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Sports Fan Interaction: A Comparison of Teams to Determine the Common Thread Between Fan Engagement Across Social Media

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Sports Fan Interaction: A Comparison of Teams to Determine the Common Thread Between Fan Engagement Across Social Media

by

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Abstract

This study focused on the utilization of social media by collegiate athletic teams and how it relates to their interaction with their fan base. The aim of this study was to determine if a particular platform or post type gained the most fan interaction. The study also examined whether the men's or women's teams receive more interaction from fans. A random number generator selected three collegiate athletic teams from three different school in three conferences. Data was collected in the week leading up to the opening game. Ultimately, the results were not able to prove one type of post more likely to likes, shares, or retweets. Based on the results, men's teams do receive more interaction on social media than women's teams. No social media platform claimed the most likes, shares or retweets over the other. This study contributes to the field of social media analysis by revealing how collegiate athletics chooses to utilize social media and the effect it has on the fan base interaction.

Key Words: Honors College, collegiate athletics, undergraduate research, social media, thesis, fan interaction

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Chapter I. The Introduction

Social media has grown in its relevance to sports teams and their interactions with fans. There are dozens of collegiate teams with over 10,000 Twitter followers and even more teams with over 100,000 Facebook fans. For example, the NCAA football champion Clemson Tigers have 335,320 likes on its Facebook page. Geography or the particular sport involved may have an effect on how teams choose to interact with fans. The "Big Three" of social media are Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Facebook and Twitter fall into the category of social networking sites, which "exist worldwide and let individuals connect with each other and organizations that interest them" (Hlavac, 7). Instagram falls into the category of video connection sites, which serve a slightly different purpose. Instagram's focus is not on the captions, but rather the graphics and videos posted. Using videos and texts "fits better into their [users who follow accounts] multi-tasking day, quickly conveys ideas and thoughts, is more engaging, and easily remembered" (Hlavac, 8). Step one for success of a sports team's social media pages is strong content. It is important that the content shared and posted is valuable to the fans. The ideal goal of any social media manager or specialist is to provide content that reaches the audience of followers (Effing & Spil, 2016). This content should be so noteworthy that the audience shares it with their respective inner circles.

There are a number of trends that can be seen when collegiate accounts are examined on a more detailed level (Shih-Chia Chen, Duncan, Sweet & Hesterberg, 2016). Some collegiate teams post more frequently than others. There are accounts that focus on the team and the season as a whole, whereas others allow for fans to have one-on-one time with the athletes. These different types of posts may elicit different responses from fans. The current research addresses

two facets of sports teams' social media. One facet addresses the types of posts that get the most shares and likes, which is an asset to social media specialists in the future. The goal of social media accounts is to connect and engage with fans. The second facet comes into play when examining sports which receive a lot of national attention in comparison to a sport which receives less attention. The more popular sports and the less popular sports could both be using different tactics, which the other could benefit from and use to improve their own accounts. This study will examine the effectiveness of collegiate athletic department promotion of the teams on social media. The goal is to determine if there is a common thread that results in fans engaging on social media.

Chapter II. Literature Review

Overview of Social Media

Social media can be defined as "forms of electronic communication (as websites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (as videos)" (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2017). It can also be defined as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content" (Kaplan and Haenlein, 197). Social media allows for a single individual to have access to a plethora of information at his or her fingertips. It allows for one person to connect with thousands, and in some cases, millions, of other people. It allows for brands, companies, and organizations to get real-time feedback from the followers and customers (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Hlavac (2014) explains social media in the form of a pyramid with shallow discussions occurring at the top and deeper discussions at the bottom. Shallow discussions mean that the conversations are quick and short. Many times, there may not be conversation at all. Deeper is synonymous with length in terms of the conversations. "Social Network Sites" are at the very top of the pyramid. The social media that fall into this category include Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Tumblr and Google+ (Hlavac, 2014). Since it is the top of the pyramid, the conversations are the shortest of all other sites for each platform's respective reasons. These are the sites users go to in order to be redirected to other sites to engage. "News Aggregator Sites" are the second tier of the pyramid. This tier includes outlets like the Huffington Post, MSNBC, E-Journals, and e-magazines (Hlavac, 2014). Pinterest, StumbleUpon, Digg, and Reddit (Hlavac, 2014) make up the third tier of the pyramid, which are the "Passion Connection Sites." These sites are the ones sought out by the users who share similar passions about a specific topic. These sites focus on helping people make connections with other people who share similar interests.

