gauge the public's response to their self-presentation strategies (Sanderson, 2011).

In a recent piece that explores how former professional road racing cyclist Lance Armstrong used Twitter to self-present in 2012, Hambrick, Frederick and Sanderson (2013) assert, "Athletes rely a great deal on their public image" (p. 5). The study's findings suggest that athletes "who display a multi-faceted self-presentation embolden identification and attachment with followers and introduce competing media narratives surrounding their identity" (p. 1). In Armstrong's case, specifically, his self-presentation strategy more closely connected his followers to his athletic commitment, personality and advocacy efforts. In turn, Armstrong was able to combat negative press and "competing media narratives" during what was perhaps the most turbulent year of his career (Hambrick, Frederick & Sanderson, 2013).

Twitter and the Brand of Professional Athletes

Twitter was launched with a 34-character Tweet that reads, "just setting up my twttr". Jack Dorsey, the executive chairman and product lead of Twitter, posted that first public Tweet on March 21, 2006. It took Twitter exactly three years, two months and one day to reach its first one-billion Tweets, and just eighteen months to acquire its first 500,000 users (Wauters, 2012).

Based on its unique abilities to break news instantaneously and link online content directly with its users, Twitter is on the cutting edge of innovation with regards to social media and journalism (Sheffer & Schultz, 2010). These characteristics are paired with its potential to distribute content, increase audience, and grow revenue more efficiently than any other form of mass media, making it every journalist's ideal tool (Sheffer & Schultz, 2010). As it relates to the aforementioned relationship between media and sport, Sheffer and Schultz (2010) suggest, "The real-time, interactive nature of Twitter makes it ideal to

study the relationship between sports journalists, athletes, and fans" (p. 475). Moreover, the uniqueness of Twitter's self-promotional nature creates an ideal breeding ground to study the relationship between professional athletes and their fans. Athletes who use Twitter possess the ability to relay exactly what they want to say to their fans, overriding traditional sports journalists' role as "gatekeeper" (Cassidy, 2006).

Ellyn Angelotti, interactivity editor at the Poynter Institute, claims, "Twitter is based on personal brands. [When] a station can tap into the individual brands within the organization, it can strengthen the collective organization's brand" (Petner, 2009, p. 2). Similarly, some professional athletes have unlocked the blueprint to creating and managing their own personal brands on Twitter. Johnson is perhaps the most distinguished of these athletes. As of October 9, 2013, his Twitter account flaunted 3,733,785 followers, the most among all NFL players using Twitter (Top 10 NFL Twitter Athletes, 2013). As Dittmer (2010) notes, "[Johnson] has developed quite an online persona for himself posting frequent Twitter updates, which are shared simultaneously on his Facebook page" (p. 2).

Not only does Johnson use Twitter as a means of personally interacting with his fan base, but as an all-encompassing tool to relay news to the public instantaneously as well. In February 2010, Ocho Cinco News Network (OCNN) officially broke the news to ESPN that former Philadelphia Eagles running back Brian Westbrook was to be released by the team, by simply posting to its Twitter account (Dittmer, 2010). Johnson used Twitter to effectively promote the various aspects of his personal brand, demonstrating what is likely to be the future of relationships between professional athletes and consumers of mass media (Dittmer, 2010).

The Dangers of Twitter

While Twitter has become a preferred avenue for professional athletes to combat negative press (Hambrick, Frederick & Sanderson, 2013), it has often been the source of its creation as well. "If you have something posted on your Twitter site, that's exactly what you have to say," said Washington Redskins cornerback DeAngelo Hall. "It hasn't been doctored up by a writer or any of the media. It's straight from your mouth to the fan" (Robinson, 2009).

Several professional athletes have abused Twitter's power since its emergence, leading to documented instances of backlash and criticism. In March 2009, former Milwaukee Bucks power forward Charlie Villanueva caused a stir around the NBA for Tweeting during halftime of a game. Although Villanueva suffered repercussions from the team, the NBA had no policy to enforce as punishment for his disruptive behavior ("Skiles to Villanueva," 2009). In a similar incident in August 2010, Johnson, a then Cincinnati Bengals wide receiver, was fined $25,000 by the NFL for having an electronic device on the sideline and posting to a social media site during a game (Davis, 2010).

In more recent cases, Twitter has also become a dangerous platform for politically opinionated professional athletes. Following George Zimmerman's acquittal for the shooting death of Florida teen Trayvon Martin, NFL wide receivers Roddy White and Victor Cruz took to Twitter to express their outrage. White posted a Tweet suggesting that the jurors from the case should "go home and kill themselves" (Schwartz, 2013). In another insinuated message of violence, Cruz Tweeted, "Thoroughly confused. Zimmerman doesn't last a year before the hood catches up to him," before quickly

deleting the post (Baker, 2013). In both instances of Twitter misuse, though, the athletes

under fire took back to Twitter to apologize for their comments.
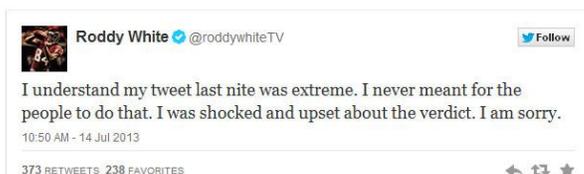
Roddy White apologizes over Twitter (White, 2013).
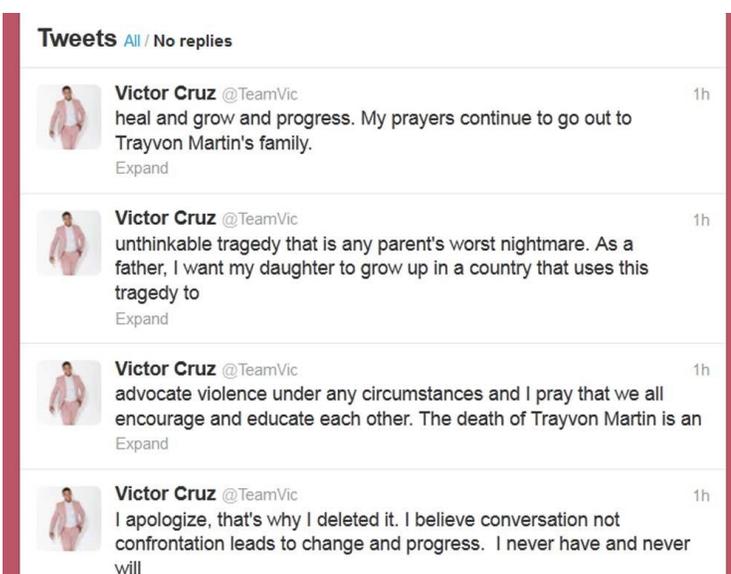
Victor Cruz apologizes over Twitter (Cruz, 2013).

