

TWITTER'S IMPACT ON SPORTS MEDIA RELATIONS

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ABSTRACT

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The introduction of Social Media (SM) into sports communications in professional leagues is disrupting the traditional methods of sports media relations. In the past, teams used websites to post information for fans, but it was strictly a one-way format of communication whereby a story was posted for fans to read. To fully engage with this new communication channel, the sports communications departments in professional leagues have begun to use SM to communicate directly with fans through platforms like Twitter and Facebook. Currently, SM like Twitter allows the team communication departments to communicate directly with fans in an interactive two-way format that is not mediated by a reporter or someone from a traditional media outlet. In addition, the open format of SM means that media relations staff are no longer the only intermediary between the media and the players; through the use of SM like Twitter, a professional athlete can now communicate directly to fans without gatekeepers like the media or the sports communications department of the team.

This thesis will explore how SM has changed media relations from several different perspectives. The first perspective is related to the risks that are associated with the use of SM by professional athletes: without an intermediary or a filter for athlete-fan communication, many athletes have caused irreparable damage to their reputation and the reputation of their team. The second perspective is related to the benefits for teams that use SM as a platform to connect with fans: the ability to connect with fans using SM is new to sports communications and represents an interactive one-to-one and one-to-many mode of communication through which the fan can directly communicate with the team. Finally, this research will look at how Twitter has changed media relations in sports from the perspective of the lived experiences of people who work in sports media.

To explore the risks associated with athletes' use of social media, this research used Situational Crisis Communication Theory as a theoretical framework to explore reputation-

damaging incidents that occurred through social media. The study reviewed national media stories reported in North America from 2009 to 2010 that were perceived to have negative impact on athletes' reputation. In total, 17 incidents were reviewed — seven incidents in particular demonstrated the athlete as the source of the SM crisis. Through the review and categorization of these 17 situations, the study was able to identify four broad categories of situations that a sports communication manager needs to be prepared for. The four categories identified were “Rookie Reporter”, “Team Insider”, “Opportunist”, and “Imposter”. Each of these categories are invaluable for team communication managers to recognize in order to address the risks associated with social media.

To explore the benefits associated with the communications department's use of social media, this research used Uses and Gratification theory as a theoretical framework to explore how and why fans followed team Twitter accounts. This study was conducted in partnership with the Canadian Football League (CFL) and a total of 526 people responded to an online survey that was tweeted out to them for their feedback. The results of the survey indicated several significant findings — in particular, the phenomenon of *converged* sports fan consumption was identified, which has not been previously acknowledged in academic research. The phenomenon of converged sports fan refers to the multi-screen environment whereby a sports fan decides where, when, and how they want to consume sporting content.

This research identified that in-game consumption of SM while watching television and the mobile consumption of SM are both dominant ways for fans to interact with their teams. This multi-modal format of connecting with the team supports the idea of Henry Jenkins's Black Box Fallacy (2006, p. 13): as teams move forward in developing communications platforms to reach their fans, they will need to recognize that all channels can and do work together.

In order to further understand how Twitter has changed sports media relations, the study used long semi-structured interviews with a phenomenological research design to understand how Twitter has impacted sports media relations. The phenomenological analysis

of the informant interviews suggested that Twitter is the source of three themes of change: general media relations, mechanical job functions, and other changes specific to sports media relations.

The significance of Twitter's impact on sports media relations cannot be understated. With the ubiquitous use of SM like Twitter, it is important to understand how sports media relations can use SM to manage the image of their respective teams and athletes. After looking at SM and sports from three different perspectives, the pivotal finding was the role that Twitter and mobile communications play in 'flattening' sports media relations. Similar to how Friedman (2006) argued that the convergence of the personal computer drove globalization, Twitter and the increased adoption of mobile communications have flattened the role of sports media relations. This research will explain how the flattening of sports media relations happened and what the implications might be for sports media professionals.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

It was March 18, 2009, and the National Basketball Association (NBA)'s Milwaukee Bucks were playing their rival Boston Celtics. Milwaukee was desperately trying to hold onto the final playoff spot in the Eastern Conference and had to win the game. At halftime, the Milwaukee star forward Charlie Villanueva tweeted from his mobile phone in the locker room: "In da locker room, snuck to post my twit. We're playing the Celtics, tie ball game at da half. Coach wants more toughness. I gotta step up" (Stein, 2009).

The Milwaukee Bucks ended up winning the game 86-77 and Villanueva finished with a team-high 19 points, however, the result of the game was secondary. The primary concern, which garnered more media attention, was that Villanueva tweeted from a locker room during a game. That simple 113-character tweet would be featured in national television, print, and radio press. Within the world of sports, tweeting during a game was argued as a good and a bad activity. In the case of Villanueva, coach Scott Skiles expressed that "anything that gives the impression that we're not serious and focused at all times is not the correct way we want to go about our business" (Associated Press, 2009b). Unlike the traditional media model that used a journalist or team media person as an intermediary, an athlete can use Twitter to communicate ('tweet') directly to their fans. As the moments before, during, and after games are emotional times for athletes, tweeting during any of these time periods has the potential to create situations where an athlete does not think before they tweet, releasing sensitive player information or injury status updates that were not intended to be released.

Although teams and leagues cannot control what players do on SM platforms, they have started to introduce guidelines and punishments for athletes who use SM inappropriately. As an example, the NBA, the National Football League (NFL), and the National Hockey League (NHL) have all introduced SM-use guidelines that prevent players, team personnel, and game operations staff from using SM for a designated time period

before, during, and after games. These guidelines are designed to protect the images of the player and avoid occurrences of an athlete sending something inappropriate.

Professional sports teams and managers are all too familiar with similar versions of the aforementioned incident with Villanueva. Although SM use has the potential to damage a team's image, the adoption and use of SM by athletes, sports media, and celebrities to connect with fans is growing (Marobella, n.d.). For example, there are positive situations like Shaquille O'Neal's tweets from the streets that promote his team and image when he gives tickets away. Similar to how Boyle and Haynes (2009) described the World Wide Web (WWW) as a game changer, SM is currently becoming a game changer that shifts the power and influence from traditional media to users of social media. SM allows athletes and teams to connect directly with fans without being mediated by a reporter who represents a traditional media organization, creating a new category within the growing body of research that Wenner (1998b) has called *mediasport*.

Less than 15 years after the first SM site SixDegrees.com started, there has been an explosion in the number of SM sites and users of SM (D. Boyd & Ellison, 2007). As of 2012, the social medium Facebook has over 500 million users ("Facebook Fact Sheet," 2011) while Twitter has over 200 million active users ("Twitter Stats," 2011). In addition, the speed of adoption for these SM platforms was achieved in record time: Facebook took five years to gather 500 million users and Twitter took six years to have 200 million users. In comparison, it took radio 37 years to get 50 million users and television 13 years to get 50 million users (Auletta, 2010). Thus, the rate of adoption of SM has surpassed that of any prior media platform. SM such as YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook are shifting the responsibilities and roles of traditional sports communication management.

The purpose of this research is to explore how SM is impacting the practice of sports media relations. While recent research has examined the use of SM by athletes, limited research has been conducted that explores management issues related to SM and sports communications. From a business perspective, all teams in the four major North American

sports leagues now use the SM platforms Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. For example, the Los Angeles Lakers has over 10 million followers on Facebook and 2 million followers on Twitter, as well as thousands of videos posted on YouTube (Coyle, 2011). From a player perspective, the website www.twitterathletes.com reports that there are 4,691 athletes using Twitter. It has been estimated that approximately one in three professional athletes publicly uses Twitter (Biderman, 2009). Messages about sports celebrities in SM sites like Twitter and Facebook have been the source of numerous news stories published through mainstream media (Clavio, 2008b; Marobella, n.d.; Pew Research Center, 2008; Solove, 2007). Clearly, SM has presented an opportunity to further understand how this new online platform affects media in a sports context.

As a discipline of research, the study of sport and media is relatively new. From an academic perspective, the 1998 publishing of *MediaSport* by Lawrence Wenner was one of the first and most comprehensive collections of research about sports and media. Blain and Bernstein (2000) argued that sports and media have emerged as a significant field of research within the academic community. As a research field, sport and media encompasses many disciplines including sociology, gender studies, leisure studies, and media studies. While the study of sport and media is a relatively new discipline, SM is an even newer thread within the sport and media research theme.

The study of new media and sport has been covered extensively by Boyle and Haynes (2004) in their book *Football in the New Media Age*, which offers a European football perspective to issues of new media in sports. Most recently, Hutchins and Rowe (2012), in their book *Sport Beyond Television: the Internet, Digital Media and the Rise of Networked Media Sport*, also covered new media and sport. From an academic journal community, recent special issues for the *International Journal of Sports Communication* (IJSC) covered topics such as new media and social networking (Clavio, 2010) and Twitter (J Sanderson, 2012). In later chapters of this research, these publications will be discussed and reviewed. While SM is a new element of media sport, it is also an emerging thread of research in almost

all business disciplines: SM has impacted many sectors of society and business including healthcare, tourism, politics, and law. Yet the start date of SM is debated in the literature: some suggest that it started with SixDegrees.com in 1997 (D. Boyd & Ellison, 2007), whereas others suggest that it started in 1969 with “Open Diary” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Forrester Research suggests that mainstream adoption took place between 2007 and 2008 when Internet surfers who used SM reportedly increased from 56% to 75% (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

It will take years of research to understand the impacts that SM has had on media and sport. The aforementioned research in IJSC discussed athletes’ use of social media, digital branding, user-generated content, female athletes, and student athletes. Currently, there is no research from the perspective of SM as it is being used by professional sports teams in North America. Prior to the Internet and social media, teams and players would communicate with fans through reporters who would mediate discussions to fit the format and needs of their businesses. With the advent of the Internet and social media, teams have much more control on how and when they communicate with their fans.

The definition of SM has been used interchangeably with terms like Web 2.0, social network systems, and User-Generated Content. Web 2.0 is a term coined by Internet guru Tim O’Reilly in 2005 to describe open-shared software that runs on web platforms and harnesses the collective intelligence of data. Web 2.0 software can range from tools for sharing and networking with friends, like Friendster, to online encyclopaedias like Wikipedia (O’Reilly, 2005). The term social network systems is similar to Web 2.0, but specifically refers to an open-based online software designed to connect people in a public or semi-public way (D. Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Finally, User-Generated Content has been described by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development as having three key characteristics: publicly available, a creative effort, and created outside of professional routine or practice.

For the purpose of this research and to clarify a definition for readers, terms such as User-Generated Content, Web 2.0, and social networking sites will not be used. The term ‘SM’ will be used instead to refer to popular social networking sites such as YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, and blogs. While other popular SM sites are in use, reference to these three sites is most popular within a professional sports context. The term SM will be defined as publicly available Internet-based software where fans, athletes, teams, and organizations can post comments, feedback, and original thoughts to be shared with a closed or open network of people.

One of the issues while researching SM is the rate of adoption and change. For example, in 2006 MySpace was the first SM site to reach 50 million users, and in 2007, it had 114 million users versus Facebook’s 52 million. However, in 2008 MySpace was surpassed by Facebook: it had only 3 million new users for a total of 117 million, while Facebook added 80 million users to total 132 million users. In less than 12 months, Facebook superseded the market-leading SM site MySpace, and today, MySpace is not used by professional sports teams. This issue of rapid change is relevant for discussion because the average PhD takes 3 to 4 years to complete. For this reason, a slightly different approach will be taken to convey the impact of SM on sport.

To ensure that this research is as current as possible and fits within the landscape of media and sport, a chapter-based conceptual framework will be used. Similar to *MediaSport* and digital media editions previously discussed, each chapter will provide more insight into how SM is reshaping media sport. Within each chapter, different methods, questions, literature reviews, analysis, and discussion will be presented. The collection of a series of shorter chapters will allow the researcher to unveil several instances of how SM is reshaping the management of sports communications.

While the roots of SM can be traced back more than ten years, its establishment as a popular culture vehicle has only occurred in the past few years. For this reason, this research will not attempt to test any hypothesis or use a pre-existing theory to explain the management

of SM in sports. In order to explore SM and sports, an inductive approach to reasoning will be used as opposed to a deductive approach. The inductive approach has been chosen because it is used to observe phenomena whereas the deductive approach is used to test phenomena. Furthermore, an inductive approach is more appropriate to use when explaining new ideas and expanding knowledge about a topic. In keeping with the inductive approach, the research will use more exploratory research approaches than explanatory research approaches.

The purpose of this research is personally motivated by the researcher Chris Gibbs. I spent eight years of my career in professional sports with Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment during the introductory years of the Internet and SM. While each of the core chapters of the research may have specific research questions, the overarching research aims to understand how SM has changed management of sports communications.

Ultimately, this research will attempt to provide insight into professional sports teams' use of SM platforms. To explore this question, the researcher has partnered with the CFL to access fans and measure Twitter usage. It is the hope of the researcher that the findings can be used by the CFL and other sports enterprises to improve their use of SM as a form of fan communication and marketing.

Chapter two will present a historical overview of the relationship between sports and media in the United States and Canada, investigating some of the previous research that has engaged with sports and media. The focus of this chapter will be to further the understanding of how different traditional and new media technologies have impacted the business of sports. This chapter will map out the various theoretical and analytical influences that established media and sports as a major academic research theme.

Chapter three will further explore the media sport phenomenon by looking at the impacts of SM. This chapter will provide a brief history of SM platforms and the impacts they are having on society. This chapter will also review how sport has re-shaped and changed with the introduction of SM.

Chapter four will review the history and role of sports communication within a professional sports context. By examining the role and history of sports communication, this chapter will allow the researcher to better understand and explain how the role has changed because of social media.

Due to the exploratory nature of this social science research, a multi-method research approach was used. Chapter five will review the multi-method approach to demonstrate how to build a research program that includes both qualitative and quantitative projects.

Chapter six explores the risks associated with the use of SM by athletes. This chapter will identify crisis and reputation management practices within SM and sports. In order to frame the practices, a review of national media coverage from January 2009 to June 2010 was conducted. Situational Crisis Communication Theory was used to categorize the sources of risk.

Chapter seven will use an online Uses and Gratification framework to understand the benefit of SM from a fan or follower's perspective. The CFL teams will send out a survey link to their Twitter followers in order to learn what motivates them to use the medium. Although Uses and Gratification is an effects-based research strategy, it not as heavily used as content-based research in the study of sport and media (Kinkema & Harris, 1998). Thus, this chapter will be a major contribution to the business of sports and media, as it will provide practitioners with a new format for understanding the motivations of their Twitter follower communities.

The last study conducted within the multi-method research included semi-structured long interviews with sport media practitioners in North America. Chapter eight uses phenomenological research methods to understand how Twitter has impacted media relations in sports. This chapter will be one of the first considerations of how Twitter is changing sports media relations.

The final chapter will pull together the findings of all chapters and identify key issues for communications managers in professional sports. The empirical evidence supports the

statement that Twitter is the dominant SM platform in sports that has caused paradigm shifts in the management of sports media relations and flattened the sports media hierarchy.

CHAPTER 2

SPORT AND MEDIA: HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Sport and media have shared a mutually beneficial, symbiotic relationship since Joseph Pulitzer, the publisher of the New York World, started the very first newspaper with a sport editor in the 1890s: the business of sport benefits from the attention that media provides and media benefits from the revenue generated by the audience that sport attracts. Prior to the Internet and other digital platforms, the distribution of sports content was traditionally controlled and managed by broadcasters, journalists, and other members of traditional media (Hutchins & Rowe, 2012). With the launch of the Internet and team-based websites in the late 1990s, teams started to distribute content directly to fans rather than through traditional media. A further shift happened with the introduction of SM applications like YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook.

This chapter will use key milestones in media history to explore how different shifts in media influenced the business of sport. Through the Internet and SM applications, sports fans developed the ability to engage with sports through a one-to-one, one-to-many, or many-to-many platform (Boyle & Haynes, 2004). This medium has shifted the power from traditional sport media to sports teams, players, and fans that now have the capacity to create and distribute their own content.

The Beginning of MediaSport

In order to demonstrate the effect of SM in this context, it will be useful to outline the general history of sports media. This chapter will examine many notable scholars that explored the interactions between sport and media including Raymond Boyle, Rick Gruneau, Richard Haynes, Toby Miller, Robert McChesney, and Garry Whannel. In addition, two collections of research published as *MediaSport* (Wenner, 1998a) and *Critical Readings: Sport, Culture and Media* (Rowe, 2004) were comprised of academic studies that also attempted to define the relationship between sports and media.

In Wenner's *MediaSport* (1998), the research articles mostly featured a North American group of scholars. Among the 27 scholars featured, only four were not from the

United States: two of them were from Canada and the other two were internationally recognized sports media scholars – David Rowe from Australia and Gary Whannel from Britain. In total, there were 17 different and distinct chapters in the book, providing multiple perspectives to explain how sport and the media became linked and how they broadly impact different stakeholders. For example, Whitson (1998) argues that professional sport was a new kind of integration in the media and entertainment industries, using examples like the vertical integration of owners and distributors of media to illustrate how sports and media became intertwined. Specifically, he noted that large media empires like Disney were becoming owners of the NHL's Anaheim Mighty Ducks, and that news corporations were purchasing the National Football League's (NFL) broadcast rights. Whitson (1998) also argues that:

The most important development in the sports business followed from the rapid deployment of pay-tv technologies, technology and corporate developments that point towards tighter vertical integration in the communications and infotainment industries (p. 67).

In contrast to Wenner's (1988) *MediaSport*, Rowe's (2004) *Sport, Culture and the Media: The Unruly Trinity* included an international portion to the publication or, as Rowe refers to it, an Anglo-American-Antipodean concentration. In this publication, there were 19 distinct chapters with 30 different scholars' contributions – notably, only eight of the scholars were not from the United States. From Rowe's perspective, to develop a critical understanding of sport, culture, and the media, a researcher must take an analytical structure to production, text, and audience (Rowe, 2004). In their historical survey of studies in *MediaSport*, Kinkema and Harris (1998) note that:

Work on sport and the mass media concerns three major topics: production of mediated sport texts, messages or content of mediated sport texts and audience interaction with mediated sports texts... but at the outset it is important to acknowledge the lack of clear demarcation between them. Considerable overlap exists and certainly it is difficult and somewhat artificial to discuss them separately, although efforts are made to explore linkages (p. 27).

In an afterword, Rowe suggests that the relationship between sport and media will continue to evolve as new technologies transform the process of production. The relationship between sport and media have changed drastically over the past 100 years; examples of how

technologies have impacted sport can be traced from the introduction of traditional media such as newspaper, radio, and television to the innovations provided by digital platforms such as online and mobile social media. McChesney (1989) states how “virtually every surge in the popularity of sports has been accompanied by a dramatic increase in the coverage provided by the media” (p. 49).