Moving down the pyramid, discussions become more focused on the "Video Connections Sites" like Instagram, Vimeo, and Vine (Hlavac, 2014). The fast-paced world we live in today lends itself to messages found in short videos and pictures scrolled through. The final two tiers of the pyramid are where the deepest conversations occur. Each tier allows for long, drawn-out conversations among visitors and users. "Thought Leaders" encompasses blogs and e-newsletters (Hlavac, 2014). "Virtual Communities" are forums, bulletin boards, and content rich sites (Hlavac, 2014). Virtual Communities are similar to Passion Connection Sites, but on a much larger scale. They also form in a much less organized fashion since they are created based on a single person or small group wanting to confront something he, she or they feel strongly about (Hlavac, 2014).

Sports teams have, for several years, been using different social media outlets to target fans in different ways. Google+, which is a social network owned and operated by Google, is a new tool that some teams may use. Pinterest, a website where users can browse for every topic imaginable and then pin it (save it for later) in groups on their account page (to their board), is also being picked up by teams especially for female fans (Conlin, McLemore, & Rush 2014). Snapchat is a popular app that allows for people to send pictures ("snaps") to each other, which disappear after 10 seconds. Snapchat also allows for users to text in the chat with the option of saving the messages. One of the most-used features Snapchat has to offer is the 24-hour disappearing story. It's a snap that lasts 24 hours and is seen by all the friends of the user on the app. For the sake of this study, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram will be the focus (Billings, Qiao, Conlin, & Nie, 2017)

Facebook

Facebook was one of the first social networking sites to be launched. Today it is one of the most popular platforms people use (Marino, Vieno, Moss, Caselli, Nikčević & Spada, 2016). Created by Mark Zuckerberg, in the beginning stages in 2004, Facebook was only accessible to Harvard students. It slowly expanded to encompass more and more universities. It was not until late 2005 that Facebook opened up to high school students and corporate professionals (Philips, 2007). Shortly after, it was open to everyone. Facebook has grown to be a global social networking site with over one billion users (Phillips, 2007). Users have the option to share videos and pictures, as well as links. Facebook allows for instant messaging and has developed a separate mobile app for both Facebook and messaging for the convenience of its users. The website and the mobile app both are successful. Facebook is the most likely network to contain the largest number of people, making it easy for users to make connections. Facebook also offers

the convenience of almost everything other social media sights have in one convenient location (Phillips, 2007).

Twitter

Twitter, which began as a side project for co-founder Jack Dorsey, was launched in early 2006 (MacArthur, 2017). Twitter began as "twttr," the intent being for people to use it like texting, but in the form of status posts (MacArthur, 2017). Friends could keep up with each other based on short status updates, known as "tweets." In the early stages, Twitter was so popular that the site reached its maximum number of users. Twitter was constantly having to allow for more people to become users and create accounts. SMS messaging or short messaging service gained popularity in 2003 (Xu, Teo & Wang, 2003). The character limit on Twitter stems from SMS messaging, which, at the time, limited texts to only 140 characters (MacArthur, 2017). Twitter grew, but kept the character limit. It is currently both a mobile app and website. Twitter has over 200 million users today, who tweet text, links, images, and short six second videos. Twitter allows for users to connect with public icons easily by just tweeting at them using the group or individual's twitter handle, which is the account name (MacArthur, 2017).