Such incidents demonstrate a widespread lack of self-regulation amongst

professional athletes, and perhaps more importantly, compromise Twitter's numerous

benefits as a self-promotional tool. Due to Johnson's creation and maintenance of a

personal brand on Twitter, however, his lack of self-regulation has been largely

overlooked in the public arena (Dittmer, 2010). The following research looks for similar

variations of Johnson's path to reputation recovery in other heavily scrutinized

professional athletes.

Research Question

Previous literature (Dittmer, 2010; Hambrick, Frederick & Sanderson, 2013) fails to locate consistencies and/or irregularities between similarly scrutinized professional athletes and the ways they use Twitter. Thus, the following research question was formed to provide a more comprehensive understanding of self-presentation's role (Goffman, 1959) in the reputation recovery of such athletes.

RQ1: How do disliked athletes, who are active Twitter users, use Twitter to combat a negative public image?

Methodology

In this study, social media use was confined to the way in which two purposefully selected professional athletes use Twitter. According to Sheffer and Schultz (2010), "Twitter can be viewed as a content-delivery system that makes news operations more competitive in a crowded media field" (p. 473). Twitter use, therefore, was defined by the way professional athletes use the outlet to self-present, and how they use it to directly communicate with their followers. The given definition then tested how professional athletes use Twitter to mold or shape their images. Professional athletes - as opposed to amateur athletes - were defined as athletes who are paid in accordance with their levels of performance in their respective sports. Furthermore, this research specifically targeted professional athletes who have received significant amounts of backlash and criticism throughout their careers, due to poor or regrettable decisions on or off their respective fields of play.

To effectively analyze how Twitter use alters the images of heavily scrutinized professional athletes, test subjects were selected from Forbes' 2013 "The Top 10 Disliked Athletes in America" list (Van Riper, 2013). From that list, Armstrong (top-ranked) and Woods (third-ranked) were then selected for analysis. These two disliked professional athletes are also active Twitter users, making them appealing candidates for this research. San Diego Chargers rookie linebacker Manti Te'o ranks second on the list, but his absence from Twitter disqualified him from the study. The other athletes on the list are Jay Cutler, Metta World Peace, Alex Rodriguez, Michael Vick, Kurt Busch, Kobe Bryant and Tony Romo.

Armstrong, who first joined Twitter on October 13, 2008, had accumulated

3,931,016 followers as of October 8, 2013, despite having an appeal of just 15% (Van

Riper, 2013). Woods, who only has an appeal of 19% (Van Riper, 2013), had collected

3,629,523 followers by the same date. Woods created his account on July 17, 2009, a

little more than nine months after Armstrong. Despite joining Twitter within the same

calendar year, the way Armstrong and Woods manage their Twitter personas is

fundamentally different. As of July 4, 2013 (the day the framework for this methodology

was constructed), Armstrong had Tweeted 10,258 times. By contrast, Woods had only

composed 300.

Though Woods had only Tweeted three times prior to his aforementioned

infidelity scandal (Farhi, 2010), he, by definition, was an active Twitter user when his

personal life and public image took a nosedive. Woods also made headlines in more

recent months, firstly in April for a controversial ball drop at the Masters Golf

Tournament 2013 (Crouse, 2013). Woods found his way into the news again in May, for

his eye-popping Twitter posts directed at fellow PGA pro Sergio Garcia (Harig, 2013).

To harness a definitive understanding as to how Woods has used Twitter as a vehicle to

respond to such criticism in an effort to repair his damaged reputation - if at all - the

universe of his Tweets dating back from July 4, 2013 was analyzed.

To achieve consistency, Armstrong's most recent 300 Tweets dating back from

July 4, 2013 were analyzed as well. While using an nth series would have allowed the

timeline of Armstrong's Tweets to match that of Woods', it could have also jeopardized

the thoroughness of the research. On October 22, 2012 the International Cycling Union

stripped Armstrong of the seven Tour de France titles he collected from 1999-2005

("Lance Armstrong verdict upheld," 2012). Shortly thereafter, he admitted to doping

during an interview with Oprah Winfrey on January 17, 2013 (Albergotti & O'Connell,

2013). Armstrong's most recent 300 Tweets starting from July 4, 2013 are inclusive of

the both controversial time periods, so an nth series was not used to ensure that

potentially relevant Twitter posts on or after the date of October 22, 2012 were not

overlooked.

To accurately code the total 600 Tweets without bias, the researcher only coded

half of each athlete's Tweets. With regards to Woods' Tweets, the researcher started

from the most recent Tweet before July 4, 2013 and worked backwards until 150 Tweets

were coded. For Armstrong, the researcher started from the 151st Tweet before July 4,

2013, and continued in reverse chronological order until 150 Tweets were coded. A

second coder then coded the other half of each athlete's Tweets following the same

model. The second coder is a Southern Miss Rivals staff writer and a New Orleans

Saints contributor for SB Nation. He is an avid Twitter user (3,370 Tweets as of

November 10, 2013), so his paired interests in sports and social media made him the ideal

candidate to accurately code the 300 Tweets without bias. Assigning Tweets from both

athletes to both coders ensured objectivity in the study, and in turn made the findings

more valuable.

A quantitative content analysis was conducted to collect data for this research. To

quantify the information, Tweets were coded with the code sheet below. The actual data

was collected in an Excel spreadsheet due to its compatibility with Statistical Package for

the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 22. SPSS was then used to analyze the data.

Code Sheet

1. Coder: _____

2. Tweeter: _____

3. Tweet # (1-300): _____

4. Date of Tweet: _____

5. (Circle one) The Tweet was posted within _____ of specified public scrutiny per the methodology section of this thesis?

   1. One week or more after   2. 5-6 days after   3. 3-4 days after
   4. 1-2 days after   5. The same day

6A. (Check one) Does the Tweet address criticism?