Many scholars suggest that sport and media share a symbiotic relationship (Boyle & Haynes, 2009; McChesney, 1989; Rowe, 1996). Sport has become an integral part of media and culture (Hutchins & Rowe, 2009). In fact, the relationships are so intertwined that we can now see sports as media or, as Wenner (1998) calls it, MediaSport. Sport has benefited from the attention that media provides and media has benefited from the audience that sport attracts; however, as with any business relationship, the real driver is the capitalistic pursuit of profit by owners of both sport and media (Boyle & Haynes, 2009). For example, sport generates direct revenue from media and media generates advertising revenue from the audience that sport provides. In order to better understand the impact of SM on MediaSport, a historical look at traditional media and new media will be conducted — similar to the approach of using general history within media to understand new media that was explored by Boyle and Haynes (2004). Due to the global nature of sport and the narrow approach required for this research, the historical review will focus on North America.

Impacts of Traditional Media on Sport

Traditional media is a relatively new term used to identify pre-Internet media, which represents a time span of over 100 years. While no formal definition has been provided for the term ‘traditional media’, in the context of this research it will represent all media related to newspaper, film, radio, and television. While other forms of media such as billboards, magazines, and outdoor advertising could be considered, the historical review provided will focus only on these four traditional media. The focus is limited to these four because they have been the most influential to the business of sport for the past 100 years, and have also been investigated on a scholarly basis.

Newspaper. Newspaper is the oldest medium for informing people about sports. Newspapers helped facilitate the commercial development of sports sponsorship and media exposure (Boyle, 2006; Boyle & Haynes, 2009; Oriard, 1998). Once only games played between gentlemen taking time off work, sports started to attract commercial interest from businessmen who wanted to profit from the attention and status that sport had in society. The modern newspaper format that attracts working- and middle-class readers started in the 1830s through the introduction of the penny press. The penny press was a newspaper format that was very affordable to purchase and included advertising that offset production and distribution costs. This commercialization of sport and media became prevalent in the advertising explosion in the early 1900s when advertising accounted for 75% of a newspaper's revenue (McChesney, 1989).

The beginning of sports and newspapers in North America can be traced back to baseball and the civil war in the 1860s, but it was not until 1883 that Joseph Pulitzer hired one of the first sports editors to establish a sports department at the publication New York World. The increase in the amount of space devoted to sports helped increase the readership of New York World (Schudson, 1978). Nine years after purchasing New York World, Pulitzer would grow the circulation from fifteen thousand to two million readers (Hughes, 1940). By the 1940s, 25% of all newspapers were sold based on their sport section, according to a survey of circulation managers of newspapers (Woodward, 1949).

The addition of the telegraph to the distribution of media introduced the first electronic medium to have an impact on the business of sports. Using the telegraph, newspaper publishers were able to receive and report sports news from outside their local area by paying sports teams for their content, which had a financial impact on the business. In 1897, baseball teams received \$300 for telegraph broadcast rights, and by 1913, Western Union paid each team \$17,000 per year (Hauptert, 2010). Through the dissemination of information via the telegraph, the newspaper maintained its status as the primary source for

sports content. The relationship between sports and newspapers was the start of the symbiotic sport-media phenomenon that helped build sport as a business.

Film. One look at the list of the Sports Illustrated top 50 greatest sports movies of all time can demonstrate the ways that film influenced sports. The relationship between film and sport began in 1894 with the introduction of boxing films (Streible, 2008). While the history of cinema largely ignores the 20 years of ‘fight films’ prior to 1915, it was an era that started the sport of boxing as a form of business and entertainment. Producers of ‘fight films’ would film 90-second features of fights and sell them to “peephole” movie venues, avoiding legislation that banned fighting in most states. For example, as fighting was not illegal in Nevada, on St. Patrick’s Day in 1897 in Carson City, Nevada, a heavyweight championship bout was filmed and then distributed across the United States. It was estimated that the profits of this film exceeded \$750,000 (Streible, 1989). This example demonstrates that this form of entertainment was “financially lucrative but legally suspect” (Streible, 1989: p. 237). By 1897, social and political pressure caused the US government to not only stop the fights, but also stop the distribution of ‘fight films’. This movement to censor boxing films can be seen as part of a larger social reform movement that sought to keep both the sport of boxing and the film medium in harmony with the prevalent social stance of white Christian morality (Streible, 1989: p. 249).

In addition to legal pressures, the era of the ‘fight films’ ended in the early 1900s as a result of the introduction of the newsreel format of sports reporting. These newsreel films were typically 15-minute shows that played at the start of a movie and typically covered several broadcast items including news, lifestyle, and sports. Newsreels also helped create the celebrity status of athletes and sports. For example, newsreel helped further establish Babe Ruth as a celebrity through the documentation of his popular home runs. During the 1954 Cotton Bowl, the newsreel showed the famous tackle from the bench: a player caught a pass and was running down the sidelines for a touchdown when a player off the bench tackled him

from the sidelines. Although newsreel was popular in its time, the television quickly overtook it as the most prominent medium for sports consumption.

Yet sport continues to be affected by film media even after the end of newsreel. While newsreel updated fans on a weekly basis with sports highlights, the movies that followed newsreel emotionally linked sports and entertainment. Sports movies like *Bill Durham* (baseball), *Rocky* (boxing), *Slapshot* (Hockey), and *Hoosiers* (basketball) generated millions of dollars at the box office while also helping to create a cultural image of sport.

Radio. Unlike the newspaper — which took many years to be adopted and have a financial impact on sports — radio had a much more immediate impact on the business of sports. The penetration of radio at the start of the 1920s in America was only 1 in every 400 homes, but by 1929 the penetration exploded to almost 1 in every 3 homes (McChesney, 1989). McChesney (1989) argues that sports contributed to popularizing radio by providing a large audience of listeners. In one example of the impact of sports on radio, McChesney (1989) cites the Dempsey-Tunney championship fight in 1927 and how a New York department store sold \$90,000 worth of radio receivers prior to the fight. Radio benefited from the live and celebrity nature that sports provided, however, the initial introduction of sports radio broadcasts was not always well received by sports team owners. At the time (early 1930s), the major stream of revenue for sporting events was through attendance. Smith (1995) presented many examples of hostility in the early years of radio broadcasting of sporting events in his book about baseball. Some owners of sport teams viewed both radio and television as threats to game attendance.

The owners began to proactively incorporate media into live sports in the 1930s, when producers started to be paid licence fees for allowing radio stations to broadcast live events, generating an entirely new stream of revenue for sports team owners and sports promoters. For example, it was estimated that the 1935 World Championship fight between Joe Louis and Max Schmeling realized \$27,500 in licence fees. While newspaper's impact on sports

was slow and took place over thirty plus years, radio's impact on sports was more immediate and started to deliver direct revenue to owners through licence fees.

Sports also benefited radio broadcasters because it attracted high audience ratings among a mostly male demographic. As reported by Hutchins and Rowe (2009), sports radio was so popular and generated such high audience ratings that advertisers started to pay higher than the usual advertising rates, particularly during or after live broadcasts of games. The large audiences attracted to live radio broadcasts of sporting events posed an initial threat to newspapers that traditionally distributed local and national news. As an example, the 1932 summer Olympic Games in Los Angeles limited radio sports broadcasts to 15 minutes per day while the British Broadcasting Corporation limited sports to before seven o'clock in the evening. Unlike the newspaper, radio was immediately available and provided a live on-site account from the game like no other medium at the time (Boyle & Haynes, 2009).

New York City was the pioneering market for sports and radio content. Due to its large population base and multiple sports teams, New York radio stations were the pioneers of many different formats. Two of the most significant shifts in sports radio are represented by call-in talk radio and all-sports radio programming. Rosen (2001) found that the first call-in show happened in New York in 1960, and that by 1965 all major US markets had similar shows, making radio the first medium in media to feature discussions and content directly from the sports fans. In addition, although all radio stations already had some form of sports content, the first all-sports radio station WFAN went on air in 1987. By the 1990s, almost all major markets in the United States had an all-sports radio programming station. The local 24-hour nature of these stations benefited local sports teams because it gave them another channel to reach the sports-craved public. Operating seven days a week, all-sports radio stations needed to provide more content than just scores, statistics, and play-by-play games; they needed to provide listeners with sports programming 24 hours a day.

Radio extended the sports experience by offering a live voice to call the game, which is consistent with McChesney's statement that the increase in media coverage causes a surge

in popularity of sports (McChesney, 1989). The introduction of live audio proved to be very popular amongst listeners and arguably brought a whole new type of fan to the game. Prior to the radio, if you did not have the money, time, or transportation to get to a live game, your primary method of experiencing sport was the newspaper. From an economic perspective, broadcasting licence revenue was radio's most immediate impact on the success and growth of professional sports leagues. This demonstrates how essential media has been in the commercialization and commodification of sports and, as McChesney (1989) discussed, "sport is arguably the single most lucrative content area for the global media industry" (p. 36).

Television. No other form of media has impacted the business of sport more than television (Boyle & Haynes, 2004; Schultz & Sheffer, 2007; Seo & Green, 2008; Sheffer, 2009; Wenner, 1998). The academic study of the relationship between sports and television gained momentum in 1980 (Boyle & Haynes, 2009). Throughout the years in which television became integrated into sports distribution, it can be argued that there are three major eras of evolution: 1) the Adoption Years era, spanning from 1939 to the 1960s, 2) the Technology, Licence Fees, and Expansion era, taking place between 1960 and 1980, and 3) the Cable Fragmentation and High Definition era. By reviewing each era individually, we can gain a better historical understanding of the impacts of media on the business of sports.

The Adoption Years era can be said to cover the initial broadcast of television sporting events through World War II and the 1950s. The first television broadcasting service was opened by Radio Corporation of America on April 30, 1939, and within one year there were 23 television stations broadcasting. While this may seem like rapid growth, at this stage not enough Americans had televisions in their homes to make it a popular medium. In fact, only 9% of Americans had a television in the 1950s (Nicholson, 2007).

Sports and television truly began to take off as a cultural icon in the Technology, Licence Fees, and Expansion era; by the mid-1960s, 93% of American homes had a television set (Chandler, 1988). The increased size of the American television audience

would become one of the drivers of sports league expansion and increased licence fee revenue. Because of television, live sports created demand by broadcasting games in new markets. From 1960 to 1980, all four major leagues in North America expanded — 57 of a total of 122 teams were added into the leagues during this time period, which represents almost half of the teams in the leagues today. While the leagues were expanding, they started to negotiate collectively with television networks for broadcast rights and licence fees (McChesney, 1989). During this era, sports and television became financially dependent on each other.

However, this symbiotic relationship between sport and television has not always been viewed in a positive manner. As chronicled by Quirk and Fort (1997), initial introductions of sports on television had an adverse effect on fans' attendance to games. One example of this is the loss in ticket revenue generated by the Los Angeles Rams in 1950: they averaged \$77,000 when not on television and only \$42,000 when on television (Quirk & Fort, 1997). Because ticket sales were the primary revenue generator for sports teams at the time, teams were apprehensive about televising sports. Some teams went as far as not broadcasting games in the immediate local area to ensure that ticket revenues would not be impacted. The threat of decreased ticket sales because of television is still relevant today: the NFL has a rule whereby teams must sell out eighty five percent of their tickets 72 hours prior to a game or the game will not appear on television in the team's local market (McIntyre, 2012).

During the Technology, Licence Fees, and Expansion era from 1960 to 1980, the NFL would establish itself as the premier television sport league. Unlike the other leagues in North America at the time, the NFL had a number of games that took place during non-traditional prime timeslots. Television programmers were happy to broadcast games on Sunday afternoons when other shows were not that popular. In addition, the NFL was the first professional sports league to package and sell its television rights as an entire league rather than individually through local television stations (Tuohy, 2010). Television rights for the first NFL-wide broadcast contract were purchased in 1962 by NBC for \$9 million per season.

By 1964, CBS competed for rights and spent \$28 million for them. This amount would grow to \$50 million in 1970. While not at the same scale as the NFL, the other three major sports leagues also experienced rapid growth in television broadcast rights: by 1970, the NBA received \$2 million and MLB received \$18 million in broadcast licence fees.

The increased revenue from broadcast rights fees resulted in a loss of control for the owners. In order to maintain and generate new revenues from television, the sports leagues would not only forfeit their media content to television broadcasters, but would also have to modify their rules and schedules to accommodate television time slots. All four leagues in North America have established television time outs to allow for advertisements to be shown without audiences missing the game. The leagues are also forced to shuffle their schedules in order to accommodate other television broadcasts. The start times and dates of games are mostly driven by the needs of television broadcasting; for example, the NFL will schedule its games so that fans can watch up to four different games on Sunday. In addition, the NHL — by request of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and a special promotional segment called *Hockey Day in Canada* — will schedule games so that fans can watch two or three games in a row on Saturday.

While television audience sizes, number of teams, and television licence fees were increasing, the technology for the broadcasting of sports was also improving. Prior to the 1960s, sporting events were covered by only a few cameras and announcers who, for the most part, reported the live-action and end-results of games. In his book about television and sports, Whannel (1992) talks about how technological innovations like multiple camera angles, freeze frames, and slow motion changed the television viewing experience of sports: multiple camera angles gave fans at home many different perspectives on the events of a game; the freeze frame images allowed producers to highlight an image; and slow motion allowed the announcer to give a more detailed narrative of an event in game. While technology was increasing the demand for sports on television, the licence fees to broadcast sports began to grow substantially.

During the 1970s, the value of the four largest professional sports leagues continued to grow, and in July of 1979, Bill and Scott Rasmussen launched the Entertainment Sports Programming Network (ESPN). ESPN was billed as the “Worldwide Leader in Sports” and was the first 24-hour sports channel in the industry. During this time, other cable television channels started to offer more niche content, including NASA-TV, the all-news network CNN, and the movie network HBO. The introduction of more television channels created a shift in television audiences, leading providers to focus on content that met the niche-viewing interests of Americans, who now had hundreds of channels to choose from instead of being forced to rely on the big three networks for television content. This was the beginning of the Cable Fragmentation and High Definition era, when television audiences were fragmented over numerous channels, decreasing the audience sizes for traditional television network programming. The introduction of cable television also caused a rapid increase in the number of channels devoted to sports programming, following sports such as hunting, car racing, and college sports. The new sports programming options further fragment television audiences.

Prior to cable, the big three networks of ABC, CBS, and NBC controlled the majority of content that was distributed on television. Cable television also introduced the format of subscription-fee revenue to the media and professional sports industries, helping both industries to develop a new revenue stream that did not rely on advertising. The introduction of subscription fees for cable television also escalated the competition between networks. The three big networks plus sports cable television increased competition for sports content would be a contributing factor in the escalation of license fees. With hundreds of cable channels available, sports had the ability to generate bigger audiences and charge higher subscription fees. While other cable channels could only charge between 5 and 20 cents in monthly fees, ESPN garnered monthly fees of more than \$4.00 (Taylor, 2000).

The growth in television fees would continue unabated. By 1990, MLB’s revenue increased by 800% to \$612 million. Similarly, the NFL’s income from broadcasting grew nearly 600% by 1990, from \$167 million in 1980 to \$948 million (Gratton & Solberg, 2007).

During this time period, it was estimated that television fees for the NFL generated 64% of team revenues (Gorman, Calhoun & Rozin, 1994). Similarly, Quirk and Fort (1997) estimate that by 1991, broadcast revenue accounted for 25% of NHL, 30% of NBA, and 50% of MLB's revenue. The popularity and value of sports on television would continue to grow as the television entertainment market continued to fragment. As stated by Billings (2011), sports would become one of the few television programs that people view en masse in real time; the live format of sports helps shield content providers from time-shifting technology like personal video recorders.

While the rest of the television broadcast world has been experiencing a reduction in audiences because of time-shifting technology and Internet television watching, sports has been protected from this shift. Although video streaming technology and personal video recorders allow consumers to time shift and experience entertainment when they want, sports will be able to defend the traditional mass media television business model. This protection from time shifting technology should be added to Rowe's (2004) list of TV benefits from sport. In the past, television has benefited from sports because it:

- attracted large and passionately devoted audiences;
- secured highly lucrative advertising revenue;
- was much cheaper than 'quality' drama;
- filled up a great deal of broadcast time; and
- was associated with positive images (Rowe, 1996).

Although sports also benefit from the large audiences that television attracts and from the revenue they generate through broadcast licence fees, the sports and television industry is becoming more complicated through introduction of new media (Rowe, 1996).

Internet and New Media

Although the Internet has not reached the same level of revenue generation for sport as television, nor had the same financial impact on the business, it has added a level of complexity to the management of media platforms. The advent of the Internet has been the third major transformation in mass media technology within the past two centuries: the first transformation was the steam-powered printing press in the 1800s, which was the start of the

penny press, and the second transformation was radio broadcasting in the 1920s and television broadcasting in 1939 (Dizard, 1997). To compare the rates of adoption, the rapid growth of the Internet took only 5 years to reach 50 million users, while traditional digital media like television took 14 years and radio took 38 years (Flew, 2005). The use of the Internet accelerated drastically following Tim Berners-Lee's development of the WWW in 1989 as a way to exchange ideas with his colleagues at CERN (Organisation Européenne pour la Recherche Nucléaire, or European Organisation for Nuclear Research).

One of the more comprehensive works to explain the impact of the Internet on sports media was recently completed by Hutchins and Rowe (2012). During the process of researching their book, they conducted 45 interviews with Australian sports and media managers and examined case studies to understand how networked digital media are actively changing the production and consumption of sport. An important finding of their work was a list of over 30 challenges faced by the members of the sport media industry in Australia as a result of the pervasive nature of the Internet and online media (see Figure 1).

<i>Sports Organizations</i>	<i>Broadcasters</i>	<i>News Media Outlets</i>	<i>Digital Media and Telecommunications Companies</i>	<i>Fans, Viewers, and Users</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain or improve the value of broadcast rights and contracts. • Deal with the potential devaluing of broadcast rights by online media. • Establish alternative business models and strategies designed for online media, and develop their own broadcast, online, and mobile media content. • Circumvent or prevent online piracy and unauthorized content reproduction. • Accommodate online feedback, criticism, and independent content reproduction by fans and consumers. • For minor sports, explore opportunities for exposure and revenue generation through the Internet and Web. • Where possible, build successful and profitable partnerships with computer game developers and publishers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish complementary and attractive online sites and distribution points for viewers. • Compete with new online market entrants, including telecommunications providers. • Adjust to an altered advertising market. • Circumvent or prevent online piracy and unauthorized content reproduction. • Accommodate online feedback, criticism, and content reproduction by fans and consumers. • Deal with regulatory uncertainty in a fast changing communications environment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish viable business models that identify profitable linkages between print and/or broadcast and online and mobile media. • Compete with or limit the activities of online content aggregators. • Deal with changing viewer, listener, and reader habits and practices. • Confront new online competitors for users and 'eyeballs', including 'official' Web portals that distribute sports news and information. • Adjust to an altered advertising market. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Break the stranglehold of broadcasters over coverage rights to popular sport. • Establish profitable business models for online sport. • Obtain and package reliable 'premium content' to attract users. • Cope with regulatory uncertainty in a fast changing communications environment. • Consistently profit in an aggressively competitive and changing marketplace. • Establish viable and affordable technology offerings that change the consumption patterns of sports consumers (e.g., IPTV and mobile media). • Develop profitable and appealing sport related digital applications and services, including downloadable apps, and specialist mobile news and highlights packages. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access quality sports news and information in the face of plentiful online choice. • Decide which sites, voices, and sources can be 'trusted' to provide accurate, timely, and reliable content. • Deal with increased expectations of 'pay-for-view' or access online. • Decide how to access sports content (e.g., online and/or mobile and/or broadcast and/or print), as well as how much and how often in a '24/7' media environment. • Choose whether to pay, or try to access (perhaps illegally) sports content for free. • Decide whether to exercise the ability to create fan-produced or modified content. • Choose from a growing range of sport related products and services, including downloadable apps, fantasy sports, and computer games.