Instagram

Instagram, now the number one photo social media platform, was the last of the "Big Three" to be launched, in late 2010. Within two months of the launch, Instagram had over one million followers (Desreumaux, 2015). Instagram is a very simple concept of users sharing short, typically thirty second, videos and pictures. It also offers users the ability to directly message each other as well as comment on posted photos. In 2013, Instagram added the tagging feature to

photos using each person's Instagram account name (Desreumaux, 2015). Instagram, within the past year, has introduced some recognizable features from other social media sites, such as the ability to like and a "LIVE" feature (Desreumaux, 2015). Following Snapchat's 24-hour disappearing story, Instagram released their own version of a disappearing story (Desreumaux, 2015). They also introduced a "LIVE" feature, just like Facebook, where users can interact with followers in real time. Instagram offers photos with very little text and no links to clutter the feed (Desreumaux, 2015). It is very visually appealing to its users. It has remained a predominately mobile app because of the nature of the features (Desreumaux, 2015).

Reasons to Share

It is almost impossible to not use social media with over 70% of all U.S. adults on some social networking sites (Smith, 2014). To create the best content possible, it is important to understand why people share. There are five core reasons why people are motivated to share content (Brett, 2011). The first is they believe the content being shared is of value to their followers and other users. If content is enlightening or entertaining, it is more likely to be shared. Examples of this type of motivation include sharing money-saving deals and information about products in an effort to motivate or change their opinion (Brett, 2011). The second motivation is definition of self, also known as creating and developing the online persona. We, as social media users, share content which aligns with how we want others to perceive us. It stems from our need, as humans, for validation (Brett, 2011). Validation is a third motivation for sharing. We, as humans, are constantly in search of self-fulfillment. People have compared sharing content without a reaction to the equivalent of giving a speech without applause at the end (Brett, 2011).

We enjoy sharing with our fellow social media users, and we like credit where and when credit is due (Brett, 2011). A fourth reason for motivation is relationships. We are, after all, humans who crave the connections that an often impersonal social networking site lacks. Sharing creates a platform for interaction that is sometimes the only way for two to stay connected. Families spread across the country utilize social media to keep up with the lives and happenings of each other (Brett, 2011). Consumers enjoy the content they see much more when they get to share it with others. One thing sharing allows for is new perspectives to be put on the table through comments that spark debate or offer suggestions. Through this, connections are formed and relationships are developed (Brett, 2011). The final motivation for sharing is people like to get the word out about causes they are passionate about.

Sharing Personas

There are six different personality types when it comes to sharing on social media (Brett, 2011). The first are altruists, who are motivated to share because of the value of the content. Altruists care about the people around them and want to make sure they are seeing the valuable content out there on the internet. This type of person also is motivated to share content pertaining to causes and brands they support. The second type of persona is a careerist, focused primarily on his or her career (Brett, 2011). The goal of the careerist is to develop his or her network both professionally and personally. Careerist want to spark discussion and debate in order to discern valuable recommendations and suggestions. The careerist will engage equally with the content shared to them.

The hipster is one who uses online sharing as part of his or her identity. He or she lives for debate and controversy (Brett, 2011). A hipster likes to be the start of the conversation, and they

are constantly searching for new content to share. He or she finds content with the intention of causing a reaction. Hipsters want to be found at the start of the conversation. The content they share will be earlier in the debate than other personas. Boomerangs are reaction-motivated sharers (Brett, 2011). This group is focused on generating likes and comments. For boomerangs, even a negative response is better than nothing. Connectors is the name of the fourth persona group. This is a self-explanatory group because their main goal is to connect (Brett, 2011). Their sharing habits are all about inclusion, so the content will be as relatable as possible. Connectors will be the ones to share coupons for stores or restaurants in order to create a connection with those looking for the specific coupons. The final sharing persona is the selective. This group is very focused in the content they share. This group will analyze and select particular content to target a particular recipient. Selectives expect a response, unlike other groups, because they took the time to tailor the message (Brett, 2011).

Athletics and Social Media

Athletic departments at colleges and universities are beginning to take advantage of various social media platforms to engage with the fans. When it comes to the fans, there are significant differences when it comes to how much different groups use social media. The younger followers of the teams are on social media much more than the older followers (Clavio & Walsh, 2014). Newspapers and other traditional forms are much more popular among the older fans (Clavio & Walsh, 2014). Team websites are another category dominated by older users. There simply appears to be a defining line between the generation prior to social media and the generation raised on it as far as which platform with which they choose to interact (Clavio & Walsh, 2014).