   0. No._____ 1. Yes, directly._____ 2. Yes, indirectly. _____

6B. (Check one) Does the Tweet address criticism?

   0. No._____ 1. Yes, apologetically._____ 2. Yes, defensively. _____

7. (Check one) Tone of the Tweet:

   1. Positive _____ 2. Negative _____

8. (Check one) Intention of the Tweet:

   0. Non-Sport Related _____ 1. Recreational Sport Related _____ 2. Other Professional/Collegiate Sport Related _____ 3. Athlete-Specific Sport Related _____

9. (Check one) Engagement of the Tweet:

   0. No Fan Interaction _____ 1. Direct Fan Interaction _____
   2. Indirect Fan Interaction _____

10. (Check all that apply) Did the Twitter user engage his followers with this Tweet?

   0. No _____ 1. Yes, RT _____ 2. Yes, @ _____ 3. Yes, # _____
   4. Yes, hyperlink _____ 5. Yes, picture _____

11. (Check one) Brand of the Tweet: Does the Tweet promote a brand or a sponsor of the professional athlete?

   0. No _____ 1. Yes _____

Code Instructions

While item Nos. 1-4 are for organizational and informational purposes only, item Nos. 5-11 break down the makeup of each Tweet being analyzed. Since Twitter use can be classified as a daily activity (Sheffer & Schultz, 2010), item No. 5 looks for a relationship between Tweets that address public criticism and an event that could have caused the athletes to take to Twitter to respond to it. Going forward, this item will be referred to as the "relative date."

To help reduce gaps in previous literature, item No. 6A attempts to define the way in which the athletes respond to scrutiny. It specifically examines the directness of such Tweets, by distinguishing those that address criticism directly from those that address it indirectly. For this item, a direct address Tweet can be defined as one that confronts scrutiny with clear intent to combat or acknowledge a swirling media narrative. Contrarily, an indirect address Tweet can be defined as one that combats or acknowledges scrutiny without specifically mentioning the competing media narrative.

Similarly to item No. 6A, item No. 6B also looks for a trend regarding the way the athletes address criticism. It specifically analyzes the presentation of such Tweets, by distinguishing those that respond to criticism apologetically from those that address it defensively. An apologetic Tweet, therefore, can be defined as a Twitter post portrayed in a manner that seeks forgiveness from the athlete's followers and/or fans. Likewise, a defensive Tweet can be defined as one that attempts to relieve the athlete from any responsibility of wrongdoing, in turn framing the athlete in a positive light.

Item No. 7 is similar to No. 6, but looks for a more general pattern regarding the the tone of the 600 Tweets. Tone can be defined by a Tweet's negativity. To support the

findings of the literature review ("Skiles to Villanueva," 2009; Davis, 2010; Schwartz, 2013; Baker, 2013), this item attempts to isolate Tweets that are presented negatively to show how often the athletes fail to self-regulate on social media. Negative Tweets, therefore, can be defined as posts that include any combination of foul language, suggested obscenities or aggression. Positive Tweets encompass all non-negative Tweets, including ones that are not particularly positive or negative, which are thus neutral. For this particular item, whether or not a Tweet addresses criticism is considered irrelevant.

Item Nos. 8-11 try to specifically identify how the athletes use Twitter, if not to address criticism. To dovetail off the findings of Hambrick, Frederick and Sanderson (2013), item No. 8 attempts to determine the athletes' relationships with their followers. Do the athletes engage their audiences by talking about sports, or by bringing their followers into their personal lives? The latter represents an example of a non-sport related Tweet. Recreational sport related Tweets reference sports that are neither professional nor collegiate by nature. Activities such as working out, running and swimming recreationally or competitively fall under this category. An "other professional/collegiate sport related" Tweet can then be defined as one that pertains to a professional team, league (NFL, NBA, MLB, NHL, MLS, etc.) or player that is paid accordingly for its services. Tweets that reference unpaid collegiate athletes, teams or leagues (i.e. NCAA) also fall under this description. Lastly, athlete-specific sport related Tweets are defined per the athlete. For Armstrong, Tweets that reference or mention professional or recreational cycling fall under this category. For Woods, Tweets that reference or mention professional (PGA) or recreational golf makeup this category.

Based on the findings of Sheffer & Schultz (2010), item No. 9 analyzes the Twitter use of the athletes even further by depicting how often they seek fan interaction. Tweets that are declarative in nature generally indicate a lack of intent to interact with fans, as opposed to Tweets that seek direct and indirect fan engagement. Direct fan interaction specifically includes Re-Tweets (RT) and Tweets directed at other Twitter users (@). For such Tweets to qualify for this category, it must be conclusive that the posts are geared towards a fan. Such Tweets that are clearly aimed at Twitter users with pre-existing relationships with the athlete fall under the "no fan interaction" response. Indirect fan interaction can be classified by Tweets that acknowledge fans, either individually or collectively. Any Tweet that inquisitively seeks feedback from fans or probes them for responses also falls under this category.

Item No. 10, the only multiple response question on the code sheet, focuses less on fan interaction and more on follower engagement. To fill voids left by previous literature, it specifically looks to pinpoint the most frequent type of engagement between the athletes and their followers. A Tweet that includes any combination of the @ or # symbols, a hyperlink to a website or a picture should be coded accordingly. To accurately report how often the athletes use such means of follower engagement on their own accord, however, those categories give way to stand alone RTs and RTs directed @ other Twitter users. Only when a @, # or hyperlink comes before the original @ in a RT does the information get recorded as if it was part of an original Tweet.

Finally, item No. 11 examines Dittmer's (2010) claim regarding the brand of professional athletes. Are heavily scrutinized athletes using Twitter as a form of self-promotion? Instances in which Armstrong promotes the Livestrong Foundation, Mellow

Johnny's, Nike or any other sponsor are considered branding. Likewise, instances where Woods promotes the Tiger Woods Foundation, the Tiger Woods Nike Shoe, Tiger Woods '14 (or any other previous edition of his video game), the Tiger Woods My Swing Mobile App, Nike, Rolex, Fuse, EA Sports or any other sponsor are classified as branding. Though many branding efforts overlap with sport-related Tweets, they are all considered non-sport related per item No. 8. This helps compartmentalize the data collected from item Nos. 8 and 11.