Figure 1 – Challenges Faced by Members of the Media Sport Industry (Hutchins & Rowe, 2010, 2012)

The stakeholders impacted by the pervasive nature of the Internet and online media include sport organizations, broadcasters, news media outlets, digital media and

telecommunications companies, and the sports fan. The challenges that these stakeholders faced ranged from improving the value of broadcast rights contracts for sports organizations to fans deciding how to access sports content (online, mobile, broadcast, print, etc.).

Throughout the different chapters of the book, the authors investigated the evolution of the term *networked media sport* to explain the features of media sports in a digital age, focusing on media intensification (of content production), acceleration (of information flows), and expansion (of content productions).

In a chapter that focuses on blogging and social networking, Hutchins and Rowe (2012) identify two keys to understanding the effect of Internet on sport: the relationship between two screens — which refers to the different platforms that fans can consume live events including television, computer, tablet, and mobile phone —and information accidents such as scandalous disclosures, damaging criticisms, and embarrassing photographs. Another example of how the Internet has transformed non-sports media is demonstrated in newspaper advertising revenue. According to the Newspaper Association of America, print advertising revenues fell from \$5 billion to \$3.6 billion from 2005 to 2008, in large part due to the Internet (Olinger, 2008). This rapid drop in advertising revenue can be attributed to a national recession, declining readership due to online content, and the loss of classified advertising to services like Craigslist. Consumers now hunt for jobs, cars, houses, and services on the Internet using websites like workopolis.com or craigslist.com, forgoing the classified section of the paper. Prior to the shift caused by the Internet, classified advertising represented almost 40% of large daily newspapers' revenue. However, while the Internet has significantly impacted newspapers, it has not significantly reduced the consumption of television or radio (Flew, 2005).

While the Internet and new media have promoted changes in other media, the real force of change has been the *convergence* of media platforms. With the introduction of the Internet and new media, traditional media and entertainment companies were forced to adapt or be left behind. The definition of the term 'convergence' was delineated by Henry Jenkins

in his book *Convergence Culture* as the “flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries and the migratory behaviour of media audiences which will go almost anywhere in search of the kinds of entertainment experiences they want” (Jenkins, 2006: p. 2).

The convergence of media platforms has also had an impact on sports journalism. Whereas the traditional journalist would prepare content for only one platform of communication, a journalist’s story is now repurposed for online, print, and broadcast platforms (Hutchins & Rowe, 2012). Due to the increased pressure to produce more content with less time and less resources, the original material created by a journalist is frequently lifted and used for stories in other websites or media forms as a way to increase output (Curran, 2011). Curran (2011) labeled this process ‘creative cannibalization’.

According to Flew (2005), the key to understanding convergence and new media has been the storage, delivery, and reception of information in a digitized form. This transformation is supported by the work of digital anthropologist Michael Wesch. In his 2008 YouTube video, which has been viewed by over 11,000,000 people (Heil & Piskorski, 2009), Wesch argued that the WWW has transformed culture through digital text that is flexible and linkable. While traditional companies did not always successfully embrace the convergence of media, professional sports teams began to see the Internet and convergence as an opportunity to connect and communicate directly with their fans.

The cross-pollination of content ownership and sports teams’ participation in new media platforms supports the argument that sports teams have effectively used convergence. Throughout the 1990s, the cross-ownership of sports teams and media platforms became commonplace: within New York City, the cable operator Cablevision owns Madison Square Garden, the New York Knicks of the NBA, and the New York Rangers of the NHL. Conversely, in the same market, the MLB’s New York Yankees own YES cable network. Other examples of this cross-ownership of media and teams can be found in Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment’s ownership of three digital television stations (Leafs TV, NBA TV

Canada, and GOL TV) along with four teams (NHL's Toronto Maple Leafs, NBA's Toronto Raptors, MLS's Toronto Football Club, and AHL's Toronto Marlies). Meanwhile, Comcast Cable owns the NHL's Philadelphia Flyers and NBA's Philadelphia 76ers. Sports teams have also embraced the Internet and new media through the development of popular sports websites, which has transformed the relationship between traditional media and sport by using online communication to interact and communicate directly with fans.

Yet when the WWW phenomenon started, sports teams were slow to adopt and did so cautiously: professional teams' adoption of a converged media environment was not instant, as adoption tended to grow with the availability of affordable technology engines used to produce and distribute the content. The first team websites in the late 1990s were designed to market tickets, merchandise, and team information to fans. This era of website design is commonly referred to as "brochureware" or Web 1.0 — for the most part, these websites emulated traditional push media business models of radio and newsprint. Teams would use the websites as a central hub where fans can find the information they need about their teams; often, teams transmitted the same information as traditional media outlets, like the score of the game last night. However, as technology progressed, teams updated the features and tools available on their websites. Today, the media platforms that a team manages can range from a simple Internet website to a multi-tiered platform with a YouTube channel, SM portal, and mobile application software.

Online distribution of content powered by broadband video is restructuring the role of the traditional sports broadcast. According to Hutchins and Rowe (2012), the Internet and new media represents a challenge to the power structure for television and sports: through the use of online media, access to the broadcast of a sport can bypass the traditional channels. Although some eager futurists may assert that the emergence of online distribution will replace television, history suggests otherwise. For example, when sport television was introduced, it was not the end of sports on radio; the use of radio in sports persisted, but the economics, administration, and form of sports and radio changed forever (Rowe, 2004).

The introduction of SM within sports media changes the role of traditional sports media technologies, as the fans themselves now represent an important stakeholder as the producers and consumers of online sports content. With the inception of individuals hosting their own personal websites and blogs, professional team websites created message boards as a way for fans to voice their opinions. These message boards were easy to use and did not require an individual to have significant computer knowledge to update or post stories. Nearly every team, university, and event sports media website like ESPN.com had a message board for fans, which allowed them to become part of the communication strategy of sports teams (Clavio, 2008). While operating message boards, the senior director of digital for the NHL Toronto Maple Leafs and NBA Toronto Raptors realized that fans were expecting to find more information beyond the traditional newspaper story that contained the score of the game and the standings (John McCauley, personal communication, April 15, 2011). This was the start of teams realizing that their websites could create their own audiences and start their own community. As a result, team websites started to be thought of as a media platform that did not rely on traditional media. Professional teams invested heavily in video content distribution for their websites, and the more advanced teams hired media professionals to write and post stories that were not featured in traditional media. With the media convergence of sports team websites producing video content, original stories, and interactive content, fans started to rely more heavily on team websites as a source for information and entertainment.

This chapter presented a historical overview of the relationship between sport and media primarily covering what some people would call traditional media through to the Internet and new media. It demonstrated how sport and media are linked and how the introduction of each new form of media changed sport. Chapter three will further explore the media sport phenomenon by looking at historical overview of the major SM platforms to demonstrate their impacts on society, including the preliminary impacts SM is having on sport.

CHAPTER 3

MEDIA SPORTS NEXT GENERATION

Throughout the history of professional sports leagues, the business success of sports teams and media distributors have clearly depended on mutually beneficial ties (McChesney, 1989; J. Williams, 1994). As the television networks' advertising revenues increase over time, more revenue is distributed back to the teams. In addition, the increasing number of games on television resulted in more advertising revenue, which has become a phenomenon with sports and media that has, for the most part, proven itself to be true, with one notable exception: during the era of media fragmentation by cable television, advertisers had an increased number of opportunities to advertise on television; as a result, the big four broadcast networks no longer dominated television media, and consumers could choose from hundreds of channels for different interests (Gluck & Roca, 2008). During this era, television advertising revenue declined as audiences spread out over different channels.

Will SM have the same impact on sports and media? Hutchins & Rowe (2009) claim that this new world of a digital plenitude removes the barriers to entry for an individual to compete with traditional media. Therefore, as a result of this increase in avenues and opportunities to express one's self, will audiences spend less time consuming sports through traditional outlets?

SM represents the fourth major technology transformation that will impact sports. In this new world of social media, an individual can just as easily develop a following with more users than an established media company. In fact, this change has already occurred: the Hollywood actor Ashton Kutcher reached 1,000,000 followers on Twitter before the CNN news network, and the instant celebrity like Justin Bieber or Susan Boyle can be discovered overnight on YouTube. From an academic perspective, Kansas State University's Michael Wesch's YouTube video that he produced from home received more attention on YouTube than the best Super Bowl ads (Wesch, 2008). His posting became more popular because it had more longevity, successfully targeting an online audience by analysing their Internet use

to help people better understand this new digital world. In this case, a professor competed against the NFL for online attention, and in the process a celebrity academic was born.

SM presents a new order in MediaSport: unlike the times of dominant traditional media formats, when the message between the fan and the team was mediated, professional teams can now communicate directly with their fans. Although most professional sports teams have successfully produced and distributed their own content for social media, they will need to adapt and change their strategies as the audience and platforms continually transform. The difference between teams that are exceptional at SM and teams that are mediocre will be gauged by how well they understand their audience and whether they use several different SM platforms concurrently to reach out to fans.

To better understand SM in sports, this chapter will provide a historical overview of the major SM platforms to demonstrate their impacts on society, including the preliminary impacts SM is having on sport.

Historical Overview of SM

The early onset of SM can be traced back to the telephone, which allowed people to connect on a one-to-one basis. Following the telephone, broadcast media allowed media companies to connect with groups on a one-to-many basis by broadcasting or pushing content. Consequently, the Internet started a new form of media that empowered people to produce and consume media on a many-to-many basis. Although the Internet was started by Tim Burner Lee in 1989, the use of Internet technology for a form of popular media coined ‘social media’ did not really take off until the creation of social networking sites MySpace (in 2003) and Facebook (in 2004).

As with all emerging phenomena, the early years of SM were filled with rapid growth, as well as discussion and debate about definition and history. In their attempt to define social media, Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) found it to differ from concepts like Web 2.0 and user-generated content. In their work, Kaplan and Haenlein defined SM 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 & Haenlein, 2010, p. 61). Using different terminology, Boyd and Ellison (2007) also defined social network sites:

We define social network sites as web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system (2007, p. 1).

As the term ‘social media’ is heavily associated with platforms like MySpace, Facebook, and YouTube, some may consider it to be tantamount to the term ‘social network sites’. The terms and applications for SM and social networking sites are used interchangeably in the popular press. For the purposes of this research, the term ‘social media’ will be used rather than ‘social networking’ because of its current use by sports teams to connect with fans in order to build brand and reputation.

In a review of different SM platforms, Boyd identified three eras for social media. The first era, ‘the early years’, started in 1997 with a tool that helped people connect and send messages called SixDegrees.com. During this era the lack of friends who were also online limited widespread adoption of the platform.

Boyd referred to the second era (post 2002) as ‘the Rise (and Fall) of Friendster’. By 2002, the adoption and use of the Internet was much more widespread than during the early years of social media. Friendster started out as a tool to compete with the popular dating site Match.com. While it never took off as a dating site, Friendster gained popularity amongst early adopter groups such as bloggers, attendees of the Burning Man arts festival, and gay men (D. Boyd, 2004). While Friendster was an early pioneer in SM, it encountered technical issues that allowed later entrants to learn from their mistakes. The rapid growth of Friendster caused many imitators to create new platforms.

The final era was termed ‘Mainstream’ by Boyd. Starting in 2003, only one year after the start of Friendster, there was a plethora of start-up SM sites. Most of the platforms

imitated Friendster and targeted specific demographic groups that organized around segmented audiences. People could find websites for career connection (LinkedIn), photographs (Flickr), college friends (Facebook), and videos (YouTube). After creating online traffic within their specific demographic groups, SM platforms would grow by targeting new groups. This strategy of expanding into new markets was particularly successful with Facebook, when they changed from being an exclusively Harvard University platform to include more universities and eventually high schools.

While SM platforms were starting to gain popularity from 2003 to 2006, their use by sports teams would not become mainstream until 2009. Although many different SM platforms have significant followings, three have emerged as being the most commonly used by professional sports teams: YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter (John McCauley, personal communication, May 2, 2011).

YouTube is a popular video sharing website started by former PayPal employees in 2005 to be a user-friendly alternative to other, more difficult to use video-sharing websites. In 2010, YouTube had over 3 billion page views per day and 8 years of video content uploaded every day (YouTube, 2011). It is the most popular video sharing website, with a market share of 43% of all videos viewed online (comScore, 2010b). YouTube has created an alternative source for watching television and is the most popular way for people to share home videos. Cultural Anthropologist Michael Wesch's (2008) research into YouTube found that it was mostly a platform for sharing home videos, with typically less than 100 viewers per video.

Within a professional sports context, YouTube had to be used in a different way than other SM platforms. While one would expect to find game highlights and replays uploaded onto YouTube, most teams with broadcast agreements are forbidden from using YouTube to share game highlights. As professional teams receive millions of dollars for the broadcast rights to games, the distribution and control of game content is governed by broadcast agreements – for this reason, teams that have broadcast agreements are limited to posting original video content that does not happen during a game. Although teams are limited on

YouTube, they use YouTube to share behind-the-scenes activities that do not violate broadcast agreements (John McCauley, personal communication, May 2, 2011). However, both Facebook and Twitter are more widely used as a SM platform by professional sports teams than YouTube – almost all professional teams have their Twitter and Facebook links prominently posted on the front page of their websites (Coyle, 2011). While Facebook has almost three times as many registered users as Twitter, the use and history of the two SM platforms in sports is very different.

Facebook was launched in 2004 by a Harvard University student named Mark Zuckerberg. According to Alexa.com, Facebook is the most popular SM website on the Internet today. From the start, Facebook experienced explosive growth in usage from students at Ivey league universities in the United States. From universities, Facebook expanded into high school students and then commercial organizations. With almost one billion active users, Facebook has become the most widely used SM platform.

Twitter was launched in 2006 by Jack Dorsey and other members of a podcasting company named Odeo. Similar to all other SM platform launches, it started to become popular amongst a highly targeted group of users and then grew to other user groups. Between 2007 and 2008, usage of Twitter grew from 400,000 Tweets per quarter to 100 million Tweets per quarter. A tipping point for Twitter was Barack Obama's use of Twitter to reach out to the electorate during the 2008 United States Presidential Election.

Within professional sports, Twitter is widely used by athletes, coaches, team management, and marketing staff. According to one team digital media executive, Facebook is the place where teams connect with fans for promotional purposes, but Twitter is the more immediate medium where they share insider news (John McCauley, personal communication, May 2, 2011). In a scan of SM-related sports articles, it would appear that issues related to Twitter in professional sports receive more coverage than issues related to Facebook in professional sports. While Facebook is a more popular SM platform with the public, it could be argued that Twitter has had a greater impact on sports communications.

Thus, although social media-savvy teams use all three of the most popular SM platforms, this research will only focus on the use of Twitter by professional sports teams because Twitter has had a much more publicized impact on the business of professional sports than Facebook or YouTube.

Before exploring the impact of SM in a sports context, it will be instructive to demonstrate how this format has impacted society as a whole in many ways. The impacts of SM on society are wide ranging: individuals have shifted from being content consumers to being content producers, thereby increasing the fragmentation amongst media choices for consumers. Now that individuals have the ability to create and develop their own audience, how will this change the business of sports?

Convergence

The concept of *media convergence* is not new. It gained prominence after MIT political scientist Ithiel de Sola Pool wrote *Technologies of Freedom* (1983). While the term ‘media convergence’ has been used extensively to describe the concentration of media ownership, as well as the flow of content across multiple media platforms and the relationship between old and new media, little research to date has been published to explain its intersection with social media. I expect this gap in research related to convergence and SM to be short-lived, as it will be expanded upon as the popularity and usage of SM continues to expand.

Although the formal definition of the word ‘convergence’ in the online Merriam-Webster dictionary is “the merging of distinct technologies, industries, or devices into a unified whole” (Merriam-Webster Inc., 2003), MIT Professor and convergence expert Henry Jenkins has explained media convergence as both a technological and cultural process.

The flow of content across multiple media platforms, the cooperation between multiple media industries, and the migratory behaviour of media audiences... teaches us that old media never die – and they don’t even necessarily fade away. What dies are simply the tools we use to access media content – the 8-track, the Beta tap. These are what media scholars call delivery technologies... Delivery technologies become obsolete and get replaced; media, on the other hand evolve (Jenkins, 2006, p. 13).

This cultural view of convergence is not consistent with the formal definition of convergence in media and technology circles. Within these circles, many researchers maintain the utopian dream of communication technologies coalescing into an all-encompassing singular medium for every kind of message. In his book, Jenkins refers to this as the “black box fallacy” and argues that there are more and more black boxes by which you can consume content, but that each multiple tasking device does not necessarily replace the device that was originally dedicated to the task. For example, if you are at the airport and want to consume the news while you wait for your flight to depart, you have multiple options available to you: read the news in a newspaper, watch on the television in the bar, or use your mobile personal digital assistant (PDA) to read. Through PDAs and tablet computers, people can watch live sports, read a book, play a video game, listen to a radio station, read SM postings, and even create original content. This access to media demonstrates that it is the device or delivery of technology that will make the other devices obsolete, but the content within these new devices is always being regurgitated by and often originates from traditional media sources. Recognizing this, traditional media companies like CNN, NBC, New York Times and others have emerged as some of the heaviest users of social media.

Some would consider Henry Jenkins’ definition of convergence to be overused, arguing that the term ‘convergence’ is ambiguous and means different things to different people (Silverstone, 1995). In the book *Media convergence; Networked digital media in everyday life*, convergence is broken into four key dimensions: technological, industrial, social, and textual (Meikle & Young, 2012). While a long debate could be made for a clearer definition for the word convergence, it would not improve the understanding of convergence and sports media. The explanation of convergence by Meikle and Young (2012) represents an approach that can withstand the criticisms of single definitions or approaches to the concept of convergence: from a sports and media convergence perspective, ‘technology’ can refer to the enabling of sports content to travel through different media platforms, ‘industrial’

can refer to the media institutions and owners of the content, 'social' can refer to the one-to-one communication moving towards a many-to-many broadcast model, and finally 'textual' can explain different ways that media text can converge (i.e., mash-up, re-mixed, or reimagined).