Sports organizations

It is almost impossible for sports organizations to maintain a fan base without some form of social media interaction (Tomko, 2011). There are athletic departments which demonstrate the use of social media for marketing and public relations. They use Facebook and Twitter for ticket giveaways, fan interaction, and feedback (Tomko, 2011). Social media requires these sports organizations to first understand their audience. The most common ways these organizations have used social media include hashtags, live tweets, and fan giveaways. Live tweets are perfect for fans who cannot watch the game in person because they get notifications sent straight to their phone. They can also log onto Twitter to follow the key plays from the game as they happen. Fan giveaways include social media challenges that result in things like signed gear and free tickets (Clapp, 2017).

Collegiate organizations

According to a recent poll, college football ranks third in popularity behind the National Football League and Major League Baseball (Nolte, 2013). One of the biggest factors affecting the college sports' audience is its age demographic. The largest age range is 18 to 24 years old for fans (McCarthy, 2013). These young fans are logging into social media accounts motivated by the need to socialize, be entertained, see and create a status for themselves, and find information (Clavio & Walsh, 2014). Collegiate organizations are using social media to live tweet and for free fan giveaways. Teams will also create a unique hashtag fans can use to show their support. They are also taking advantage of features like Google+ and Pinterest boards to bring a new level to the interaction. Colleges and universities' athletics have set up informal press conferences between fans and the team's key players. They're also appealing to the female

demographic by creating Pinterest boards titled “Dream Closet” with all different kinds of team paraphernalia. This study will examine how the use of social media differs by team and varies by location. It will examine how various collegiate teams interact and grow their fan base.

Chapter III. The Methodology

RQ1: Will the collegiate conference affect the number of posts on social media?

RQ2: Will the sport affect the number of posts on social media?

RQ3: Will there be more posts for the men’s or women’s teams?

RQ4: Which social media platform (Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram) will have the most posts?

RQ5: Which social media platform (Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram) will have the most interaction?

RQ6: Which types of posts do teams from each conference use?

RQ7a: Which types of posts will get the most likes?

RQ7b: Which types of posts will get the most shares?

RQ7c: Which types of posts will get the most retweets?

RQ8a: Will men’s or women’s teams get more likes?

RQ8b: Will men’s or women’s teams get more shares?

RQ8c: Will men’s or women’s teams get more retweets?

The current study employs a content analysis to examine the role of social media in collegiate athletics. Three different collegiate schools in three different collegiate conferences will be selected and their social media strategy will be examined. The current study will look at whether they utilize only one or multiple social media platforms. The men's team accounts will be compared to the women's team for each sport. The study will also determine if either men's or women's sports will be promoted more than the other. Most colleges with a men's and a women's team may have a separate account that sees similar traffic.

The week prior to the first game of the sport's respective season has been chosen for examination. This time was chosen because at that point each school and each team's efforts will be equal since no games have been played. Each school and each team is ranked on the same level for that upcoming season. Midseason will probably see a shift within ranks because there are teams winning more than others. Some schools and teams may decrease or increase their efforts depending on how the season is going. The end of most seasons will sometimes see an either intentional or unintentional lack of social media efforts. Fans will be most receptive to early season social media efforts because they are excited for what's to come.

Three conferences were selected for analysis: Conference USA (C-USA), the SEC Conference (SEC), and the Pac-12 Conference (Pac-12). C-USA was selected because it's positioned more at the bottom of all the conference rankings examined. The SEC was selected because it is at the top of most conference ranking charts. Pac-12 was found in the middle of the ranks on most lists. From there, a random number generator was used to pick the teams and sports for the study from each of these conferences. It gives the teams with less of a social media

presence that fly under the radar an equal opportunity to be selected for analysis as the well-known teams.