Results

Upon collecting the data, it was realized that eight of the 300 total Tweets gathered for Woods were unoriginal, bringing his total to 292. A total of 300 Tweets were still gathered for Armstrong, yielding a new total of 592 analyzed Tweets.

The researcher first produced frequency tables with the coded data. The data was then cross-tabbed to compare and contrast the Twitter use of Woods and Armstrong. Analyzing the data showed the consistencies and irregularities between the two disliked athletes, in turn answering RQ1: How do disliked athletes, who are active Twitter users, use Twitter to combat a negative public image?

According to Table 1, both athletes avoided Twitter use during times of scrutiny. Although there was no significant difference in relative date, Armstrong posted 100% of the time at least one week after an instance of public scrutiny, compared to Woods' 97.3%. The other 2.7% of Woods' Tweets (n = 8) came on the same day of two different instances of cited scrutiny.

Table 1

How often professional athletes use Twitter during times of scrutiny

| | | Professional Athlete | | | | Total | |
| | | Armstrong | | Woods | | | |
		Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Relative Date	One week or more	300	100%	284	97.3%	584	98.6%
	5-6 days	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
	3-4 days	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
	1-2 days	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
	Same day	0	0%	8	2.7%	8	1.4%
Total		300	100%	292	100%	592	100%

As shown in Table 2, Armstrong and Woods did not use Twitter to address criticism (n = 580, 98.0%). Both athletes seldom used Twitter to address criticism directly (n = 9, 1.5%), and even less often to do so indirectly (n = 3, 0.5%). While there was no significant difference in the manner in which the two athletes used Twitter to address criticism, Lance Armstrong elected not to defy scrutiny 99% of the time, compared to Woods' 96.9%. When Armstrong did respond to backlash, he always did so directly (n = 3, 1%). Woods also preferred a direct method of responding to criticism, doing so 2.1% of the time as opposed to addressing it indirectly just 1.0% of the time.

Table 2

How professional athletes address criticism on Twitter

| | | Professional Athlete | | | | Total | |
| | | Armstrong | | Woods | | | |
		Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Addresses Criticism on Twitter	No	297	99%	283	96.9%	580	98.0%
	Yes, Directly	3	1%	6	2.1%	9	1.5%
	Yes, Indirectly	0	0%	3	1.0%	3	0.5%
Total		300	100%	292	100%	592	100%

Table 3 supports the findings of Table 2, in that Armstrong and Woods did not use Twitter to respond to scrutiny (n = 580, 98.0%). In instances where they did address criticism, though, both athletes did so apologetically (n = 7, 1.2%) slightly more often than they did defensively (n = 5, 0.8%). As was the case with Table 2, there was no significant difference in how the two athletes chose to address criticism on Twitter. Armstrong and Woods chose not to use Twitter to respond to scrutiny 99% and 96.9% of the time, respectively. Armstrong preferred to challenge negative press defensively 0.7% of the time, compared to doing so apologetically 0.3% of the time. Contrarily, Woods primarily opted to combat scrutiny apologetically 2.1% of the time and defensively just 1.0% of the time.

Table 3

How professional athletes respond to criticism on Twitter

| | | Professional Athlete | | | | Total | |
| | | Armstrong | | Woods | | | |
		Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Responds to Criticism on Twitter	No	297	99%	283	96.9%	580	98.0%
	Yes, Apologetically	1	0.3%	6	2.1%	7	1.2%
	Yes, Defensively	2	0.7%	3	1.0%	5	0.8%
Total		300	100%	292	100%	592	100%

The findings in Table 4 fall in line with Tables 2 and 3. Of the Tweets that did address criticism in the previous tables (n = 12, 2.0%), only half of them were considered negative. The overall tone of both athletes' Tweets was positive (n = 586, 99.0%). The negative Tweets (n = 6, 1.0%) were divided evenly between Armstrong (n = 3) and Woods (n = 3).

Table 4

Tone used by professional athletes on Twitter

| | | Professional Athlete | | | | Total | |
| | | Armstrong | | Woods | | | |
		Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Tone	Non-Negative	297	99%	289	99.0%	586	99.0%
	Negative	3	1%	3	1.0%	6	1.0%
Total		300	100%	292	100%	592	100%

Unlike the first four tables, Table 5 shows a strong contrast in how Armstrong and Woods use Twitter. Woods' content contained more Tweets that were athlete-specific than Armstrong's ($\chi 2$ (3, $N = 592$) = 80.226, p < .001). Overall, both athletes referenced non-sport related content most often in their Tweets (n = 57.3%), but Armstrong did so significantly more often (n = 199, 66.3%) than Woods (n = 140, 47.9%). In fact, Woods used Twitter to talk about golf (n = 131, 44.9%) almost as much as he did for non-sport related purposes (n = 140, 47.9%). By significant contrast, Armstrong used Twitter to reference cycling (n = 45, 15%) only slightly more than recreational sports (n = 36, 12%) and other professional or collegiate sports (n = 20, 6.7%). Similarly, Woods had a low number of other professional or collegiate sport related Tweets (n = 18, 6.2%) and recreational sport related Tweets (n = 3, 1.0%).

Table 5

How often professional athletes talk about sports on Twitter

| | | Professional Athlete | | | | Total | |
| | | Armstrong | | Woods | | | |
		Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Intention	Non-Sport	199	66.3%	140	47.9%	339	57.3%
	Recreational	36	12%	3	1.0%	39	6.6%
	Other Professional	20	6.7%	18	6.2%	38	6.4%
	Athlete Specific	45	15%	131	44.9%	176	29.7%
Total		300	100%	292	100%	592	100%

Like Table 5, Table 6 further distinguishes the Twitter use of Woods from that of
Armstrong's. Woods used Twitter to interact with fans directly (n = 103, 35.3%) and
indirectly (n = 72, 24.7%) significantly more than his counterpart. Armstrong only
interacted with fans indirectly on a minimal basis (n = 21, 7%), and even less in a direct
manner (n = 12, 4%), showing a significant difference where $\chi2$ (2, N = 592) = 158.491,
p < .001. Armstrong avoided fan interaction the majority of the time (n = 267, 89%),
contrasting Woods' significantly less frequent lack of fan engagement (n = 117, 40.1%).