The annual State of the Media Report by Nielsen Marketing recently reported that mobile SM is on the rise (Nielsen, 2011). In addition, the report states that 40 percent of SM users access it from their mobile phone and that SM is the third most used type of mobile application amongst smartphone users. The findings of this report suggest that there is an increasing shift in the use of SM from a desktop computer to mobile devices and applications. Through the use of mobile SM applications, audience members become media producers and consumers who are not confined to a single location like television viewers.

Another example of convergence and its impact on media is the change in the way that people are receiving their news, as described by Erik Qualman author of the popular book *Socialnomics* (2009):

We no longer search for news; rather, the news finds us. This is evident when looking at newspaper statistics. According to third quarter 2008 data from the Newspaper Association of America, advertising revenue for newspaper declined 18.1 percent, national advertising sales fell 18.4 percent, classifieds sank 30.0 percent, and online advertising sales dropped 3 percent (Qualman, 2009, p. 12).

In his discussion, Qualman goes on to explain the SM impact of a Saturday Night Live video skit during the 2008 United States presidential elections. They estimated that the five-minute video skit received over 50 million views and over half of those views were online. This is an example of convergence, demonstrating how SM-amplified content originally produced for the offline world of broadcast television can be made substantially more popular through its re-distribution online. As a result of the video becoming popular in social media, the producers of Saturday Night Live benefited through increased viewership.

Consumers have access to multiple media platforms and they will choose the platform that best suits their needs and personal situation. For example, if they happen to be away from

home and cannot watch a game on television, they can turn to their mobile device to receive sports content. With a greater focus on increasing the amount of content, sports will be important to media companies as they modify their content for consumption amongst multiple different devices. In fact, it could be argued that the technological convergence in media is making sports one of the most valuable forms of content: sports is unlike any other form of content because of its real-time appeal and the emotional capital of fans.

Content such as movies, television shows, and music can all be recorded and consumed by the audience at any time of day or night. The ability to record and re-consume content allows the audience to time shift the content and also skip through or avoid commercial messages. Time shifting reduces the number of people that watch the advertisements and therefore reduces overall advertising revenue. Sports has a solution to this problem, generating a large share of its revenue from sponsorships paid by companies that are present during the production and consumption of the game through the branding of jerseys, fields, and other on-screen elements. Thus, unlike many forms of media, sports broadcasts are not prone to time shifting because fans need to follow the game in real time. The other element that makes sports more valuable than other forms of content is the ‘emotional capital’ that fans invest into their teams. Fans who invest their emotional capital into a brand are more likely to stay loyal to it, promoting the team and working to spread the feeling to others (Jenkins, 2006). Therefore, while some forms of traditional media are struggling to retain advertising revenues, content platforms that can seamlessly integrate advertising revenues into the on-screen environment are not negatively impacted by time shifting.

Citizen Journalism

In today’s web-connected world, the way that we produce, distribute, and consume news is rapidly changing. People no longer find one source for their news coming from traditional media outlets that are staffed by professionally trained journalists. Instead, individuals with no formal training in journalism are producing and distributing news in the

form of weblogs, Twitter feeds, Facebook pages, and other forms of social media. These new forms of media have been referred to as ‘user-generated content’, ‘participatory media’, and more commonly as ‘citizen journalism’ (Gilmor, 2004). While there are traces of citizen journalism that date back to the 17th century through pamphleteering (Salter, 2009) and sports-related citizen journalism back to the 1970s through fanzines (Haynes, 1995), the Internet enabled a new form of citizen journalism that is much more prevalent in society. Bowman and Willis (2003) describe this phenomena as “the act of a citizen, or group of citizens, playing an active role in the process of collecting, reporting, analyzing and disseminating news and information” (2003, p. 9).

Seminal work on the topic of media produced by non-professional journalists include the Bowman and Willis thinking paper for the American Press Institute *We Media, How audiences are shaping the future of news and information* (2003) and Dan Gilmor’s *We the Media* (2004). In their work, they share examples of how the Internet and its emergent forms of communication such as blogs and wikis are changing the process of news dissemination. These seminal works on the phenomenon were occurring at the same time that SM was becoming a mainstream form of communication. During this time, SM was only being used by millions of people and the predominant impact on the business of media was coming from blogs and wikis.

The prevalence of reading news on the Internet exploded on the global scene with the terrorist attack of September 11, 2001. During the aftermath of the attacks, Pew Internet Project reported that they generated the most traffic to traditional news websites than any other time in history (Fox, Rainie, & Madden, 2002). Fueled by the immense demand for immediate news during this time, people turned to e-mail, weblogs, and forums to get more information. People on the scene were using e-mail, weblogs, and other forums to provide others with eyewitness accounts, commentary, and personal photos. However, it was not until 2004 with the Asian tsunami on December 26 that the term ‘citizen journalism’ would be used for the first time (Jurrat, 2011).

Most of the photos and videos during the first 24 hours of the tsunami came from tourists armed with telephones, digital cameras, and camcorders (Kelly, 2009). Unlike blogs and other posts that were produced in the early part of the new century, the content produced during the tsunami was handled differently. Tourists and locals began posting the impacts of the tsunami online before professional journalists could reach the scene, which obliged traditional media outlets to use on-the-scene accounts as their primary mode of reporting visuals. Their use of this content acts as an example of the efficacy of citizen journalism and the start of citizen reporting in mainstream media. Within eight months of the tsunami, the phenomenon of on-the-scene reporting by citizens marked a turning point for citizen journalism in Britain and the United States (Kelly, 2009; Rosenberry, 2006). During the London transit-system bombings in Britain, July 2005, the BBC received more than 22,000 emails and text messages, 300 photos, and a number of videos from eyewitnesses (Kelly, 2009). The phenomenon of shared images by amateurs would be repeated in the United States during and after Hurricane Katrina in August 2005. CNN Executive Mitch Gelman reported that CNN had received 3,000 files with hundreds of images and videos within two weeks of the hurricane (Gonsalves, 2005).

Rosenberry (2006) has tracked the degree to which the contributions from ordinary people have begun to enter the routine presentation of the news. In his work, he describes the three main archetypes of citizen journalism as:

- (a) Weblogs, or blogs; (b) standalone "hyper-local" news sites; and (c) "blended" presentations in which an online news site operated by a traditional media outlet such as a newspaper or broadcast operation incorporates participatory contributions from audience members.

In order to understand how mainstream news was blending citizen journalism with professional journalism, Rosenberry's research reviewed 40 newspaper websites over several days in March 2006. During that time, 32 of these 40 newspapers offered some form of audience commentary opportunity.

However, in a review of citizen journalism, journalist John Kelly believes that the “percentages of people who contribute user-generated content are very low, arguably much lower than the furor over the whole issue would seem to warrant” (2009, p. 2). Kelly’s comment is supported by an informal but influential study about user-generated content; “90-9-1” (Brandtzaeg & Heim, 2011). In the “90-9-1” rule, Nielson asserts that “90% of users are lurkers and only observe and do not contribute, 9% of users contribute from time to time and 1% of users participate a lot and account for most contributions” (Nielson, 2006). With this information, one can argue that only 1% of Internet users could be considered citizen journalists, but this research was conducted in 2006 and the Internet has changed dramatically since that time. In addition, considering Facebook and its 800 million users, Nielson should acknowledge there are at least than 8 million committed contributors.

Rosenberry (2006) has stated that traditional media are no longer the gatekeepers of content for the public to view. News can be instantly distributed without the review of media professionals and delivered to an audience of millions of people at the click of the button. With this instant flow of information, time-honoured traditions like backchecking or waiting for the press deadline are gone. With hundreds of millions of people armed with mini-mobile computers that can produce and distribute content, one might consider citizen media in the growth stage of development.

SM is drastically increasing the speed of news delivery, which can be demonstrated in the reporting of Steve Jobs’ death in 2011. In September 2011, a CBS News show called *What’s Trending* published a tweet that reported Steve Jobs had passed away. The tweet on the CBS feed read “Reports say that Steve Jobs has passed away, stay tuned for more updates” (Stableford, 2011). The tweet was published just after 3pm and was removed within one minute with an apology issued, but within 60 seconds this tweet based on incorrect news travelled the globe. People believed it was true because the tweet was from CBS, a trusted media outlet. Before social media, rumour or gossip (e.g., the reporting of a celebrity’s death)

would have been confirmed by a reporter who backchecked the source, which more often than not prevented false news from being distributed.

There are also many examples in sports of stories that were published so quickly that they could not be properly backchecked. In one particular situation, a former NHL coach Pat Burns was erroneously reported dead through a Twitter announcement by a regional television station. This erroneous reporting received national attention in Canada and a national media journalist went on to comment:

We can add legendary NHL coach Pat Burns to the list of celebrities killed by hasty writers, editors, readers and social media. The speed, ease and reach of SM tools such as Twitter can be a double-edged sword for media outlets rushing to get the news out first. There have been numerous cases of celebrities being killed prematurely on Twitter (e.g. Gordon Lightfoot, Jeff Goldblum) (Huberman, Romero, & Wu, 2009).

In an effort to announce breaking news, media outlets and their journalists are using SM to announce the news before a full story can be written or produced for the traditional media channel. In the case of Pat Burns, the first account was reported by a major media outlet, and the others simply followed what they considered to be a trusted source. Thus, SM has put even more pressure on journalists and media outlets to release their news first.

While some media researchers have argued for citizen journalism as a positive phenomenon (Bowman & Willis, 2003; Gilmor, 2004), other media researchers argue that citizen journalism is destroying economics, culture, and values (Keen, 2007). The main criticism directed towards citizen journalism is the lack of quality, which was prominently made in a book by Andrew Keen called *The Cult of the Amateur: How the Democratization of the Digital World is Assaulting our Economy, our Culture, and our Values* (2007). Keen refers to untrained journalists as monkeys banging away at typewriters and decries the transformation of the Internet into a world of millions of bloggers, challenging the idea that the amateur could be elevated above the expert.

The practice of citizen journalism has become so popular that a form of collaborative online publishing business has emerged (Bruns, 2007). Companies such as OhmyNews and Huffington Post rely not on professional journalists, but instead on the decentralized and

distributed environment of the blogosphere (Bruns, 2005). While news blogger sites like are OhmyNews and Huffington Post are gaining credibility, sports blogging based sites like Bleacher Report and others are also gaining popularity; news- and sports-related services that organize content produced by users have been sold to established media companies as an asset to increase their digital media value¹.

The sale of Bleacher Report to an established sports media company like Turner Broadcasting is an example of the impact citizen journalism is having on sports media. Within the business of sports communications management, the role of the citizen journalist is now becoming explicitly recognized (John McCauley, personal communication, May 2, 2011). Professional teams now provide accreditation at games for bloggers, giving them access to the same media rooms and game notes as professional journalists. Teams are also hosting special events or “tweet ups” as a way to further engage their followers (Jaime Stein, personal communication, June 21, 2011). Citizen journalists are also being recognized within the Olympic movement. Andy Miah, an academic and a journalist, has written research papers and blogs, and hosted seminars to talk about citizen journalism and the Olympic movement (Miah, Garcia, & Zhihui, 2008). Citizen journalism has grown over time, starting with the initial Web 1.0 Olympics in Sydney – the beginning of non-accredited media attending the games. Miah has charted the evolution of the Olympics and use of media technology over time, describing different eras of the Olympics as they are impacted by media technologies: Web 1.0 Olympics Sydney 2000, Web 2.0 Olympics Torino 2006, Social Olympics China 2008, and Twitter Olympics Vancouver 2010 (Miah, 2009). At China Olympics in 2008, they created a media centre with 11,000 non-accredited media. This explosion in non-accredited media was further enhanced and changed with the Vancouver Winter Olympics in 2010 – so much so that the Olympic Review cited Vancouver 2010 as ‘The First SM Olympics’ (Miah & Jones, 2012). Due to the increased role of user-generated

¹ In 2011, the Huffington Post was sold for \$315 million to America Online (Adams, 2011). The popular sports blog website Bleacher Report was also sold to Turner Broadcasting for a reported \$180 million as a way for Turner to expand its portfolio of digital sports properties (Sandomir, 2012).

content for major events such as the Olympics, people are increasingly engaging in these events in different ways.

Other examples of citizen journalism and its impact on sports media include the US vs. Japan Women's World Cup soccer game in 2011, the Ryan Giggs' affair, and Shaquille O'Neal's form of reputation development. When the United States played Japan in the Women's World Cup final in July 2011, the broadcast set a record of 7,196 Tweets per second. This record surpassed previous results such as the 2011 NBA finals with 3,085 tweets, 2011 Super Bowl with 4,064 tweets, and the Men's World Cup with 3,051 tweets (Reisinger, 2011). The record was surprising because professional men's sports traditionally garners significantly higher viewership than professional women's sports, which raises the question: has Twitter opened an avenue to marginal sports that do not receive the attention of global broadcast agreements, or was the United States vs. Japan a one-time wonder that captured the interest of the fans?

Furthermore, when Premier League soccer player Ryan Giggs had an affair with a reality TV star and wanted to keep it private, he went to court and had a super-injunction² imposed to prohibit the media from discussing the private matter. The super-injunction kept the traditional media sources from reporting about the Ryan Giggs affair, however, it did not keep the Giggs story away from Twitter. Although the press was legally prohibited from writing about Ryan Giggs, thousands of Twitter users were able to read about and spread the story. The rumor of the affair on Twitter was so popular that it broke Twitter records for traffic in the United Kingdom (Brito, 2011).

Finally, the last example of a citizen journalist impacting sports comes from Shaquille O'Neal's use of Twitter. In an industry interview with social-media consultant Amy Martin, Ballouli and Hutchinson (2010) document ways that Shaquille O'Neal uses SM to build his brand. Within the interview, Martin speaks about how SM is a new form of communication that provides brands and celebrities an opportunity to participate in a two-way

² This format of a super-injunction is somewhat unique to the United Kingdom, whose government makes it illegal for media to report on specific private matters.

communication channel with fans. Using SM to distribute content online has enabled users to effectively blur the boundaries of who owns what and who distributes what.

These three examples, along with work from media researchers such as Gilmor as well as Bowman and Willis, provide clear evidence that citizen journalism is impacting the world of sports.

Globalization and Sport

The globalization of sports within the sport and academic literature is well documented. Academic journals such as the *Journal of Sport & Social Issues* (1996) and *Global Networks a Journal of Transnational Affairs* (2007) have hosted special issues to feature research about globalization and sports. Information and communication technologies have created new markets globally and affected the traditional ways that sport can be produced, delivered, and consumed. (Boyle & Haynes, 2009; Hutchins & Rowe, 2009). Through recent technological innovations, the globalization of sports has never been more accessible for fans. With the exception of time-zone issues related to live game broadcasts, a basketball fan in China can just as easily follow Yao Ming play for the NBA Houston Rockets as a basketball fan in Houston.

NBA basketball star Yao Ming serves as an example for the globalization of sport and its impact on society, politics, economy, and culture. In 2002, Yao Ming was granted permission to leave China to play for the Houston Rockets of the NBA. His career in the NBA subsequently created a storm of interest from fans in China.³ On average, television ratings for Houston Rockets games would be about 1 million viewers from the United States and over 30 million viewers from China (*Globalization of Sports* 2011). Without these new broadcast and Internet technologies, fans from China would not be able to follow Yao Ming. The growth of Yao Ming into an NBA superstar basketball was a calculated event that required league, political, sponsorship, and other interests to implement.

³ It was estimated that more people watched Yao Ming play his first NBA game than watched the Superbowl in 2002 (*Globalization of Sports*, 2011).

Another recent example of sports media super-stardom and globalization would be the NBA New York Knicks' Jeremy Lin: the story of an American-Taiwanese kid who graduated from Harvard and went undrafted in the NBA. However, after a New York Knicks basketball game on February 4th, 2012, where Jeremy Lin came off the bench to score 25 points and lead his team to victory, global interest started grew. As of February 14 (which is sure to change, as there are 300 million NBA fans in China...):

- His official Weibo account (which has reproduced many of his tweets from Twitter) now has 1 million followers – dozens of personalities in business and entertainment have been posting Lin-related quips (1.8 million and counting, a number which doubled in just four days during February 2012).
- His Twitter account, @jlin7, had 10,000 followers at the beginning of February, 2012, but now stands at 234,000.
- On February 3, 2012, he had 46,000 Facebook fans. As of February 14, 2012, this number grew to 433,000 according to Wildfire SM monitor (see chart below).
- Greater China and North America are not the only ones devoutly following Jeremy Lin. There are over 962,000 references on Google using his Korean name, "제레미 린", and 161,000 articles on Google for Jeremy Lin in Bahasa Indonesian (Zung, 2012).

This global explosion for interest in Jeremy Lin was a combination of SM and traditional media amplifying an athlete to global proportions. While fans were going to SM to read anything 'Lin', they were also motivated by the story of Lin that they learned through traditional media. What is interesting about this situation is not the fact that social and traditional media both reported on Lin, but the speed with which the story crossed the ocean. In the words of Michael Zung, the Asian American who documented the Lin story:

From a digital and SM practitioner's point of view, what makes this interesting is the "Jeremy Lin" phenomenon allows us to truly see what the velocity of a "great story" can be - how fast and far and wide news can travel using today's infrastructure and its effect on the social graph (Zung, 2012).

The example of Jeremy Lin seen through the eyes of Michael Zung represents anecdotal evidence that speaks to the speed of celebrity as a result of social media. When you compare the trajectory of the Jeremy Lin story with that of the Yao Ming story, it could also be argued that SM creates a less predictable sports media environment. The impact and success of Yao Ming was tightly controlled by the Chinese government and the NBA in order

to capitalize on the media opportunity. On the other hand, Jeremy Lin's rise to superstar status happened in a couple of weeks and was not controlled; SM amplified the story of Lin and allowed fans from around the world to connect directly with him on Twitter and Weibo. This shift away from premeditated athlete popularity represents a loss of power from the broadcast-centric understanding of sports media, allowing SM to become increasingly significant in the global sports market (Hutchins, 2011). While the globalization of sport and media has been well documented in the literature, the impact that SM will have on the globalization of sport is just starting to be documented.

Privacy

This dissertation will explore two kinds of privacy as they relate to sports: 1) physical privacy, and 2) privacy of information that is collected, stored, and available through a computer. Interestingly, the first publication that advocated privacy in the United States was written in 1890 and was largely a response to printing technology that made it possible for newspapers to publish photographs (Warren & Brandeis, 1890). The privacy law in 1890 defined privacy as "the right to be let alone". The definition of privacy has evolved over the last century to include "informational privacy" (Cavoukian, 2002).

The introduction of computer and Internet technologies has created new ways to gather and send information. Prior to the introduction of social media, Internet security was primarily intended to protect personal information, which was particularly important in order to avoid identity theft. The introduction of SM has caused an interesting shift from the protection of personal information to the public availability of personal information. Where prior laws and societal norms held the ideal that your personal information is valuable, the first users of social networks made their personal information publicly available without considering the potential ramifications of doing so.