The conferences selected were supposed to provide a variety so as to ensure a fair comparison among the collegiate schools chosen within me. There are fourteen teams that make up Conference USA and SEC. There are only twelve teams that make up the Pac-12 Conference. Each team was assigned a number within their respective conference. A random number generator was used to select the single school for each conference. The random number generator selected Marshall from Conference USA, Vanderbilt from the SEC, and University of California, Berkeley from the Pac-12.

In order to compare the men's and women's team accounts, only sports which offered men's and women's teams in the same sport were included in the sample. There were four sports offered for men and women at Marshall and Vanderbilt. There were twelve sports offered for men and women at the University of California, Berkeley. A random number generator was used to select the sport to be included in the analysis. The resulting sample included Men's and Women's Golf at Marshall, Men's and Women's Basketball at Vanderbilt, and Men's and Women's Swimming & Diving at University of California, Berkeley.

During the week leading up to the season, the accounts of Marshall, Vanderbilt, and University of California, Berkley are monitored daily (screenshot for reference). The types of posts they choose, whether it be photos and videos or another type, will be coded, as well as the likes, shares, and retweets. This will be collected from the Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram accounts. See Appendix A for coding categories.

In Fall 2017 the social media accounts will be monitored across platforms for the week leading up to the opening of the season. All three sports—golf, basketball, and swimming and diving—have seasons that begin in the middle to the late Fall. The thesis will be written beginning in December 2017 and continue into Spring 2018. It will be finished by April. The final project will be submitted in Spring 2018 prior to graduation in May 2018.

Chapter IV. Results

Research Question 1 (RQ1) asked if the collegiate conference would affect the number of posts on social media. A chi-square test was used to analyze the results of the data. Total number of posts across all three conferences was 278. The SEC had 127 posts. Conference USA had 135 posts. The Pac 12 had 16 posts. There was significance with $x^2(2, N = 278) = 95.49$, $p < .001$. The answer to RQ1 is yes, the conference would affect the number of posts on social media.

Research Question 2 (RQ2) asked whether the sport would affect the number of posts on social media. A chi-square test was used to analyze the results of the data. The total number of posts across all three conferences was 278. There were 127 posts pertaining to basketball. There were 135 posts pertaining to golf. There were 16 posts pertaining to swimming and diving. There was significance with $x^2(2, N = 278) = 95.49$, $p < .001$. The answer to RQ2 is yes, the sport would affect the number of posts on social media.

Research Question 3 (RQ3) asked if there would be more posts for the men's or women's teams. A chi-square test was used to analyze the results of the data. The total number of posts, male and female, was 278. There were 156 posts pertaining to the men's teams and 122 posts pertaining to the women's teams. There was significance with $x^2(1, N = 278) = 4.16$, $p = .041$. The answer to RQ3 is there are more posts for men's teams than women's teams.

Research Question 4 (RQ4) was proposed to determine if a particular social media platform (Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram) would have the most posts. A chi-square test was used to analyze the results of the data. There were a total of 278 posts on the platforms used (Facebook and Twitter). Facebook had 132 posts. Twitter had 146 posts. There was not significance with $x^2(1, N = 278) = .71$, $p = .401$. The answer to RQ4 is no, there isn't a particular social media platform to have the most posts.

Research Question 5 (RQ5) was proposed to determine which social media platform (Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram) will have the most interaction. A One-way ANOVA test was used to analyze the results of the data. The mean likes in total, across all platforms used (Facebook and Twitter) was 59.39 (SD = 81.50). The mean likes for Facebook was 78.67 (SD = 91.93). The mean likes for Twitter was 41.97 (SD = 66.42). There was significance with $F(1, 276) = 14.76$, $p < .001$. The answer to RQ5 is Facebook received more interaction via likes.

Research Question 6 (RQ6) asked about the types of posts teams use from each conference. A chi-square test was used to analyze the results of the data. The results are shown in Table 6.1.

Conference*Type of Post Crosstabulation

Count

		TypeofPost					
		Post about season	Post about opening game/event	Post about conference/standings within the conference	Post about sport	Interactive post	Total
Conference	SEC	22	39	9	20	37	127
	Conference USA	21	6	0	9	99	135
	PAC 12	0	2	0	5	9	16
Total		43	47	9	34	145	278

Table 6.1 Results of Research Question 6: Which types of posts do teams from each conference use?