Table 6

How professional athletes interact with fans on Twitter

		Professional Athlete				Total	
		Armstrong		Woods			
		Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Fan Engagement	No	267	89%	117	40.1%	384	64.9%
	Yes, Direct	12	4%	103	35.3%	115	19.4%
	Yes, Indirect	21	7%	72	24.7%	93	15.7%
Total		300	100%	292	100%	592	100%

Whereas Table 6 contrasts how Armstrong and Woods interact with their fans on
Twitter, Table 7 depicts how the two athletes most often engaged their followers.
Overall, both athletes actively engaged their followers in a relatively similar fashion.
Woods (n = 149, 51.2%) and Armstrong (128, 42.7%) both favored direct Tweets,

followed by RTs. Both Woods (n = 105, 36.1%) and Armstrong (n = 92, 30.7%) Re-

Tweeted their followers in about a third of their posts. Woods composed his Tweets

using strictly text about a third of the time as well (n = 85, 29.1%), compared to

Armstrong's 9.7% (n = 29). Armstrong also provided a hyperlink to a picture in 29

(9.7%) of his Tweets. Similarly, Woods posted pictures in 9.3% (n = 27) of his Tweets,

while #'s (n = 45, 15.5%) and hyperlinks (n = 40, 13.7%) appeared slightly more

frequently. The case was the same for Armstrong, but he incorporated more hyperlinks

(n = 55, 18.3%) and fewer #'s (n = 38, 12.7%).

Table 7

Preferred method of follower engagement amongst professional athletes

		Professional Athlete				Total	
		Armstrong		Woods			
		Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Follower Engagement	None	29	9.7%	85	29.1%	114	
	RT	92	30.7%	105	36.1%	197	
	@	128	42.7%	149	51.2%	277	
	#	38	12.7%	45	15.5%	83	
	Hyperlink	55	18.3%	40	13.7%	95	
	Hyperlink to Picture	29	9.7%	27	9.3%	56	
Total		300		292		592	

Like Tables 5 and 6, Table 8 even further differentiates the Twitter use of

Armstrong and Woods. Woods' superior branding efforts revealed a significant

difference in that category, where $\chi2$ (1, $N = 592$) $= 25.789$, p $< .001$. While both athletes

promoted sponsors in less than one-third of their Tweets, Woods branded himself

significantly more (n $= 88$, 30.1%) than Armstrong (n $= 39$, 13%).

Table 8

How professional athletes brand themselves on Twitter

| | | Professional Athlete | | | | Total | |
		Armstrong		Woods			
		Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Branding	No	261	87%	204	69.9%	465	78.5%
	Yes	39	13%	88	30.1%	127	21.5%
Total		300	100%	292	100%	592	100%

Discussion

By analyzing the consistencies and irregularities of the Twitter use of disliked professional athletes, this study aimed to further define what an athlete's blueprint to reputation recovery looks like. Previous literature (Dittmer, 2010; Hambrick, Frederick & Sanderson, 2013) suggested such athletes used Twitter to challenge competing media narratives, in turn compromising the media's role as agenda setter (Cohen, 1963). These athletes are overriding the journalist's traditional role as gatekeeper (Cassidy 2006), thus redefining selective exposure's impact in today's changing media landscape (Messing & Westwood, 2012). By following Goffman's (1959) model of self-presentation, heavily scrutinized professional athletes are using this new flow of information to promote images of self that bypass media misrepresentation. This research further concluded that such athletes use Twitter to unhinge their images from the association of negative press, but in fundamentally different ways.

Hambrick, Frederick and Sanderson (2013) already established Armstrong as a Twitter user that combats negative press by connecting his followers to his athletic commitment, personality and advocacy efforts. The results of this study further supported that claim, as Armstrong rarely addressed criticism on his Twitter page (1%). Based on an eyeball test, however, Armstrong exhibited potentially intentional efforts to avoid Twitter use during times of media scrutiny altogether. From September 17, 2012 to October 7, 2012, Armstrong Tweeted at least once per day during that twenty-one day span. That was followed by a twenty-nine day period (from October 8, 2012 to November 5, 2012) where Armstrong posted to his Twitter account just twelve times. As was previously stated, Armstrong was stripped of his seven Tour de France titles on

October 22, 2012 ("Lance Armstrong verdict upheld," 2012), leading the researcher to believe that avoiding Twitter use during that stretch was a pre-meditated attempt to evade undue media attention.

Armstrong followed that same pattern after admitting to doping during an interview with Oprah on January 17, 2013 (Albergotti & O'Connell, 2013). Armstrong Tweeted eight times from December 31, 2012 to January 8, 2013, before shutting it down altogether until February 9. After posting that one Tweet he went absent from Twitter again until March 16, before ripping off another streak of Tweeting at least once a day for sixteen consecutive days. Instead of creating competing media narratives, such behavioral examples of Armstrong's Twitter use during times of backlash and scrutiny indicated a high level of self-regulation. This is one less obstacle for Armstrong to overcome, as opposed to athletes like Johnson (Dittmer, 2010).

Instead of avoiding Twitter during periods of media scrutiny, Woods actually became increasingly active at times. After posting to his Twitter account just eleven times in the calendar leading up to April 13, 2013, Woods Tweeted five times on the day of his controversial ball drop at the Masters Golf Tournament (Crouse, 2013). In this instance he went out of his way to set his own agenda, using Twitter as a means of taking responsibility for his mistake before the media could in turn amplify and spin it. Woods posted only five more Tweets in the month that ensued, before Tweeting three more times on May 22, 2013 to address the derogatory comments made by Garcia (Harig, 2013).
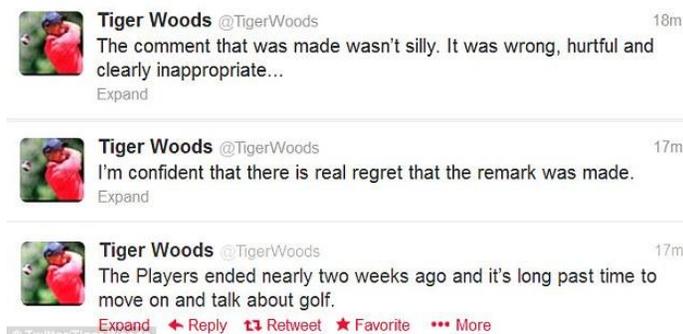
Tiger Woods takes to Twitter to defend himself (Woods, 2013).