This phenomenon of making private information publically accessible for others started with online bloggers and gamers, but became a societal norm through SM platforms like Facebook and MySpace. In a study of the online behaviors of more than 4,000 Carnegie

Mellon University (CMU) students, Gross and Acquisti (2005) examined the ways that students share their personal information. In June 2005, Facebook was in its second year of operation – still referred to as ‘The Facebook’ and primarily used by university students. Using the search features within ‘The Facebook’, 4,540 profiles from the CMU pages were downloaded. The members of the CMU Facebook group provided personal information online: 91% of profiles had an image, 88% of users revealed their birth date, and 51% list their current residence (Gross & Acquisti, 2005, p. 4). This study was significant because it was the first that quantified individuals’ willingness to provide personal information on social networks.

The study by Gross and Acquisti (2005) has been frequently cited as an example of how the culture of information privacy is changing. People are often willing to provide their personal information, creating a more transparent world where everything is digital and permanently available. In his New York Times Magazine story about Internet privacy, Jeffrey Rosen, a George Washington University law professor, refers to the work by Gross and Acquisti to demonstrate the change in the cultural norms in regard to sharing information. In the article, Rosen shares examples of the permanent Internet and how an individual Facebook indiscretion can lead to people being fired (Rosen, 2010). In one example, a 16-year-old British girl was fired from her office job for complaining about her job on Facebook (“I’m so totally bored!!”) (Rosen, 2010).

One might argue that the Gross and Acquisti (2005) study that identified the risks associated with Facebook has become dated — no longer an issue because of new Facebook privacy settings that were introduced in 2005. However, a study at Michigan Institute of Technology by Jernigan and Mistree (2009) reinforced the lack of privacy settings after they were able to use Facebook information to determine whether a profile belonged to a gay male. Usually, information about a person’s sexual orientation would be considered something private to the individual and not easily segmented by marketers, but in the research by Jernigan and Mistree (2009) they used spider Internet technology to download

profile and friend information from MIT students who subscribed to Facebook. The study demonstrated how easy it was for external organizations to use data mining techniques to collect relatively simple network data from Facebook.

Reputation Management

The social acceptability of sharing personal information through SM has been addressed by Mark Zuckerberg, Facebook's Chief Executive Officer and Founder. In an interview, Zuckerberg talks about the current norms associated with SM that favour exposure over privacy: "People have really gotten comfortable not only sharing more information and different kinds but more openly and with some people, and that social norm is just something that has evolved over time" (Kirkpatrick, 2010). As people post more information about their identity online, the process of posting pictures, videos, and stories has created an industry around online reputation management.

For people who think that their online reputations have been tarnished, consulting firms like Reputation Defender and Digimind have come along, which are firms that will electronically monitor and clean up the online image of a company or an individual. Online reputation management firms are particularly valuable if an individual or firm has had their reputation tarnished by isolated online content. The reputation management firms will attempt to have the content removed or they will perform search engine optimization techniques to push the negative links to the back pages of Google search (Rosen, 2010). They will bury the pages by bombarding the web with positive or neutral information, creating new online pages that multiply the links to the positive pages. For those companies or individuals with the financial resources, a reputation management firm offers a good short-term solution, but as the technology and search engine techniques change, it may not be enough (Rosen, 2010). To make matters even more challenging, when people post content on SM websites, they release the control and ownership of that content to the platform that they posted it on. This means that any future removal or usage of the content is at the discretion of the SM platform.

The impact of SM and the Internet has been explored in detail by Daniel Solove in his book *The Future of Reputation; Gossip, Rumor, and Privacy on the Internet* (2007). The book reviews the significant limits that the Internet has imposed on the ability of individuals' to protect themselves from unwarranted damage. Solove joins a group of legal scholars who deplore the demise of privacy due to the evolution of communications technology (Rosen, 2010; Solove, 2007). While reputation can be a person's most cherished asset, it can be easily damaged in the new interconnected world of social media.

Privacy and reputation within a sporting context is also changing. For example, on Wednesday March 24th, 2010, the NBA Toronto Raptors were playing a home game against the Utah Jazz. That night, Toronto Raptor Hedo Turkoglu came down with the stomach flu at halftime and had to miss the rest of the game. On Friday, two days later, Turkoglu did not go to the game and claimed that he stayed home with the stomach flu, but instead of staying home Turkoglu actually went out for dinner with friends to a restaurant. Fans saw him at the restaurant and sent a note to team management and posted stories on blogs that Turkoglu was at a restaurant instead of the game. Team management quickly learned of Turkoglu's indiscretion and fined him for his behaviour. Normally, a player who is sick and not going to the game would not make headline news, but this situation can now be easily broadcast by avid fans, who are content creators armed with a cellphone that has a camera, Internet connection, and the ability to share stories.

This situation with Turkoglu is an example of how the Internet and the corresponding shifts in media technology have changed privacy for individuals. In case study research by Sanderson (2009), he lists several situations that demonstrate how fans are using SM platforms to monitor players. The three case study examples included an NBA player participating in a pick-up game while rehabilitating a knee, pictures of an NFL player in a hot tub drinking beer with several young women, and a video posted on YouTube of a player disparaging the United States' national anthem. The case studies were a demonstration of how the privacy boundaries of professional athletes are shrinking because of fans' ability to

capture images of players away from work and distribute them to others. On a personal note, it has been interesting to witness athletes with fans at restaurants. On several occasions I have witnessed fans taking pictures with athletes, but the athlete has requested that the picture not be taken with anyone having an alcoholic beverage present. While I've never personally asked the player why, I can surmise that the player has become accustomed to practicing good reputation management tactics.

The academic literature provides numerous discussions about Internet privacy as it relates to the law and technology; however, there is a limited amount of research that speaks the role of privacy with regard to the reputation of a professional athlete.

Collaboration and Sharing

In their book *Media Convergence*, Meikle and Young (2012) refer to ease of collaboration being made possible through networked hardware such as computers and cell phones that “simplify processes of creation, manipulation, submission and combination” (Meikle & Young, 2012, p. 120). Without the convergence of different media hardware technologies, collaboration would not be as easy. Throughout their book, Meikle and Young (2012) argue that “the development of media technologies is an ongoing process, not an event” (p. 33). Meikle and Young rely on the works of Yochai Benkler, author of *The Wealth of Networks* (2006), to help explain how convergence is not a single dominant system – it is a multi-faceted, inherently unpredictable process.

Yochai Benkler's (2006) book describes three layers of mediated communication: physical, logical, and content. To demonstrate the interconnectedness of these three layers, Twitter will be used as an example. When Twitter was initially launched in early 2006, the founders of Twitter created the platform as a side project to their audio blogging service. While the audio blogging idea did not take off, it got them started on the idea of mobile phones and text messaging (Shirky, 2008). The initial idea for the content of Twitter was to configure it as a broadcast medium whereby people would share moments as they happen – the founders felt that this would make people feel closer. With the idea of mobile SMS text

messaging and the sharing of ideas, one of the founders who wrote the program for Twitter started it in March and launched it to the public in July of 2006. What started out as a side project to help people broadcast what they were doing has become a SM platform with 140 million users as of March 21, 2012 (its 6th birthday) (Wasserman, 2012).

Twitter would not have been successful without all three of Benkler's layers of mediated communication coming together. From a physical perspective, Twitter's growth coincided with the growth of mobile phones, as they were ideal for Twitter's 140-character format. With regard to the logical layer, Twitter was a relatively easy platform to program because it is limited to only 140 characters and it does not waste data resources: instead of storing large files, Twitter users distribute links that point to other content. Without the availability of HTML language that allows users to link other users to online files, Twitter would have been limited to a text-only format without the capabilities to share information longer than 140 characters. Lastly, the producers of the content are the users that share their stories and information. Without the ease of use created by mobile phones and the ability to share links and larger files of content, Twitter would likely not have experienced such sustained growth.

Twitter users have also collaborated to shape the language and functionality of the platform. The major innovations in Twitter that allowed people to reply to others, identify trends, and improve functionality have all been led by the users. Notably, the users started the @ symbol to signify a reply message to someone, and users also created the hashtag (#) symbol to easily identify a trend or a topic so that others could follow. Lastly, Twitter opened up their application program interface to allow users and programmers to develop new applications. To date, there are hundreds of Twitter applications for different functions, such as tracking the latest trends (Twitscoop, Tweetscan, and Tpsy), sharing linked information (Bit.ly, miny url), integrating files and images (Twitpic, Twitvid), analyzing account information (Klout, Twitter Grader), and using iPhone-specific apps (Tweetdeck, Tweetlogix).

Twitter Media Disruption

The term ‘media disruption’ refers to how Twitter is interrupting the normal course of operations for mainstream media. According to Dan Gilmore (2004), “the collision of journalism and technology is having major consequences for three constituencies: journalists, newsmakers, and the audience” (Gilmore, 2004, p. 237). Many of the impacts of Twitter are similar to citizen journalism, but Twitter has more functions as a technological application that allows its users to instantaneously share and communicate in large groups like no other media platform. Even Facebook, which is the world’s most popular SM application, cannot communicate with large groups like Twitter because of its privacy settings. Because of its unique characteristics, Twitter has created its own space where it is able to transform media.

In the most recent report by the Pew Research Center’s Project for Excellence in Journalism, *State of the News Media 2012*, the results suggest that SM has caused a change in the traditional pattern of news consumption. SM are “becoming an added rather than an alternative way that people get news” and “mostly an additional way to get news, rather than a replacement” (Mitchell, Rosenstiel, & Christian, 2012). The results of this study seem to downplay the impact of SM on traditional news, but other results have identified significant increases in SM-related news consumption. Although only 9% of current traffic to news sites comes from either Facebook or Twitter, when compared to 2009 figures, only 6% of traffic came from either; over a 50% increase in 3 years (Mitchell, Rosenstiel, & Christian, 2012). This study also explores the differences between Twitter and Facebook: “On Facebook, the news comes mostly through family and friends. On Twitter, people tend to get news from a broader mix of recommenders” (Mitchell et al., 2012).

Within a sporting context, much of the debate about how Twitter is changing media and society has relied more on anecdotal evidence published in traditional media platforms than the quantifiable change demonstrated through the Pew Research Center. From a sporting context, stories about how Twitter is changing sport have been featured in such publications as *Sport Illustrated* (Gregory, 2009), *TIME Magazine* (S. Johnson, 2009), and

traditional newspapers (Reiter, 2009). Since 2009, popular news outlets related to media and sports suggest that Twitter is a paradigm-shifting platform. For example, an article from Sports Illustrated focuses on how Twitter allows fans to “bask in the reflected glory” (Gregory, 2009) because they follow a winner on Twitter. Twitter is satisfying a “fans’ thirst for a closer connection to big-time athletes” and “peels back the curtain on an athlete’s existence, showcasing personality layers never seen at press conferences” (Gregory, 2009). An article in Time magazine by renowned technology writer Steve Johnson shows how Twitter is changing the way people consume media: while watching television or live events, a public conversation can be followed on Twitter linking people who share common interests (S. Johnson, 2009). Johnson talks about Twitter users spreading feature stories from traditional media platforms as a way to receive news via passed links and tweet-based customer interaction (2009), which is a phenomenon that supports Twitter as a disruptive SM platform.

While Twitter is only ranked eighth in the web information company Alexa’s daily rankings by reach and page views, it is arguably more influential within the fields of media and sports (Alexa, 2012). The SM platform Facebook is ranked second and YouTube is ranked third, but they are not as widely reported or used in a media and sports context. Even though Twitter may not be the most widely used SM platform, it should still be considered the most disruptive to sports media relations, as Twitter is extensively used by all sports media stakeholders. As a testament to how popular Twitter is in a sporting context, it is estimated that more than 70 million people use Twitter to follow professional athletes and sports teams (Campbell, 2012).

Twitter can be deemed the most disruptive SM platform to sports due to the structural design of the platform, ease of use with mobile devices, and fit with the lifestyle of an athlete. When Evan Williams and Jack Dorsey established the structural design of Twitter, they specifically made it simple and easy to use: a tweet is only 140 characters and can easily be completed from a mobile phone or a computer. This short message structure has made it

easier for athletes to use than blogging. When I was working in professional sports, very few players were interested in blogging, and media relations staff had a hard time convincing players to write a blog. Structuring a full paragraph is a lot more time-consuming and challenging than simply typing 140 characters.

When you compare the ease of use for Twitter with other SM platforms, Twitter is much faster and simpler to use. Other SM platforms like YouTube and Facebook require more time and effort to create, read, and re-distribute content. Facebook is much more visual and the main interface almost mirrors that of a simple website, while YouTube requires the user to videotape content and upload it to the platform. Facebook has also become a more private network than Twitter, because users must mutually agree to exchange information, whereas Twitter users do not need to mutually agree. This asymmetric position where sports teams and athletes can follow only a few chosen accounts while being followed by millions users make it an attractive tool for communications (J. Porter, 2011). This growing importance of Twitter has been observed by Farhi (2009): “its speed and brevity make it ideal for pushing scoops and breaking news to Twitter-savvy readers” (Farhi, 2009).

Unlike Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube, and other popular SM platforms, Twitter was specifically designed for the mobile phone. The structure of 140 characters was based on SMS text messaging, which is the most popular activity across mobile phone users. In 2009, the Pew Internet and American Life Project reported that “Twitter users are more mobile, less tethered by technology” (Lenhart & Fox, 2009). The report also highlighted some interesting findings about Twitter users that stood out from other users of the Internet or SM platforms: Twitter users were more likely to read a newspaper online, on a cell phone, or on a smartphone than reading a physical copy, and Twitter users are more likely to have a cell phone and use it for text messaging (Lenhart & Fox, 2009). Research published by Ipsos Media CT (2012) identified that Twitter users in Great Britain are most likely to access the social platform using a mobile (68%). Compared with the other SM platforms — Facebook

(51%) and LinkedIn (33%) — it appears that Twitter users have more mobile lifestyles (Ipsos MediaCT, 2012).

An athlete's lifestyle and that of sports journalists also lend themselves to Twitter better than other SM platforms. When an athlete is not playing or practicing their sport, they are likely to be travelling or waiting in hotel lobby. These athletes spend half of their working season on the road competing against other teams and do not have access to their home computers or family members. It is also common for an athlete to be living in a different city than family and friends, which requires the player to keep in touch with more people through some form of communications platform. Overall, the mobile nature of Twitter fits well with an athlete's lifestyle.

For a fan who reads the sports section, listens to sports radio, watches sports on television, and attends live sports events, Twitter is able to be more commonly used than Facebook and YouTube. While this has not been empirically proven, anecdotal evidence points towards Twitter being used more in different media and sports contexts than Facebook or YouTube. In an online video interview with Dana White, the founder and owner of Ultimate Fighting Championship, Dana acclaims Twitter as the "...greatest marketing tool in the history of the world and it is free" (Puopolo, 2011). Dana White is an infamous Twitter user: he tweets more than twenty times per day and has over two million followers. In the interview, Dana speaks about Twitter being a good tool for business marketing because it provides a direct connection with the audience, it allows you to convey genuine emotions, and the communication is in real time so that you do not have to wait several days to learn about an issue. An endorsement for Twitter by one of the highest-valued sports brands in the world cannot go unnoticed: during UFC fights and sports events like the NHL playoffs, tweets are posted live on the arena video board and used for contests in the arena. Tweets are also used during the broadcast of a game as part of a discussion with fans, similar to a call-in talk show. This shows how Twitter has penetrated sports media in a way that no other SM platform can match.

Empirical research is starting to emerge that supports Twitter as the most disruptive SM platform overall. After three years of conducting digital platform and new media research, Edison research has attempted to gauge the public awareness of tweets in traditional media such as TV, radio, newspapers, and websites. In the report, it highlights that although only 10% of Americans aged 12+ are actual users of Twitter, 89% of Americans aged 12+ are aware of it as a media platform (Webster, 2012). The key learning from the new study is that 44% of Americans aged 12+ hear or read about tweets almost every day through other media platforms (Webster, 2012). The author of the research report suggests that “most Americans view Twitter as a purely broadcast network” and that the real influence of Twitter occurs by looking at the offline impacts of Tweets; however, other recent research reports suggest that Twitter has greater importance as a news source of its own and as a strategic communications tool for athletes and teams to manage their media profile. Sears’ (2011) thesis on Twitter’s impact on sports journalism interviewed nine prominent sports journalists who agree that Twitter is a significant source of content for the sports journalist profession. In addition, Kwak and Lee’s (2010) topological analysis of 106 million tweets suggests that the majority of trending topics are re-tweets — a function of Twitter that reposts others’ tweets as a means to further disseminate that information. These reports demonstrate the prevalent use of Twitter as an autonomous source for news, which could be considered a form of disintermediation whereby users go straight to Twitter for news and skips the journalist as a gatekeeper or intermediary.

Situations of disintermediation whereby the traditional sports journalist or intermediary is being avoided and news is being distributed directly to fans through Twitter are becoming a regular occurrence in sport. Traditionally, if a superstar athlete retired, a large press conference would be organized and the player would address the media to alert their fans. Most recently in June 2011, Shaquille O’Neil announced his retirement by sending a message and short video link through Twitter. First, this announcement was sent to the over 2 million followers of Shaq. Upon receiving the message in Twitter, news agencies like

the Associated Press rebroadcast the news through their networks, alerting sports fans that did not receive it through Twitter through traditional means such as the television, radio, or newspaper channels (Associated Press, 2011). This Shaquille O'Neal retirement message is an example of an athlete using Twitter as a strategic management tool that outpaces traditional media.

While the discussion thus far has been primarily centered on Twitter being the most disruptive SM for media and sports, this dissertation has not properly explored the presence of the most-visited SM platform: Facebook. According to online measurement service Experian Hitwise, Facebook had 65% of the United States market share in visits to SM platforms compared with YouTube's 19% and Twitter's 1%. Based on the market share of visits alone, one might argue that Facebook is the most disruptive SM platform, however, empirical studies conducted to date point to Facebook having very distinct uses that limit its media influence.

Previous studies have used the Uses and Gratification framework to explore the impact of Facebook. Uses and Gratification research to date defines Facebook as a "social" platform whereas Twitter is a "news" platform. In 2008, a Uses and Gratification study of 116 college students identified the most common uses of Facebook: to keep in touch with old and new friends (Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008). A later study in 2010 compared the uses of Facebook with the uses of Instant Messaging, interviewing 77 university students to understand the key differences between the two tools (Quan-Haase & Young, 2010). In this study, Facebook and Instant Messaging uses were deemed to be similar and different: the authors claimed that Facebook fulfilled social needs by "allowing users to conveniently broadcast social information asynchronously" (Quan-Haase & Young, 2010, p. 359), while Instant Messaging was deemed to serve a less important social purpose. In other words, Facebook was deemed to be a tool for broadcasting social information whereas Instant Messaging was deemed to be a tool for more one-to-one intimate connections. When comparing the "social" nature of Facebook with the "news" and "live game" factors involved

in sports media (see the Chapter 7 Twitter Uses and Gratification study), evidence supports the statement that Twitter is a more disruptive SM platform for media and sports than Facebook (P. Johnson & Yang, 2009; Liu, Cheung, & Lee, 2010).