There was significance with $x^2(1, N = 278) = 74.35$, $p < .001$. The answer to RQ6 is interactive posts are the most popular post type used by each conference.

Research Question 7a (RQ7a) was proposed to examine which types of posts would get the most likes. A One-way ANOVA test was used to analyze the results of the data. The mean number of likes across all platforms used (Facebook and Twitter) was 59.39 (SD = 81.50). The highest mean number of likes was 94.78 (SD = 57.70) for posts about the conference/standings within the conference. The second highest mean number of likes was 76.97 (SD = 95.14) for posts about the sport in general. The mean number of likes for posts about the season was 63.34 (SD = 96.88). The mean number of likes for interactive posts was 58.52 (SD = 82.23). The mean number of likes for posts about game/event was 38.98 (SD = 47.51). However, there was not significance with $F(4, 273) = 1.60$, $p = .175$. The answer to RQ7a is there isn't a type of post which receives the most likes.

Research Question 7b (RQ7b) was proposed to examine which types of posts would get the most shares. A One-way ANOVA test was used to analyze the results of the data. The mean number of shares on Facebook was 16.88 (SD = 41.46). The highest mean number of shares was 20.55 (SD = 52.19) for interactive posts. The second highest mean number of shares was 18.07 (SD = 42.10) for posts about the sport in general. The mean number of shares for posts about the season was 12.53 (SD = 21.13). The mean number of shares for posts about conference/standings within the conference was 10.60 (SD = 13.11). The mean number of shares for an opening game/event was 7.00 (SD = 9.34). However, there was not significance with $F(4, 78) = .23$, $p = .919$. The answer to RQ7b is there isn't a type of post which receives the most shares.

Research Question 7c (RQ7c) was proposed to examine which types of posts would get the most retweets. A One-way ANOVA test was used to analyze the results of the data. The mean number of retweets on Twitter was 15.93 (SD = 27.74). The highest mean number of retweets was 29.25 (SD = 25.20) for posts about the conference/standings within the conference. The second highest mean number of retweets was 19.37 (SD = 33.82) for interactive posts. The mean number of retweets for posts about the sport was 17.11 (SD = 18.77). The mean number of retweets for posts about the season was 10.81 (SD = 16.98). The mean number of retweets for posts about the opening game/event was 8.54 (SD = 15.79). However, there was not significance with $F(4, 190) = 1.61$, $p = .173$. The answer to RQ7c is there isn't a type of post which receives the most retweets.

Research Question 8a (RQ8a) asked if men's or women's sports will get more likes. A One-way ANOVA test was used to analyze the results of the data. The mean number of likes for males and females was 59.39 (SD = 81.50). The mean number of likes was 68.56 (SD = 91.03) for males and 47.67 (SD = 65.92) for females. There was significance with $F(1, 276) = 4.56$, $p = .034$. The answer to RQ7c is men's teams receive more likes then women's teams.

Research Question 8b (RQ8b) asked if men's or women's sports will get more shares. A One-way ANOVA test was used to analyze the results of the data. The mean number of shares for males and females was 16.88 (SD = 41.46). The number of shares was 17.75 (SD = 46.98) for males and 14.75 (SD = 23.62) for females. However, there was no significance with $F(1, 81) = .088$, $p = .767$. The answer to RQ7c is neither team receives more shares than the other.

Research Question 8c (RQ8c) asked if men's or women's sports will get more retweets. A One-way ANOVA test was used to analyze the results of the data. The mean number of

retweets for males and females was 15.93 (SD = 27.74). The number of retweets was 18.06 (SD = 31.69) for males and 13.83 (SD = 23.16) for females. However, there was no significance with $F(1, 193) = 1.137$, $p = .288$. The answer to RQ7c is neither team receives more retweets than the other.