Instead of avoiding the media spotlight, Woods ran to it to. He presumably did so to not only defend himself, but more importantly, to embrace the role of the victim. Woods, who is often labeled as a villain, saw Twitter as an avenue to start breaking away from the bad guy persona that has followed him around throughout the aftermath of his infidelity scandal (Farhi, 2010).

Woods was not considerably active on Twitter, but he was incredibly inventive in his attempts to use it as a means to create a direct connection with his fans (Robinson, 2009). On several occasions Woods set aside specific days to answer questions from his followers on Twitter, a strategy that accounted for more than one-third of his posts (35.3%). Albeit limited, another one-fourth of his Tweets indirectly acknowledged his fans (24.7%), indicating Woods' desires to be viewed as an approachable and likable athlete.

Conversely, Armstrong was much less focused on fan interaction. Instead he often used Twitter to share information with his followers (18.3%), demonstrating his understanding of Twitter's ability to directly link content between users (Sheffer & Shultz, 2010). Some of his Tweets were also directly tied to the athletic lifestyle he has maintained in the wake of his retirement from professional cycling (12%), further supporting Hambrick, Frederick and Sanderson's (2013) findings. By contrast, Woods

was much more intent on maintaining his image as a professional golfer (44.9%), thus deviating the attention away from his often heavily scrutinized personal life (Farhi, 2010).

Woods' Twitter persona was also heavily defined by his branding efforts. In nearly one-third of his posts (30.1%), Woods used Twitter to reference a brand or a sponsor, incorporating a strong dose of Johnson's image repair strategy into his own process (Dittmer, 2010). Because PepsiCo.'s Gatorade dropped Woods as a sponsor on February 26, 2010 (Steel, 2010), one could speculate that many of his efforts were compensatory in nature. Woods' Twitter presence heavily relied on the promotion of several other brands or sponsors, mimicking the online persona Johnson embraced in his path to recovery (Dittmer, 2010). Even Armstrong referenced comparable brands and sponsors with relative consistency (13%), supporting Dittmer's (2010) claim that, "[Johnson] stands as an exemplar of what can be and what is likely to be for hundreds of professional athletes in the NFL and other professional sports leagues as the tools of social media deteriorate the models of traditional media as gateway to the public/consumer" (p. 2).

Limitations

Because the research was constrained to just two athletes, the results of this study are coupled with obvious limitations. The study successfully showed how Armstrong and Woods use Twitter to combat negative press, but the results are not necessarily representative of all disliked professional athletes. In fact, they are not even representative of two athletes in similar stages of their careers. It begs to question how different the results would have been if Armstrong was still a professional cyclist, or if

Woods was a retired PGA pro.

Armstrong and Woods are also in different phases of repairing their respective images. Doping whispers have followed Armstrong for years, but some of his 300 Tweets were posted before his career was marred by his admission to cheating (Albergotti & O'Connell, 2013). Contrarily, Woods has been making strides to repair his image for nearly four years (Farhi, 2010). Only future research can truly determine how their Twitter personas will impact their continued efforts to reframe their damaged images.

Future Research

Since the statistical significance of the findings was limited, skeptical readers may wonder if the behavior of these athletes is at all indicative of a greater truth. That being the case, further research including a larger and more in-depth pool of professional athletes' Twitter use should be conducted.

As it stands now, there is also much room for future studies to examine the relationship between self-presentation and its increasingly important role amongst athletes on social media. To draw conclusions between the two, future studies must measure Twitter's impact on fans' likeness of scrutinized professional athletes. Polling fans that do and do not use Twitter about such athletes would quantify the successes of different self-presentation strategies. Comparing actual reporters' negative comments with the responses of the scrutinized athletes would also make for an effective content analysis. Furthermore, analyzing reporters' responses to the athletes' comments would determine potential changes in agenda, adding relevance to Cohen's (1963) findings in this paradigm shift of sports journalism (Sheffer & Schultz, 2010).

Conclusion

The results of this study further cement Twitter's increasingly significant role in the image repair process of professional athletes, in turn bolstering the findings of pre-existing literature (Dittmer, 2010; Hambrick, Frederick & Sanderson, 2013). As future studies regarding the self-presentation of professional athletes on Twitter contribute to this expanding pool of research, a blueprint to reputation recovery will begin to take shape. Without this roadmap, however, the image repair process remains undoubtedly cloudy for Armstrong and Woods.

It is worth restating that Armstrong and Woods occupy two of the three top spots on "The Top 10 Disliked Athletes in America" list for 2013, despite using Twitter to combat negative press. Vick, an NFL quarterback for the Philadelphia Eagles, ranks seventh on this year's list, just one year after holding the top spot in 2012. By contrast, Woods only dropped from No. 2 to No. 3 in the same calendar year. Despite returning to the top of the golf world in March 2013 ("Tiger returns to No. 1, wins Bay Hill," 2013), Woods has been largely unsuccessful in his attempts to shake his reputation as a liar and a cheater (Farhi, 2010). Even his branding efforts on Twitter (30.1%) could not salvage a fifteen year run with EA Sports, as the two sides mutually parted ways in the wake of declining video game sales (Kain, 2013). Based on Woods' branding efforts in 2013, however, there was foreshadowing of a looming divorce between the two parties. Woods' most recent Tweet directly referencing EA Sports reads, "Cool to have golf's greatest legends in this year's TWPGA14 from @EASPORTSGOLF. Take a look here: http://youtu.be/Xx0tIPqQbfQ," (Woods, 2013). This was posted on January 23, more than nine months before the two parties officially split. However Woods only made one

other indirect reference to his video game in the following months (January 23, 2013 -

July 4, 2013). By comparison, he made efforts to brand his shoes (3), foundation (2) and

app (2) at least twice during that same stretch, indicating a shift in focus with regards to

his branding strategy.