The lengthy discussion around Twitter being the most disruptive SM platform was conducted for two reasons: 1) the discussion clearly demonstrates the importance of Twitter when compared to other SM platforms, justifying the investigation into Twitter versus other platforms, and 2) by identifying Twitter as the most disruptive SM platform, it allows sports media relations to focus their management time and efforts on one platform versus multiple platforms. While this observation has been based on anecdotal evidence and comparisons of previous empirical studies, it has yet to be definitively proven. If this investigation into Twitter can empirically prove that Twitter is the most influential platform, it would be an important breakthrough for media relations and sports.

This chapter further explored the media sport phenomenon by looking at the historical overview of the major SM platforms. The chapter explored the wide ranging impacts that SM is having on society: individuals have shifted from being content consumers to being content producers, thereby increasing the fragmentation amongst media choices for consumers. With a clear understanding of the history of the relationship between sports, media and media technology clearly established, the next chapter will transition in examine the role and history of sports communications. Chapter four will provide a brief history of sports communications and review academic investigations into sports communications.

CHAPTER 4
SPORTS COMMUNICATIONS

Sport receives more coverage in the media than any other industry. There are sports in the daily newspaper and on the nightly news, as well as many other formats such as sports magazines, sports-only radio stations, and sports-only television stations. The sheer popularity of sports within media has created a need for professional sports teams to master the art of sports communications. As discussed in Chapter two, there is a symbiotic relationship between sports and media: media benefits from the audience that sports provides and sports benefit from the attention that media generates. To clarify terminology for the readers, the term ‘sports communications’ is used interchangeably with the term ‘sports public relations’, as these terms are used interchangeably within the sports industry and education sectors. For the purposes of this chapter, the term ‘sports communications’ will be used rather than ‘sports public relations’.

Before this research begins to explore how SM is reshaping sports communications, this chapter will define sports communications as a role within professional sports, provide a brief history of sports communications, and review academic investigations into sports communications. Taking time to understand the evolution and the investigations of sports communications will provide further insight into the impact of social media.

Defining Sports Communications

Although little research has been devoted to sports communications in general (Boyle & Haynes, 2011; Hardin & McClung, 2002; Hopwood, Skinner, & Kitchin, 2012; McCleneghan, 1995; Neupauer, 2001; Stoldt, Smetana, & Miller, 2000), even less research has been conducted on professional teams’ sports communication. When looking for the most commonly accepted definitions about sports communications or sports public relations, I have relied on sport-related textbooks. Human Kinetics is North America’s leading publisher of educational products for the physical activity and health fields. They have three publications that supply a definition for ‘sports communications’ and ‘sports public relations’. A summary of these definitions can be found in Table 1.

Table 1
Definition of Sports Communications or Sports Public Relations

Publication	Definition
<i>Sports Marketing</i> Chapter 16: Public Relations	An interactive marketing communications strategy that seeks to create a variety of content for media designed to convey the organization's philosophies, goals and objectives to an identified group of publics, for the purposes of establishing a relationship built on comprehension, interest, and support (Mullin, Hardy, & Sutton, 2007, p. 385).
<i>Contemporary Sport Management</i> Chapter 11: Public Relations and Crisis Communication in Sport	Sport public relations may best be defined as the management of information flow between a sport entity and its key publics, both internal and external, to present the sport organization in the most favorable manner possible and to establish mutually beneficial relationships.
* <i>Sport Public Relations</i> Chapter 1: Introducing Sport Public Relations & <i>Contemporary Sport Management</i> Chapter 13: Communication in the Sport Industry	Sport public relations is a managerial communication-based function designed to identify a sport organization's key publics, evaluate its relationships with those publics, and foster desirable relationships between the sport organization and those publics (Stoldt, Dittmore, & Branvold, 2006: p. 2)
	*Note: the same definition was included in both publications.

Amongst the three different definitions, there are common terms that appear in all: the term 'publics' refers to small groups of people who follow a particular issue closely; the term 'relationship' refers to an emotional connection, which is combined with positive terms such as 'support,' 'mutually beneficial' and 'desirable'; the term 'management' refers to the accomplishment of goals in an effective and efficient manner; and the term 'identify' refers to determining different demographic groups of people. The only definition that contains all four terms ('publics,' 'relationships,' 'management', and 'identify') is presented in the *Sport Public Relations* and *Contemporary Sport Management* textbooks. The fact that this definition contains all four terms would make it arguably the most comprehensive definition for this research.

Similar to the difficulty in finding a single definition for sports communication, there are also issues with finding literature related to the roles and responsibilities for sports

communications within a professional sporting context. It is important to define the roles and responsibilities of sports communications professionals to supply researchers with context when trying to communicate how sports communication is being impacted by social media. A review of *Sports Marketing*, *Strategic Sports Communication*, *Contemporary Sport Management*, and *Sports Public Relations* was conducted to discover the different roles and responsibilities of a person working in sports communications for a professional sports team.

Within the four textbooks, there were three common themes for the role of sports communication within a professional team: media relations, community relations, and other relations. From the three roles identified, media relations received the greatest amount of coverage within the textbook chapters. According to Stoldt, Dittmore and Pederson (2011), sports media relations professionals “are responsible for creating, coordinating, and organizing information about the entity and disseminating it to the public indirectly through the mass media or through direct channels (e.g. Organizational Web site)” (Stoldt, Dittmore, & Pedersen, 2011: p. 283; (Stoldt et al., 2011, p. 283). Kathy Connors from Octagon suggests that media relations specialists should adopt skills such as building relationships, maintaining communication, creating public relations plans, making pitches, managing the story, creating talking points, and managing crises (Mullin et al., 2007).

The specific roles and responsibilities within media depend upon the size of the team or organization (Stoldt et al., 2006), however, regardless of the setting and size of the team, media relations responsibilities include “cultivating publicity, managing statistical services, managing the media at games and competitions, and managing Web sites” (Stoldt et al., 2006, p. 12). Other responsibilities of media relations include such things as writing news releases, planning news conferences, arranging interviews with players, preparing media kits, and managing the press box. Interestingly, most of these roles identified closely with the press agency-publicity model of public relations (J. E. Grunig & Grunig, 1992): the role primarily focuses on obtaining positive and favorable coverage from the media. Teams

achieve this positive feedback by providing assistance and services for the mainstream media journalists to facilitate research and the writing of stories.

The second most commonly identified role for sports communications within the textbook chapters reviewed was community relations. According to Stoldt et al. (2006) “community relations may be defined as organization activity designed to foster desirable relationships between the sport organization and the communities in which it is either located or has strategic interests” (Stoldt et al., 2006, p. 14). The community relations department within a professional team will organize activities such as food drives, player appearances, reading programs, ticket donation programs, and the team’s involvement in charitable work. While media relations have traditionally been conceptualized to deliver short-term goals, community relations is more of a long-term investment for a professional team. The general goal for community relations is to develop future fans that create positive stories within the media and overall community.

The third most common theme related to sports communications was a category of activities referred to as ‘other’. This category includes items such as employee relations, investor relations, customer relations, donor relations, and government regulations, as well as a variety of different stakeholder groups that the teams tend to work with. Within some teams, these activities are referred to as corporate communications and actually have a separate staff manager. Only those teams that have large enough business organizations (with multiple teams or properties) will typically have someone in a role that deals with other sports communication-related activities.

After a review of formal definitions for sports communications and the related roles and responsibilities, it could be concluded that the role of media relations within the team will have the greatest impact on SM for professional teams.

Evolution of Sports Communications and Professional Teams

In order to understand sports communication, it could be argued that one must understand its general history within a professional sports context. This section will provide a

broad historical understanding of sports communications to demonstrate how the management function has changed over time through the introduction of new technologies.

The first account of public relations in professional sports occurred in 1889, when professional baseball players staged a revolt known as the Brotherhood War (Seymour, 1989). At the time, players started the Brotherhood of Professional Baseball Players as the first 'players association' to protest the Classification Rule, a rule enacted by the owners that gave them the power to determine player salaries based on their play on the field and behaviour off the field, essentially allowing the owners to penalize players for public drunkenness (Anderson, 2001a). This penalty can be considered the first tactic by the owners to manage the image of their team. In response to the Classification Rule, the players association threatened to start an upstart league if the owners did not change their policies. The players used the media to sway public opinion by releasing a "card to the public" to develop fan support for their new league (Anderson, 2001a). During this battle between the owners and the players, both sides used communications strategies with the media to manage positive fan relationships.

While baseball grew in popularity and profits through the early parts of the early 1900s, the 1919 Black Sox Scandal⁴ would be the beginning of a press office for a sports league (Anderson, 2001b). At the time, only a few team owners used sports communications initiatives to sell tickets. The primary communications expense at the time covered the costs of a writer to travel with the team, providing them with easy access to tickets and hosting them during a game with free food and drinks. These tactics would increase the amount of baseball coverage in the newspapers and helped increase attendance at baseball games.⁵ The 1919 Black Sox Scandal was unique because it was a communications crisis that damaged the image of the game. In order to manage the issue, the league hired a new commissioner,

⁴ Eight players allowed the Cincinnati Reds to win the World Series in exchange for a financial payout.

⁵ From 1910 to 1920, coverage of baseball in newspapers grew from 7 to 10 columns in each newspaper (Mott, 1942)

banned the eight players from the league, and developed the Service Bureau, which was the first sports press office.

Through shrewd use of the media, professional baseball would survive the 1919 Black Sox Scandal and most professional team owners would realize the importance of newspaper writers. In return for positive publicity, journalists would travel for free with the team and develop an emotional graft to the team through camaraderie with the athletes and coaches (Towers, 1981). The practice of journalists travelling with a team for free continues today as a way to generate positive media coverage.

Following the baseball crisis and what some term the Golden Era of sports, Pedersen, Miloch, and Laucella (2007) tracked sports communications development into the “perspective period” (1930-1950) and the “transition years” (1950-1970). During the “perspective period” four primary areas of change occurred: change in public perception, reorganization of the newspaper structure, expansion of coverage, and the development of radio. The first trend that impacted professional sports communication for was the expansion of coverage. During this era, the audience began to shift their attention from college to professional sports and the media also started branching out to cover football and basketball. The second shift was the development of radio. Originally, sports team owners feared that radio would negatively impact attendance, however, the popularity of the format grew in the early 1930s as newspaper readers started to question the professionalism of sportswriters (Pedersen et al., 2007). With the growing middle class in America during the “transition years” (1950-1970) and the affordability of television sets, the television quickly began to dominate sports media (Pedersen et al., 2007). During these different eras, sports communications continued to grow in importance.

Since the 1970s and the “transition era” of sports, the role and importance of sports communications has continued to evolve. With each new technology or avenue, sports communications continues to become more complex. Owners of teams understand that a positive image for the team can result in positive business results: even though teams cannot

win a championship every year, if they participate in activities and events within their respective communities they will nurture an emotional connection with fans.

Academic Investigations about Sports Communications

The limited attention that sports communications has received as a form of academic investigation has been frequently discussed by scholars (Anderson, 2001a, 2006; Hopwood, 2005; Irwin, Sutton, & McCarthy, 2008; L'Etang & Hopwood, 2008; Mullin et al., 2007; Pedersen et al., 2007; Stoldt et al., 2006). However, an even narrower focus within the sports communication literature is necessary to learn more about the role of sports communications within a professional sporting context. A review of literature related to the role of sports communications has helped to identify three important themes in this area: the introduction of textbooks, sport and culture, and the necessity of image repair.

The study and research of sports has been a relatively new phenomenon within the academic community in North America. The real growth started in the 1990s as sports management-specific schools opened and textbook publishers started to publish textbooks to support teaching. Some of the popular and early editions of textbooks within sports management schools in North America include: *Sports Marketing* (Mullin, Hardy, & Sutton, 1993), *Contemporary Sport Management* (Parks, Quarterman, & Thibault, 1998), *Sport Marketing: A Canadian Perspective* (O'Reilly & Séguin, 2009) and *International Sport Management* (Li, MacIntosh, & Bravo, 2011). With the popularity of sport management growing, specialized textbooks started to support teaching specifically for sports communications. Some of the popular and early edition of the textbooks within sports communications include: *Sport Public Relations: Managing Organizational Communication* (Stoldt et al., 2006), *Strategic Sport Communications* (Pedersen et al., 2007), and *Media relations in Sport* (Schultz, Caskey, & Esherick, 2012).

Within the 'sport and culture' theme, L'Etang's work in *Public Relations Review* (2006) served as an almost seminal piece of research that connected sport, culture, and sport communications. L'Etang conducted a discursive review on a number of topics that identified

the importance of sport to global culture, media, and commerce. The article identified a lack of literature that related to the role of public relations in sport and called for a new research agenda. L'Etang's work was later followed up with a Sports Public Relations special edition of *Public Relations Review* (J. L'Etang, 2008). Within the special edition, there were twelve articles related to sports and public relations. Amongst the articles, six of the twelve were about crisis management or image repair, one of the articles focused on public relations involving a mediated form of communication, and the other six articles were related to different topics that ranged from gender issues and sports marketing to public relations strategy. The inordinate number of articles related to crisis management and image repair emphasizes its importance in the role of sports public relations.

Wilson, Stavros, and Westberg (2008) conducted eight in-depth interviews with Australian Football senior executives in order to examine the impact of player transgressions on their sponsor relations, such as drug use, assault, driving offences, gambling, and on-field violence. It was determined that it was easier to control player's on-field transgressions than off-field transgressions. The sponsor's type of business dictates the level of sensitivity to particular types of transgressions, as the sponsoring brand often has values that are inconsistent with the player's transgression. For this reason, it was suggested that sponsors are becoming more astute at aligning the sport with their image. This research has highlighted the importance of public relations and specifically crisis management to the sponsor relationship.

In another example of crisis communication research in professional sport, Bruce and Tini (2008) conducted a content analysis of media coverage from an Australasian men's rugby league salary cap scandal. In their review, they found that sports fans have an intense relationship with players, which gives professional sports teams the ability to divert attention from the players, portraying them as innocent victims to reduce negative publicity.

A review of sport-based textbooks, journals about sport and culture, and an emphasis on image repair within a sporting context demonstrates that sports communications is becoming an increasingly popular topic of investigation.

Twitter and Sports Media Relations

While there is empirical and anecdotal evidence that confirms Twitter as a disruptive form of media within a sports and media context, limited research has been done to explain the impact of Twitter on the role of media relations in sports. When exploring the development of media technologies, it is not surprising that the initial findings on the impacts of the innovation are limited. The development of media technologies is an ongoing process and cannot be perceived as a single event (Meikle & Young, 2012). The process of understanding innovations in media technologies is like building blocks: once you put one building block in place, you can then add a second block with new capabilities, but the new capabilities from the second block would not have been possible if not for the first block. Thus, the understanding of how Twitter has emerged as a media platform within sports cannot be comprehended without first investigating the role of media relations within sports. If you consider Raymond Boyle's (2012) work about sports journalism's historical shifts based on new communication technologies, one might assume the emergence of new technologies such as Twitter will not eradicate the previous media forms, but will instead force existing sports media relations standards to adjust to new methods of communication.

The introduction of Twitter is changing the management of sports media relations. Sports media relations practitioners have traditionally acted as a gatekeeper, controlling access to the players and managing the relationships with traditional media. In this role, the media relations practitioner regularly communicates with different newspaper, radio, and broadcast media about the day-to-day activities of the team. Whether it is the time and location of practice, the status of an injured player, or arranging a press conference for the coach, media relations practitioners work on behalf of the team to control access and manage the profile of the team within their local market. When situations like an indiscretion outside

of the game go public, it is also the role of the media relations staff to manage the crisis. The media relations staff will share information about the situation with the media, control access to the player, and generally help the player and their family deal with the media.

Changes in the role of media relations and sports are not new. Significant change in media relations and sports started with the growth of sport content distribution and the introduction of new technology (Schultz et al., 2012). Prior to the 1980s, the distribution of sports content was dominated by local newspaper, radio, and television stations. The televising of sports was primarily done through three to five major national networks. With a relatively small number of media outlets, sports media relations practitioners were able to develop strong relationships with reporters and the athletes they protected. As a result of these relationships, reports of indiscretions by players or management may not have been reported, but during the 1980s and 1990s new technology, government regulation, and demand for sports content caused an explosion of sports media outlets. Breakthroughs in technology like the satellite television, the home computer, and the Internet impacted media relations and removed some of the structures that helped control the media presence of athletes.

The new technologies weakened the power of the traditional mass media and provided more options for sports audiences to access sports content. National network broadcasters like American Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) no longer had exclusive access to college football games as new channels like the Entertainment and Sports Programming Network (ESPN) started to program sports. ESPN was one of the first all sports cable television channels.⁶ ESPN has grown into one of the most influential distributors of sports content with outlets in television, magazines, radio, events, and websites. The success of ESPN would be followed by other sports-only television networks such as Turner Sports, TSN, and Sportsnet. The increase in sports television and its social and cultural impacts on sport have been documented and discussed from both a United States (McChesney, 1989) and a

⁶ ESPN started in 1979 after Bill Rasmussen, the sports communication manager for the now defunct NHL Hartford Whalers, was fired from the team.

European Football perspective (Boyle & Haynes, 2004). McChesney (1989) suggests that the increase in television brought about an immediate change in the process of newspaper sports journalism: when sports telecasting provided the highlights and the scores of games, newspaper sport journalists started to spend less time recounting the story of the game and instead provided the reader with “more analysis, background information and statistical data that were difficult to find from other sources” (McChesney, 1989: p.66). With this change in coverage by newspapers and the increase in television networks that broadcasted 24 hours of sports contents a day, the audience demanded more content such as increased access to players and news about the team.

The increased demand in sports led to the first all-sports talk radio station, WFAN, which was started in New York City in 1987 (Eisenstock, 2001). WFAN was the pioneer in all-sports talk radio, spurring a rapid growth in this new format. By 1998, there would be 251 all-sports stations in the United States, and by 2007 it would grow to 557 stations (Janssen, 2008). Similar to the increase in all-sports cable television, the increase in all-sports radio stations required 24 hours of content a day. This demand for sports content was facilitated by new technology, government regulations that provided more licenses for broadcasters, and the insatiable appetite of sports fans for more analysis.

The introduction of the Internet has led professional teams to further cater to this demand: team-owned webpages have had a significant impact on media relations in sports. Prior to the Internet, the distribution of sports content was solely in the hands of the traditional media. The role of the media relations staff for a team was to manage relationships with the mass media in order to generate favorable publicity. Upon the introduction of team-owned webpages, teams were able to control the news agenda for the first time. Recognizing the importance of their websites, teams even hired former newspaper sports journalists to keep readers engaged (personal communication, John McCauley May 2, 2011). This creation and distribution of content was a new development for media relations staff — they were no longer just an intermediary responsible for managing relationships with the mass media, they

were now the producer and distributor of content, directly competing with the mass media. Media relations staff had to keep their existing stable of mass media stakeholders happy while also producing their own privileged content that the mass media could not get access to.