Chapter V. Discussion

Today, athletic departments at colleges and universities are beginning to understand the importance and take advantage of social media platforms when engaging with their fans. The "Big Three" in social media is the term given to Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. These are the most popular sites for users to be on. If someone is active on social media, they more than likely have at least one of these accounts. Some collegiate athletics teams will use all three, and other teams will invest their resources in only one or two. It's also important for these teams to know their fan base and know who their message is reaching most often. If the accounts of collegiate athletics teams are posting strong, valuable content that is of interest and tailored to this age range, then collegiate athletics has the potential to play a monumental role in the recruitment and retention of students.

The current research focused on how three different sports team's utilization of the "Big Three" connected with the interaction with and growth of the fan base. The data collected in the week leading up to the opening event of each sport's respective season revealed that Instagram was not a social media outlet chosen by these teams. This could be due to the nature of Instagram itself. Facebook and Twitter fall into the category of social networking sites, which "exist worldwide and let individuals connect with each other and organizations that interest[s] them" (Hlavac, 7). Instagram falls into the category of video connection sites, which serve a slightly

different purpose. Instagram's focus is not on the captions, but rather the graphics and videos posted. Using videos and texts "fits better into their [users who follow accounts] multi-tasking day, quickly conveys ideas and thoughts, is more engaging, and easily remembered" (Hlavac, 8).

Within the findings of this research, it's important to note that there are more posts for men's teams than women's teams. Also, posts about men's sports received more likes than women's sports. Going more in depth, the analysis was of both the men's and women's accounts of the collegiate sport. The study examined Marshall's Golf teams, UC Berkeley's Swim and Dive teams, and Vanderbilt's Basketball teams. For each sport, there was an active Twitter and Facebook account. Neither team utilized Instagram actively. In my research, it was evident that when it came to using social media, male and female sports teams aligned almost parallel. My results reported that regardless of the sport, school, or conference, interactive posts were the most popular choice for social media. Male and female sports teams have the right idea in wanting to engage and connect with their fans.

In order for collegiate sports teams to better use social media, they must first have an understanding of what social media is. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines social media along the lines of forms of electronic communication which allow for users to create online communities where they can share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content. Social media is a powerful tool which allows for one individual to connect with millions at his or her fingertips. Fans log on to be entertained and socialize while finding the information they desire. Facebook offers the convenience of almost everything other social media sites have in one convenient location (Phillips, 2007). Twitter is a lot of entertainment and information summarized to get straight to the point in 140 characters or less. Instagram is the number one photo social media platform with the unique emphasis being on the photos and not text.

(Desreumaux, 2015). Collegiate sports teams need to know their audience well enough to be able to determine which platforms they should invest in.

Some colleges and universities are well-known and some sports are more recognizable. These well-known universities and sports will more than likely take a different approach in how they implement social media tactics than a smaller school or a sport few have actually heard of. It is important to note that even if the more popular sports and well-known schools are implementing different tactics than the less popular sports and a lesser-known school, either could potentially benefit from and use each other's tactics to improve their own accounts. My results reported there to be no specific type of post that received more likes, shares, or retweets over another, but interactive posts were most commonly noted overall.

Chapter VI. Conclusion

Nowadays, over 70% of all U.S. adults are on some social networking sites (Smith, 2014). Social media is ever-changing and needs to be able to be responsive when there's a shift. If a particular type of strategy or tactic isn't generating the interaction and engagement it is supposed to, then things need to change. Collegiate sports teams need to be on social media posting both consistent and relevant content. Word of mouth is a powerful entity for a team to have on its side allowing the post to be seen and the message received by a significantly larger number of people. Content must be noteworthy enough to compel fans to share it.

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Appendix A

Conference

1-SEC

2- Conference USA

3- Pac 12

School

1- Vanderbilt

2- Marshall

3- UC Berkeley

Sport

1- Basketball
2- Golf
3- Swimming & Diving

Gender

1-Male

2- Female

Social Media

1- Facebook

2- Instagram

3- Twitter

Type of post

1- Post about season
2- Post about opening game/event
3- Post about conference/standings within the conference
4- Post about sport
5- Interactive post

Likes

[enter as number]

Shares

[enter as number]

Retweets

[enter as number]

Date

[enter as date]