With less than a year separating Armstrong from his admission to doping, the

success of his road to recovery is seemingly even more difficult to predict. Despite the

years of speculated connections to doping, Armstrong largely evaded public suspicion

with adamant denial and charity (Van Riper, 2013). "So proud of what we've

accomplished together: The 15 Defining Moments of LIVESTRONG:

http://bit.ly/Q5XRvk #LIVESTRONG15," reads one of Armstrong's October 12, 2012

Tweets (Armstrong, 2012). Despite stepping down as the Chairman of the Livestrong

Foundation just five days later, it was only when he came clean during the Oprah

interview that his image took an irreversible blow (Albergotti & O'Connell, 2013). "By

cheating to win all those races, it's as if he didn't win them at all. There's no undoing that

(also unfortunate is the fact that the public doesn't seem moved by the 'everybody-does-

it-so-I-had-to' rationale)" (Van Riper, 2013, p. 1). With Armstrong's transgressions still

fresh in the minds of his fans and critics, it is difficult to forecast where he might end up

on next year's Forbes list - if at all.

Though Woods restored very little of his appeal from 2012 to 2013 (Van Riper,

2013), his drop from No. 2 to No. 3 demonstrates America's willingness to forgive and

forget; moreover, America's eagerness to replace one villain with the next. Either way,

Twitter provides an unfettered platform for athletes to expedite that process, in turn

making it critical to explore how elite professional athletes continue to utilize this new

medium. And because the results of this study overwhelmingly determined that neither

athlete used Twitter to address criticism (1.0%), analyzing how heavily scrutinized

professional athletes such as Armstrong and Woods do use Twitter, suddenly becomes

increasingly important to the understanding of the relationship between self-presentation

(Goffman, 1959) and an athlete's blueprint to reputation recovery.

References

Agenda Setting Theory. (2010, September 7). Retrieved March 22, 2012, from http://www.utwente.nl/cw/theorieenoverzicht/Theory%20Clusters/Mass%20Media/Agenda-Setting_Theory.doc/

Ahead of the curve: Multimedia and the future of sports journalism. (2010, August 5). Panel presentation at the national convention of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Denver, CO.

Albergotti, R. & O'Connell, V. (2013, January 18). *Lance Armstrong Admits to Doping, 'One Big Lie.'* Retrieved October 14, 2013, from http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887323468604578248582288523660.html

Armstrong, L. [lancearmstrong]. (2012, October 12). So proud of what we've accomplished together: The 15 Defining Moments of LIVESTRONG: http://bit.ly/Q5XRvk #LIVESTRONG15 [Tweet]. Retrieved from https://twitter.com/lancearmstrong

Baker, R. (2013, July 15). *Giants' Victor Cruz apologizes for tweet after George Zimmerman verdict*. Retrieved October 14, 2013, from http://www.northjersey.com/sports/Giants_Victor_Cruz_apologizes_for_tweet_after_George_Zimmerman_verdict.html

Banagan, R. (2011). THE DECISION, A CASE STUDY: LEBRON JAMES, ESPN AND QUESTIONS ABOUT US SPORTS JOURNALISM LOSING ITS WAY. *Media International Australia (8/1/07-Current)*, (140), 157-167.

Bortree, D. S. (2005). Presentation of self on the web: An ethnographic study of teenage girls' weblogs. *Education, Communication & Information, 5*, 25-39.

Cruz, V. [TeamVic]. (2013, July 14). I apologize, that's why I deleted it. I believe conversation not confrontation leads to change and progress. I never have and never will [Tweet]. Retrieved from http://www.northjersey.com/sports/Giants_Victor_Cruz_apologizes_for_tweet_after_George_Zimmerman_verdict.html

Cruz, V. [TeamVic]. (2013, July 14). advocate violence under any circumstances and I pray that we all encourage and educate each other. The death of Trayvon Martin is an [Tweet]. Retrieved from http://www.northjersey.com/sports/Giants_Victor_Cruz_apologizes_for_tweet_after_George_Zimmerman_verdict.html

Cruz, V. [TeamVic]. (2013, July 14). unthinkable tragedy that is any parent's worst nightmare. As a father, I want my daughter to grow up in a country that uses this tragedy to [Tweet]. Retrieved from http://www.northjersey.com/sports/Giants_Victor_Cruz_apologizes_for_tweet_after_George_Zimmerman_verdict.html

Cruz, V. [TeamVic]. (2013, July 14). heal and grow and progress. My prayers continue to go out to Trayvon Martin's family. [Tweet]. Retrieved from http://www.northjersey.com/sports/Giants_Victor_Cruz_apologizes_for_tweet_after_George_Zimmerman_verdict.html

Cassidy, W. P. (2006). Gatekeeping Similar For Online, Print Journalists. *Newspaper Research Journal*, *27*(2), 6-23.

Cohen, B. C. (1963). "The press and foreign policy." Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press p. 13.

Crouse, K. (2013, April 13). *After Two-Stroke Penalty, Woods Plays On*. Retrieved October 14, 2013, from http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/14/sports/golf/woods-faces-disqualification-at-augusta.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0

Davis, N. (2010, August 24). Bengals WR Chad Ochocinco fined $25,000 for using Twitter during game. *USA Today*. Retrieved March 22, 2012, from http://content.usatoday.com/communities/thehuddle/post/2010/08/bengals-wr-chad-ochocinco-fined-25000-for-using-twitter-during-game/1#.T2r3kMzBoy4

Dittmer, J. (2010). *The Ochocinco Brand: Social Media's Impact on the NFL's Institutional Control*. Unpublished manuscript, University of Oregon, Eugene, OR.

Farhi, P. (2010). LOST IN THE WOODS. *American Journalism Review*, *32*(1), 14-19.

Genovese, J. (2013). "Practicing promotion: A case study of a professional athlete's Twitter use." *Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Renaissance Hotel, Washington DC Online* <PDF>. November 19, 2013 from http://citation.allacademic.com/meta/p669876_index.html

Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. New York: DoubleDay.

Hambrick, M. E., Frederick, E. L., & Sanderson, J. (2013). From Yellow to Blue: Exploring Lance Armstrong's Image Repair Across Traditional and Social Media. *Communication & Sport, 2167479513506982*, first published on October 4, 2013.

Harig, B. (2013, May 22). *Garcia makes remark, apologizes*. Retrieved October 14, 2013, from http://espn.go.com/golf/story/_/id/9299934/tiger-woods-tweets-reply-sergio-garcia-fried-chicken-remark

Kain, E. (2013, October 29). *EA Parts Ways With Tiger Woods*. Retrieved November 21, 2013, from http://www.forbes.com/sites/erikkain/2013/10/29/ea-parts-ways-with-tiger-woods/

Kanalley, C. (2013, July 08). *LeBron James Reaction: Cleveland Fans React To Decision (TWEETS)*. Retrieved October 14, 2013, from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/07/08/lebron-james-reaction-cle_n_640294.html#s111994title=Not_No_1

Klapper, J. T. (1960). *The effects of mass communication*, p. 19, New York: Free Press.