Recognizing the value of sports content, media companies in the United Kingdom and the United States have taken ownership interest in clubs. The ownership or financial interest in sports clubs is seen to be an economic strategy by the media companies to control the rights to sports (Boyle & Haynes, 2004; Cleland, 2009). While the convergence of media and sport ownership continues to be a mass of inter-related relationships, teams realized the value of their digital assets. While most of these relationships started with media companies owning sports teams, some sports teams like the Toronto Maple Leafs realized the value of controlling media early on and started Leafs TV, an exclusive television platform for their team. While LeafsTV may struggle to attract large audiences because of its narrow approach to content, the channel has helped the team leverage larger rights fees and also improve its digital media operations.

LeafsTV is an example of how a team became a media enterprise. Today, most teams employ their own media professionals to help outsource television rights and to operate and expand their digital assets. However, while the ownership of sports rights and media companies is an invaluable asset to teams, SM platforms like Twitter may release some of the control to the fans and thus upset the established control over the content.

The Internet removed the barriers to entry for the production of media, because the costs and technology to produce and distribute content ranged from a small investment to free of charge (Boyle & Haynes, 2004); fans who were previously followers of sports were now becoming the content creators and distributors through blogs and fan-controlled websites. This was the beginning of user-generated content with sports, which added a new facet to media relations: not only did the teams have to manage the traditional mainstream media and produce their own content, but now a plethora of other relationships needed to be managed

with blogs, fan websites, and sport message boards. This impact of digital media on sport has been well documented within the sports media literature: interactivity and the fan (Boyle & Haynes, 2004), sports in the digital age (Boyle & Haynes, 2009), and sports message boards (Clavio, 2008a). Notably, one of the few and only writings to talk about media relations in a new media and user-generated content context can be found in a textbook about Media Relations in Sport (Schultz et al., 2012). In the opening chapter, the textbook shares the historic model of communications and contrasts it with a modern model:

The sports media used to be the ranchers---controlling production and distribution of content; deciding the what, when and where of audience consumption. But that system, just like Schramm's vision for free agency is long gone. In its place has risen a new model fueled by new technology and defined by interactivity, audience fragmentation and empowerment, and instantaneous access. The evolution marks an important transition for what we call media relation in sport. Sports media have evolved from a fairly closed, one-way communications system based on distribution of content to the mass audiences to a much more open and interactive system aimed at interconnected niche audiences who can now also create and distribute their own content (Schultz et al., 2012, p. 1)

The historic model of sports media relations was influential from the 1850s to the 1980s. In this first model, if sports teams, organizations, or athletes wanted to communicate with the mass sports audience, they did it through the mass media.

This model is similar to the press-agentry and publicity model (J.E. Grunig & Hunt, 1984). In this second model, media relations practitioners need to build as many relationships as possible to generate positive publicity for their team. While the historic model presented by Schultz (2012) is accurate in showing how control of the flow of information to fans is mediated through mass media interests, it could be argued that it does not depict how heavily mass media relies on the sports content producers including athletes and sports organizations. The historical model depicts a one-way relationship between mass media and the sports content producers, which assumes that press agents always need to push out information to the mass media in order to generate publicity. But this model has become flawed, as it does not take into account the symbiotic relationship between sports and mass media (Boyle & Haynes, 2009; Whannel, 1992). Without the sports content, the mass media cannot benefit

from the advertising revenues that are generated by the audiences' demand for the content. A revision to the historic model by Schultz (2012) accounts for this reciprocal relationship, recognizing that the information needs of mass media organizations also rely on sports content producers (see Figure 2). This perspective is consistent with the public information model of public relations presented by Grunig and Hunt (1984), which shows that the sports team focuses on providing services to the mass media that are already covering the sport. An important role within media relations in sport is the actual servicing of the mass media: on game day, approved mass media are provided with a press room to file and write stories, a meal during the game, a press box to watch the game, game notes prior to the game with statistical highlights, and even a post-game press conference. These are all services that a team's media relations department manages.

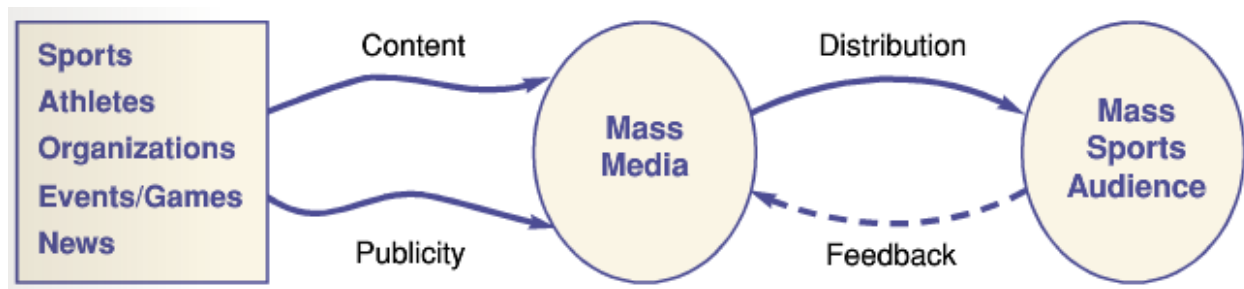


Figure 2 – Historic Model of Sports-Media-Audience Communication, 1850s to 1980s (Schultz, 2012)

The historic model presented by Schultz (2012) was in existence for over fifty years and, if were not for the introduction of the Internet, this model may still be relevant today. The modern model of sports-media-audience communications in Figure 3 is the first to depict the new reality of media relations in sports. The media relations professional now has a more complex task than just managing a few relationships with mass media outlets by speaking to their representatives at the game: the process of sports media relations now consists of a large network of stakeholders with different needs and abilities to distribute both favourable and non-favourable content about a team. The growth of technology through the Internet and

satellite transmission has provided the building blocks that have made it possible for sports communications to change from the historic one-way model to the modern two-way multi-directional model.

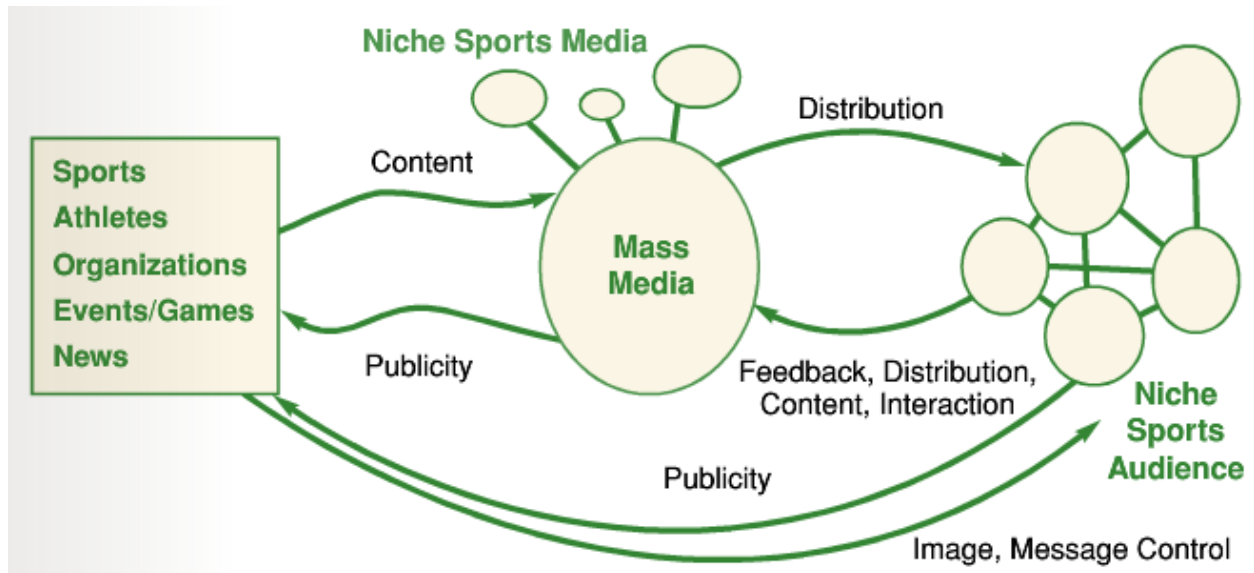


Figure 3 – Modern Model of Sports-Media-Audience Communication, 1990s to present (Schultz, 2012).

After comparing and contrasting the historical model with the Modern Model of Sports-Media-Audience Communications, four additions were made to the model: “Niche Sports Media,” “Niche Sports Audience,” “Two-Way communication,” and “Direct Access” to the audience from the sports content producers.

Niche Sports. In the historic model, media outlets had to program content geared towards the mass audience, focusing on sports that generated the greatest audience to attract the greatest advertising revenue. At the time, the forms of media and distribution channels were controlled by a few mass media outlets that had the infrastructure and financial resources to distribute the content. Technological innovation such as live satellite transmission and the Internet improved access for those without the widespread infrastructure, increasing the options for sports content by creating more channels that met the programming needs of new niche audiences (Schultz et al., 2012). With new technology, a fan is no longer limited to just watching one NFL game on television at a time dictated by

the broadcaster that had the rights to broadcast the game. Through packages such as NFL Live, they can choose to watch all NFL games with multiple options.

Two-Way Communications. With the exception of feedback that sports fans would provide to mass media through forms such as letters to the editor or a radio call in show, the historical model suggests that all communication is one-way uni-directional from the sports content producers. The new model represents two-way communications between all three major stakeholders in the model: sports content producers, mass media, and niche sports audience. The Internet has enabled this two-way communication and has facilitated its spread throughout the fan base of professional sports.

Direct Access. The old model clearly had the mass media in the middle and, with the exception of personal meetings with an athlete, the fan and the sports content producers rarely had direct contact with each other. The new model allows direct communication between the fan and the content producer. This change is significant because it has been a major shift in the sports media paradigm: athletes and other sports content sites have enabled fans to get direct unfiltered access to information. This shift is important because it is also the beginning of teams producing and distributing content without a mediated presence in the middle. This direct access weakened the power of traditional mass media because these content producers now have an avenue to distribute their own content and fans also had another source to consume sports content.

Impact of Social Media

A review of the new model of sport communications demonstrates that the media relations profession is changing. While empirical studies about SM and media relations are limited, there have been some studies that point to changes happening within the worlds of SM, public relations, and journalism. A review of these research studies may help indicate some of the ways that Twitter is impacting sports media relations.

Within the areas of public relations and social media, online surveys have been used to investigate the uses of social media. The most reported and well-known survey is a

longitudinal survey that has been conducted since 2006 that started with questions on public relations and blogs and has since grown to include SM (Wright & Hinson, 2010). The 2010 results (n=557) demonstrate a change in public relations professionals' belief that "SM including blogs complement mainstream traditional media": this number of votes about SM complementing mainstream media by public relations professionals increased from 58% in 2007 to 83% in 2010. A similar increase occurred in the belief that SM enhances public relations practice: 66% agreed in 2008 while 81% agreed in 2010. When it came to questions related to SM being a more accurate source of information than traditional media, the results suggest that SM is not a trusted source: only 8% of respondents in 2010 agreed with the statement that SM is more accurate than mainstream media. Overall, the longitudinal results of the survey indicate the growing importance of SM to the function of public relations.

In addition, a survey of 281 public health departments was conducted to determine the levels of adoption and usage of SM (Avery et al., 2010). The results of the survey indicated that adoption was in its infancy as less than one fifth of the respondents were using a form of social media. However, these results lag behind the use of SM by Fortune 500 companies: while only 17% of health practitioners engage with SM (Avery et al., 2010), 76% of Fortune 500 companies are users of SM (R.W. Lariscy, E.J. Avery, K.D. Sweetser, & P. Howes, 2009). Such a disparity in usage amongst different groups suggests that the adoption of SM by different niches of users will vary considerably.

Some research has attempted to understand the differing ways that professionals use SM within the fields of business journalism and sports journalism. In a telephone survey of business journalists (n=200), researchers discovered that business journalists used webpages and directories as a more important "first line" source than social media, and business journalists also followed SM more than they actually participated (R. W. Lariscy, E. J. Avery, K. D. Sweetser, & P. Howes, 2009). An online survey of sports journalists (n=146) indicated a similar finding with regard to business journalists: "that for the most part their daily news work routines remained the same" (Schultz & Sheffer, 2010, p. 235). The study also noted

the differences in type and age of journalist: print journalists viewed Twitter as a promotional tool to point to their work, while broadcast journalists were more focused on Twitter's ability to closely connect with fans to increase interactivity. The research indicated that younger journalists are using Twitter more actively than older journalists and that Twitter was more likely to be used for breaking news and promotion. In a follow up study by the same authors, a content analysis methodology of 297 sports journalist tweets (n=1,008) revealed a different pattern of reported usage (Sheffer & Schultz, 2010). In a content analysis of tweets, 58% of the analysed posts had some form of opinion or commentary whereas the survey results indicated that only 33% of the sports journalists had posted an opinion or commentary.

The review of literature related to the impact of SM in a sporting context would suggest that SM is used differently by different groups of people, and that reported use may not be the same as actual use. These findings are important because the opinion of people within the sports media paradigm (journalists, broadcasters, etc.) will often be as important as the opinion of media relations staff.

Summary of Sports Communications

The literature review in this chapter discussed the relevant research on sports communications, explored Twitter as a disruptive form of media in sports, outlined a theoretical model for sports communications, and reviewed studies that were related to SM in sports that could impact media relations.

The findings from the literature review suggest that Twitter is one of the leading SM platforms impacting sports communications today. Anecdotal evidence such as a review of SM crisis situations, recent market research, and personal observations of sports coverage would suggest that Twitter is also one of the most disruptive SM platforms for professional sports.

While empirical investigations into Twitter and sports have started to be published, no one has been able to explicitly explain how Twitter impacts sports media relations. The most related research to Twitter and media relations for sports was an exploratory study on Twitter

for sports journalists (Schultz & Sheffer, 2010). While this study contributes to the literature about SM and sports, it does not speak to Twitter's impact nor does it specifically explore the role of media relations. This is a significant research gap: as Twitter is arguably the most disruptive SM platform and media relations is an important management function, it is necessary to focus an academic investigation on Twitter's impact on the media relations profession.

At the present time, the only theory to help explain media relations in sports is the modern model of sports-media-audience communication, used primarily from the 1850s to 1980s (Schultz, 2012). While this model addresses many to the changes in sports communications, it is not specific to Twitter and it does not address media relations as a form of management in sports.

This chapter reviewed the history and role of sports communication within a professional sports context. The chapter identified a gap in the literature related to the impact of SM and more specifically Twitter and media relations in a sporting context. Due to the emerging nature of SM, an exploratory approach to addressing the aforementioned gap will be used. Chapter five will review multi-method approaches to research and identify the methods used for each of the three different investigations.

CHAPTER 5
METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the collection of research methods used to identify how SM has changed the role of sports communications. The goal of this chapter is to supply the reader with contextual information about the different problems, questions, and methods used. As this research has three related studies, specific research methodology issues such as sample size, research instrumentation, and research procedures will not be reviewed in this chapter, but will be reviewed later in the corresponding chapters.

The purpose of this research (as stated in Chapter 1) is to explore how SM is impacting the practice of sports media relations. When I started exploring the research topic in May 2009, SM use and adoption had not reached a level of mass adoption. In April 2009, the digital marketing intelligence firm comScore reported that Twitter had 17,000,000 unique users in the United States, a 3000% increase in usage within two months (Lipsman, 2009). Although this level of explosive growth has slowed, in June 2011 comScore reported 37,000,000 unique US Twitter users (comScore, 2011). In 2009, there was a limited amount of academic research on the effects of SM — notably, many of the journals related to sports, media, and communications had not published an article related to social media. As of May 2009, SM research mostly covered topics such as privacy (Barnes, 2006), public relations (Eyrich, Padman, & Sweetser, 2008; Wright & Hinson, 2009), and networking (Java, Song, Finin, & Tseng, 2007; Naaman, Boase, & Lai, 2009). Thus, further research was required to fill the gap between SM research and professional sports.

An exploratory approach to this research was deemed to be most appropriate due to the rapid growth of SM and the limited academic research conducted on the topic. Although it would have been easier to use one method to answer the research question, the more difficult path of a multi-method approach was deemed necessary. In this effort, I follow the well-regarded sports media expert David Rowe (2004), who agrees that a researcher must use an analytical structure consisting of production, text, and audience in order to critically understand topics related to sport, culture, and media.

The use of multi-method research within communication is a recurrent topic in journals. For the most part, the multi-method discussion has been around the use of qualitative versus quantitative methods. Within communications literature, several journal articles have been published that measure the use of qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. From 1965-1989, Cooper, Potter, and Dupagne (1994) estimated that 7% (95 of 1326) of the work in eight communications journals used both qualitative and quantitative methods. From 1980-1999, Kamhawi and Weaver (2003) estimated that 3% (22 of 889) of articles in ten journals used both qualitative and quantitative. A further study from Trumbo (2004) was conducted from 1990-2000 and replicated the methods used in the study by Cooper, Potter, and Dupagne. After reviewing 2649 articles from eight communications journals, only 2% (60 of the articles) used both quantitative and qualitative methods (Trumbo, 2004). All three of these articles about communication research methods reported less than 8% of studies using mixed methods, and all three articles called for more use of multi-method research.

The review of communication multi-method research reveals three important observations. First, multi-method research is rarely done to test a theory or a hypothesis in communications research. In the Cooper, Potter, and Dupagne (1994) article, 90% of the studies did not test a theory or a hypothesis, and in Trumbo's (2004) article, only 52% of the studies reported testing a theory or hypothesis. This change from one article to the next article suggests a shift away from atheoretical work in communications journals.

The second observation related to the prevalence of content analysis within communications. The most prevalent use of multi-method research reported included some form of content analysis (Trumbo, 2004). This is not surprising as content analysis is a commonly used research method within journalism and other text-based disciplines. The third observation is related to the lack of use of the term 'triangulation' in the communication abstracts and rationale for combining quantitative and qualitative approaches (Trumbo, 2004). This lack of a rationale makes it more challenging to apply triangulation to a

communications-based PhD. For this reason, no attempts will be made in this research to develop triangulation as a method of inquiry.

This scarcity of multi-method research in communications literature is interesting because mass communications researchers like Wimmer and Dominick (2006), who publish introductory mass media research textbooks, recommend the use of more multi-method research within communications. The use of multi-method research is also widely recommended to study complex social phenomena (Brewer & Hunter, 1989; Creswell, 2008). While discussion around the reasons for a lack of multi-method research could not be found within communications literature, Mingers (2001, 2003) writes extensively about the advantages and challenges related to multi-method research within information systems.

Table 2

Mingers Summary of Advantages and Challenges for Multi-Method Research (2001, 2003)

Advantages of Multi-method Approaches	Challenges to Implementation of Multi-method Approaches
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A more comprehensive approach to the phenomenon • Triangulate results • A Broader set of questions can be asked (e.g. what, how, why) • Enable discover 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost of multi-method studies • Publication pressures, reputation and tenure • Availability of multi-method research knowledge • Incompatibility between methods

After considering the lack of multi-method research as well as the potential advantages and challenges to multi-method approaches, I eventually chose the multi-method approach to improve the understanding of the impact of SM on sports communications. To elaborate on the selection of a multi-method approach in more detail, I will share my personal preference to demonstrate how the multi-method approach will help and why the multi-method approach will add to the critical knowledge about SM and sports media relations.