Kozman, Claudia. "The Tiger Woods Scandal in the Media: Measuring Attribute Effects on the Public." *Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Chicago Marriott Downtown, Chicago, IL*, August 09, 2012. Retrieved September 29, 2013, from http://citation.allacademic.com/meta/p582344_index.html

Lance Armstrong verdict upheld. (2012, October 23). Retrieved October 14, 2013, from http://espn.go.com/olympics/cycling/story/_/id/8536389/uci-agrees-strips-lance-armstrong-7-tour-de-france-titles

Lever, J. & Wheeler, S. (1993). Mass media and the experience of sport. *Communication Research, 20*(1), 125-143.

Littlejohn, Stephen W. *Theories of Human Communication. Seventh Edition*. Albuquerque, New Mexico. Wadsworth, 2002.

McCombs, M. E., & Shaw, D. L. (1972). THE AGENDA-SETTING FUNCTION OF MASS MEDIA. Public Opinion Quarterly, 36(2), 176-187.

Meraz, S. (2008). The blogosphere's gender gap: Differences in visibility, popularity, and authority. In Paula Poindexter (Ed.), Women, men and news. New, York: Routledge.

Messing, S., & Westwood, S. J. (2012). Selective Exposure in the Age of Social Media: Endorsements Trump Partisan Source Affiliation When Selecting News Online. *Communication Research*.

Messing, S., Westwood, S. J., & Lelkes, Y. (2011). Online media effects: Social, not political, reinforcement. *Unpublished manuscript*. Stanford University. Palo Alto, CA.

Petner, T. (2009, September 2). *Twitter alights in TV newsrooms*. Retrieved March 22, 2012, from http://www.tvnewscheck.com/articles/2009/09/02/daily.1/?promo

Robinson, C. (2009, June 29). *NFL players among sports' leaders on Twitter*. Retrieved March 22, 2012, from http://sports.yahoo.com/nfl/news?slug=cr-tweet062909

Rosenberg, J. & Egbert, N. (2011). Online impression management: Personality traits and concerns for secondary goals as predictors of self-presentation tactics on Facebook. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 17*, 1-18.

Sanderson, J. (2010). Framing Tiger's troubles: Comparing traditional and social media. *International Journal of Sport Communication, 3*(4), 438-453.

Sanderson, J. (2011). *It's a whole new ballgame: How social media is changing sports*. New York: Hampton Press.

Schwartz, N. (2013, July 15). *Roddy White tells jurors in Zimmerman trial to 'kill themselves'*. Retrieved October 14, 2013, from http://www.ksdk.com/sports/article/388360/6/NFL-player-tweets-that-jurors-in-Zimmerman-trial-should-kill-themselves-

Sheffer, M.L., & Schultz, B. (2010). Paradigm Shift or Passing Fad? Twitter and Sports Journalism. *International Journal of Sport Communication*, 3, 472-484.

Skiles to Villanueva. No halftime tweets. (2009, March 18). Retrieved March 22, 2012, from http://sports.espn.go.com/nba/news/story?id=3990853

Steel, E. (2013, February 26). *Gatorade Drops Tiger Woods*. Retrieved November 19, 2013, from http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052748704625004575089980053007068

Stroud, N. (2008). Media Use and Political Predispositions: Revisiting the Concept of Selective Exposure. Political Behavior, 30(3), 341-366. doi:10.1007/s11109-007-9050-9.

Tiger returns to No. 1, wins Bay Hill. (2013, March 25). Retrieved November 21, 2013, from http://espn.go.com/golf/story/_/id/9096561/tiger-woods-back-world-no-1-golf-wins-arnold-palmer-invitational

Top 10 NFL Twitter Athletes. (2013, October 9). Retrieved October 9, 2013, from http://www.tweeting-athletes.com/TopAthletes.cfm?CatID=2

Van Der Heide, B., D'Angelo, J. D., Schumaker, E. M. (2012). The effects of verbal versus photographic self-presentation on impression formation in Facebook. *Journal of Communication, 62*, 98-116.

Van Riper, T. (2013, February 05). *America's Most Disliked Athletes*. Retrieved October 14, 2013, from http://www.forbes.com/sites/tomvanriper/2013/02/05/americas-10-most-disliked-athletes/

Vitak, J. (2012). The impact of context collapse and privacy on social network site disclosures. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media, 56*, 451-470.

Wauters, R. (2012, March 21). *First public tweet sent six years ago today*. Retrieved October 14, 2013, from http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/tech/news/story/ 2012-03-21/twitter-birthday/53684356/1

White, R. [roddywhiteTV] (2013, July 14). I understand my tweet last nite was extreme. I never meant for the people to do that. I was shocked and upset about the verdict. I am sorry. [Tweet]. Retrieved from http://www.ksdk.com/sports/article/388360/6/ NFL-player-tweets-that-jurors-in-Zimmerman-trial-should-kill-themselves-

Willingham, S. [silquee]. (2010, July 8). im not even mad @ the fact that lebron james im mad that he went on NATIONAL TELEVISION 2 do it like dude how ignorant is that smdh [Tweet]. Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/07/08/ lebron-james-reaction-cle_n_640294.html#s111994title=Not_No_1

Woods, T. [TigerWoods]. (2013, January 23). Cool to have golf's greatest legends in this year's TWPGA14 from @EASPORTSGOLF. Take a look here: http://youtu.be/Xx0tIPqQbfQ [Tweet]. Retrieved from https://twitter.com/ TigerWoods

Woods, T. [TigerWoods]. (2013, May 22). The comment that was made wasn't silly. It was wrong, hurtful and clearly inappropriate... [Tweet]. Retrieved from https:// twitter.com/TigerWoods

Woods, T. [TigerWoods]. (2013, May 22). I'm confident that there is real regret that the remark was made. [Tweet]. Retrieved from https://twitter.com/TigerWoods

Woods, T. [TigerWoods]. (2013, May 22). The Players ended nearly two weeks ago and it's long past time to move on and talk about golf. Retrieved from https:// twitter.com/TigerWoods