From a personal perspective, I am approaching the dissertation after many years of working in sport and experiencing the impact of new technologies. As a researcher, I inherently approach this research topic with biases and instincts that are a result of my personal experiences in sport. As an example of these instincts, when I first saw the usage of Twitter by celebrities like Ashton Kutcher and also read about celebrity scandals as a result

of Twitter, I surmised that Twitter would have a significant impact on sports media relations. I also have a predisposition for my research to be more applied and relevant to current practices in sports media relations. Thus, the combination of different research methods will help overcome the biases that come from a single method or from my own personal biases.

The importance of my personal experience in the selection of a multi-method approach cannot be overshadowed by my journey to complete the dissertation and develop research skills. As an older student with a young family and a full schedule of teaching each semester, the majority of work on my dissertation has been limited to three-month time periods when I am not teaching. Based on my personal situation, I needed to work on a dissertation whereby I could complete one contribution every year to ensure my research is current to the practice of sports media relations. Rather than use one method or one approach to answering research questions, I had the opportunity to test several methods and become familiar with different approaches to research problems. Each summer, I completed a study that built on the knowledge from the previous year's work. This process of using a new method for inquiry each year not only developed my research skills, but also helped me learn from previous discoveries. This identification of SM research as a process is consistent with Meikle and Young's (2012) point that "the development of media technologies is an ongoing process, not an event" (2012, p. 33). It could be argued that researching media technologies should also be an ongoing process.

When considering a multi-method approach to understanding social media's impact on sports communication, two of the advantages identified by Mingers stand out: a more comprehensive approach and the use of broader questions. By using multiple methods, different aspects of the SM and sports topic can be explained. For example, a strictly quantitative approach could yield a descriptive classification of who follows or uses SM in sports, but it may not provide deep insights into how they use it or the impact on sports communications. The multi-method approach allows the researcher to look at phenomena from multiple lenses and use multiple types of questions. A broader set of questions such as

what, how, and why can be asked through multi-method research, whereas single method research will typically stay within a particular paradigm or type of question. With SM being a relatively new phenomenon within sports media relations, the multi-method approach will enhance our critical thinking about the topic more than a single approach.

The questions in the research project (see Tables 3, 4, and 5) represent a diverse set of problems that cannot be answered with one research project or method. Questions 1-9 are all “what” type of questions, suggesting the objective is exploration or description (Blaikie, 2007). These questions are inductive in nature and require different methods and sample groups in order to be answered properly. Question 10 is a “how” type question, suggesting a deductive approach (Blaikie, 2007) that differs from the inductive approach that was used for questions 1-9.

To help identify the methodologies used, this chapter will outline the research approaches used for Chapter 6-8. A summary table is provided for each chapter to highlight the research purpose, research questions, method, and theoretical framework. It is important to share research questions at the start because “the formulation of research questions is the real starting-point in the preparation of a research design” (Blaikie, 2007: p. 23). With the decision and justification made to use a multi-method and multi-year approach to discover how SM is impacting the practice of sports communications, the first investigation was related to SM crisis situations.

Chapter 6 – Crisis Response and Legal Strategies

The purpose of the first investigation into the impact of SM and sports was to quantify strategies used in response to SM crises and to categorize them into predictable threat groupings. The categorization of such threats to a player or team’s reputation would provide sports communications practitioners with an understanding of the typical sources for the threats. In order to answer the questions, both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to identify and analyze the information. To answer the questions, the theoretical framework for Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) was used as a form of analysis for SM

crisis situations. The analysis of SM crisis situations was similar to case study analysis; however, the analysis focused on 18 cases in total rather than the traditional case study method of one case. The multiple case-study approach was used because the purpose of the chapter was to quantify strategies used to ensure that sports communications managers can gain deeper insight into the source and strategies used in SM crisis situations.

Table 3
Chapter 6 Purpose, Question and Methodology Summary

Chapter/ Year of Study	Purpose/Question	Research Type Method Theoretical Backing
6 2010	<p>P1. The purpose of this chapter was to quantify strategies used in response to social media crises and to categorize them into predictable threat groupings.</p> <p>Q1. To what degree is social media damage initiated by a third party or by the athlete?</p> <p>Q2. What legal strategies have been used in response to social media crises?</p> <p>Q3. What response strategies to a social media crisis are reported through the media?</p>	<p>Quantitative/Qualitative Case Study</p> <p>Situational Crisis Communication Theory</p>

The motivation for understanding risks and rewards of SM for athletes came from an Associated Press report in June 2009: Tony La Russa was planning to sue Twitter because an unauthorized page used his name to make light of drunk driving (Matyszczyk, 2009). The topic of drunk driving and La Russa was particularly sensitive because two baseball players had recently died in a drinking and driving accident. What made this situation more interesting is that it was not La Russa who tweeted the information: an imposter who claimed to be La Russa used his name on Twitter.

In June 2009, Twitter was starting to gain more traction as a mainstream SM platform and was beginning to be used extensively by celebrities and professional athletes. Because of my work in professional sports, I felt that Twitter had the potential to become a game changer. At the time, I was coming across more cases in which Twitter was the source of a story about an athlete in the mainstream press. Many of these stories portrayed the athlete in a negative light and could be considered damaging to their reputation. With an increasing

number of negative stories being generated by Twitter and an increasing number of athletes using Twitter, it followed that there was going to be an increase in the situations that damaged the reputation of the athletes and their teams.

Through meeting the purposes of this first study, team communications managers would have an overview of the typical sources and strategies used to respond to SM crisis situations. The identification of the sources will provide communications managers with a model for managing reputation risks as a result of SM like Twitter. The theoretical model used for collecting the information was SCCT (Coombs & Holladay, 2002). SCCT is informed by Attribution Theory and is designed to predict the reputational cause of a crisis and the corresponding response. Unlike a typical case study that only looks at a few situations, SCCT is an evidence-based framework designed to limit and repair reputational damage.

Previous studies related to negative media coverage as a result of SM used the case study method and their findings were less generalizable to other situations as they did not identify typical threats for team communications managers (J Sanderson, 2008; J. Sanderson, 2009). Rather than use one case study, this method will use multiple situations and the SCCT framework to classify the sources of SM crises. This use of multiple situations will provide team communications managers with results that are more generalizable than previous case study methods. The use of multiple case studies is a rather unorthodox approach to case study analysis, but the analysis of multiple cases is important in this situation. By using multiple cases over a period of time, the research will identify general patterns. The general patterns of SM crisis are meant to provide insight into the typical threats and are not designed to be generalizable for all SM crisis situations. With SM and sports undergoing such rapid growth, it would be inappropriate to suggest that these findings could be generalizable to all situations in the future.

To identify the strategies used for each situation, quantitative content analysis was used. Quantitative content analysis is appropriate when there is a need to categorize

according to clear criteria and to analyze a relationship that involves categories (Riffe, Lacy, Fico, & Fico, 2005). The content analysis of each case (news stories) can help identify patterns through the application of these criteria (Krippendorff, 2004).

This format of analyzing the issues and identifying the corresponding strategies was used by Fitzpatrick and Rubin (1995) in their analysis of legal versus public relations strategies. This study reviewed 39 publicly reported incidents whereby a manager within an organization was charged with sexual harassment at work. The situations were coded according to the use of traditional public relations strategy, traditional legal strategy, or a mixed strategy or a diversionary strategy. In this study, a traditional legal strategy was used in more than two thirds of the situations.

By the time chapter six was complete, the *International Journals of Sports Communications* released a Special Issue on New Media and Social Networking. The special issue featured six papers about the topic, as well as one case study. Three of the papers and a case study were specifically related to Twitter (Clavio & Kian, 2010; Hambrick, Simmons, Greenhalgh, & Greenwell, 2010; Pegoraro, 2010; Sheffer & Schultz, 2010). One of the studies conducted a content analysis of athletes' tweets and recommended that future research needs to be conducted on sports organizations (Hambrick et al., 2010). Another study was a Uses and Gratification study of an athlete's Twitter followers (Clavio & Kian, 2010). Similar to the content analysis study, this study suggested that future research be conducted using organizational Twitter feeds rather than Twitter feeds from athletes. Motivated by the results of the initial study and the future research recommendations from the IJSC SM special issue, it became apparent that there was a need to investigate Twitter from an organizational perspective.

Chapter 7 – Twitter Follower Uses and Gratifications

With an understanding of the reputational risks associated with SM use within sports, it was important to understand how teams were actually using SM and more importantly why fans were following the teams on Twitter. Chapter 7 will focus on the Twitter audience that

subscribes to the Twitter feeds of a professional sports league and its teams. The purpose of this chapter was to examine the characteristics of Twitter followers in order to help a sports league and its teams improve the content that they communicate to their followers. The methodology chosen for this chapter was both qualitative and quantitative. To understand how teams were using Twitter, a content analysis of team tweets could help classify different uses for Twitter. To understand why individuals followed a team's Twitter account, a Uses and Gratifications approach was taken. The Uses and Gratifications approach would provide each team and the league with an understanding of the content that most gratifies the Twitter followers. Uses and Gratifications has previously been used in a sports SM context (Clavio & Kian, 2010; Frederick, Lim, Clavio, & Walsh, 2012) as well as other media-related contexts including the Internet (Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000; Perse & Ferguson, 1997), Facebook (Joinson, 2008; Park, Kee, & Valenzuela, 2009; Quan-Haase & Young, 2010), and Twitter (Chen, 2011; Liu et al., 2010).

Table 4
Chapter 7 Purpose, Question and Methodology Summary

Chapter/ Year of Study	Purpose/Question	Research Type Method Theoretical Backing
7 2011	<p>P2. The primary purpose of this chapter is to develop, test, and execute an online survey instrument that can be used by professional sports teams to get a better understanding of what content motivates and satisfies team Twitter followers.</p> <p>Q4. What are the demographic characteristics and distributions for the followers of official CFL Twitter accounts?</p> <p>Q5. What are the characteristics of technology use and sports fan activity for the followers of official CFL Twitter accounts?</p> <p>Q6. Which gratifications sought and obtained are the most desired and least desired by CFL Twitter accounts?</p> <p>Q7. What are the dimensions of gratifications sought for the followers of official CFL Twitter accounts?</p> <p>Q8. What are the dimensions of gratifications obtained for the followers of official CFL Twitter accounts?</p> <p>Q9. Based on the gratifications sought and gratifications obtained, are CFL Twitter followers satisfied?</p>	<p>Quantitative/Qualitative</p> <p>Content Analysis + Online Survey</p> <p>Uses and Gratification</p>

Uses and Gratification. A review of the literature related to the application of Uses and Gratifications theory shows that the theory is appropriate to understand the uses of a new media (Ruggiero, 2000; F. Williams, Phillips, & Lum, 1985). Uses and Gratification theory is a recognized media studies theory used to explain the audience. There is an ample amount of literature relating to Uses and Gratification, which allows for multiple approaches to be used in an exploration.

The ground work for Uses and Gratification theory dates back to early media effects research from the 1930s and 1940s (Ruggiero, 2000). Prior to Uses and Gratification, mass media research asked “What do the media do to people?” (Katz, 1959, p. 2), whereas new media research is concerned with popular culture, asking “What do people do with the media?” (Katz, 1959, p. 2). The initial research sought to understand the social and psychological gratification that would attract and hold an audience to different kinds of media and content. Examples of this research for radio include Cantril and Allport’s (1935) radio audience research, Herzog’s (1940) radio quiz program research, and Herzog’s (1944) daytime radio listener research. Examples of this research within print media include Berelson’s (1948) functions of newspaper reading, and Wolfe and Fiske’s (1948) understanding of why kids read comics. According to Katz (1974), these studies discovered a list of factors that served the medium. An example in Herzog’s (1944) work with radio found that soap operas satisfy their viewers with *advice, support, or emotional release*. Berelson’s (1948) work with newspapers discovered that readers had a sense of *security, shared topics of conversation, and structure to their daily routine*.

This initial phase of gratification research used a qualitative approach to classify open-ended statements from respondents into dimensions. The research tried to learn what people do with the media versus what the media do to people. Psychologist Herzog (1944) named these different dimensions of usage satisfaction as “gratifications”. Katz (1959) renamed this functional approach to media studies “uses and gratifications”. It was not until

1974 that Uses and Gratification theory became widespread in the field of mass communications research, linking gratification with user needs.

To understand correlations between media and audiences, Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch (1974) made five basic assumptions. First, the audience was conceived as active, with the assumption that an important part of mass media consumption is goal oriented. An active audience in this case refers to their utility, intention, or historical use of media. For example, a sports fan who wagered money on the weekend NFL games will historically follow ESPN highlights on Monday morning because they need to learn whether the games they picked would result in winning or losing money. Second, the user initiates media choices and gratification: the fact that the user initiates which media platform they wish to use to consume content limits the need to theorize about media choice and gratification, and disavows any form of straight-line effects of media content. Third, media competes with other sources of human satisfaction needs. A person could get just as much satisfaction from cooking or knitting, so media must compete with their time in order to attract audience. Fourth, individual audience members have enough self-awareness to report on their interests and motives. Finally, audience orientations should be explored on their own terms without limiting the audience to a particular cultural lens.

One of the most significant works in the development of Uses and Gratification was a collection of perspectives from various scholars interested in Uses and Gratification theory. This special volume on Uses and Gratification appeared in the 1974 edition of *The Uses of Mass Communications*, edited by Bulmer and Katz. The special volume contributed to a surge in Uses and Gratification research and also played an important role in establishing it as an accepted media studies theory (Palmgreen, Wenner, & Rosengren, 1985). Since the release of this research collection, more Uses and Gratification research started to focus on the audience and gratifications obtained versus gratifications sought by the media provider (Rayburn, 1996).

Internet Uses and Gratification. Uses and Gratifications theory has survived the shifts in media power from newspaper to radio, radio to television, and television to Internet. It is within the boundaries of the Internet that Uses and Gratification resurged as a theoretical construct: Uses and Gratifications theory is based on the consumer having choices and, with the Internet, consumers today have more options to choose from than ever before. As traditional media and new media continue to provide new platforms for content, Uses and Gratification is considered one of the more appropriate theoretical perspectives for investigating audiences (LaRose, Mastro, & Eastin, 2001).

With the introduction of the Internet and the WWW, Uses and Gratification theory proceeded to challenge many different communications theories because no other media choice prior to the Internet offered audiences so many options: one medium (such as a smartphone or a computer) allows the user to experience gratifications using the Internet to consume text, video, and sound. Morris and Ogan (1996), Newhagen and Rafeili (1996), and Ruggiero (2000) argued that Uses and Gratification was an appropriate theory for researching media on the Internet. In an essay by Morris and Ogan (1996), the Internet was positioned as a mass medium, which Uses and Gratification theory “may help provide a useful framework from which to begin the work on Internet communication” (p. 46). Newhagen and Rafeili (1996) also pointed to Uses and Gratifications as a logical paradigm to utilize in researching the Internet. A meta-analysis of communication research abstracts by Kim and Weaver (2000) supported the prediction for the rejuvenation of Uses and Gratification in media studies. This meta-analysis of Internet communications found that law and privacy issues were the most researched topic and that people’s uses and perception of the Internet was the second-most researched topic.

Ruggiero reviewed the history of and changes to Uses and Gratification theory during the 21st century to help explain its role in a new media ecology that has “altered the structural relations among traditional media such as print and broadcast and unites them around the defining technologies of computer and satellite” (Carey, 1998, p. 34). In the review, Ruggiero

followed the history of Uses and Gratification from the 1950s to the 1990s, as well as criticisms of the theory and how it is applicable to the Internet. According to Ruggiero (2000, p. 27), Uses and Gratifications is a “cutting-edge theoretical approach in the initial stages of a new mass communication medium: newspaper, radio television, and now the Internet” (Ruggiero, 2000). The main benefit of the Uses and Gratification approach is that it can be adapted easily because the basic questions remains the same: “Why do people become involved in one particular type of mediated communication or another, and what gratifications do they receive from it?” (Ruggiero, 2000, p. 29).

Examples of Uses and Gratification research in an Internet environment include Ferguson and Perse’s (2000) study about the WWW as a functional alternative to television, and Papacharissi and Rubin’s (2000) examination of motives for using the Internet. Ferguson and Perse (2000) surveyed 250 students and had them complete a three-day diary of media use. The study found that students use the web and television for similar reasons: *entertainment, pass time, relaxation, social information, and information*. The study argued that the WWW may be functionally similar to television, but may not be as relaxing as television viewing. In the study by Papacharissi and Rubin (2000), a class of 279 students were used to understand what motivates people to use the Internet. A factor analysis of 27 motives for using the Internet yielded five interpretable factors: *interpersonal utility, pass time, information seeking, convenience, and entertainment*. The most salient amongst the five was the use of the Internet for *information seeking*. These were two separate studies on groups of students found similar factors identified with using the Internet.

Uses and Gratification theory has been used to assess motivations for Internet use among a group of 343 AOL users (Stafford & Stafford, 2002). The Stafford and Stafford study used a survey link with a list of 45 items to identify three key dimensions related to consumer use of the Internet: *process* gratification related to search-, surfing-, and search engine-related measures; *content* gratification related to education-, information-, and research-related measures; and *social* gratification related to interaction- and friend-related

measures. It should be noted that, because television dominated Uses and Gratification studies until widespread use of the Internet, this was the first time that social gratification was identified as a key dimension related to a form of mass media.

Uses and Gratification has also been used to identify the strength of habitual media consumption as a predictor of media success. In a study by Diddi and LaRose (2006), 303 undergraduate students were surveyed about their news consumption patterns. The study replicated 27 motivation statements from a prior news media research project, along with a factor analysis using varimax rotation to explain factors that positively correlated with Internet news, including *surveillance*, *escapism*, *entertainment*, and *habit strength*. In the study, newspapers were the second most-frequently consulted news source after campus-specific newspapers. While students were primarily relying on the Internet for obtaining news, no evidence emerged that they were abandoning traditional media for new forms of media. Consistent with arguments by Stempel et al. (2000), it would seem that new media and traditional media complement each other. This is likely why traditional media platforms frequently advertise and promote content on their websites.

A common thread amongst these three Uses and Gratifications surveys was the use of an online survey. In Kim and Weaver's (2002) meta-analysis of Internet-related communications studies from 1996 to 2000, survey methodology was the primary method of quantitative data collection, and Uses and Gratification was the most-used theoretical application. Combined with others Uses and Gratification research, the results of the Kim and Weaver (2002) meta-analysis reinforce the approach of using an online survey with Uses and Gratification theory to explore Twitter.

SM Uses and Gratification. SM is a unique form of mass media. With hundreds of millions of users around the world, SM empowers people to become their own media hub that can both produce and consume content. In relation to studies of mediums like television or the Internet, SM-related Uses and Gratification studies are relatively few because SM like Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter did not start to attract mass appeal until 2008. A review of

the literature has only found Uses and Gratification studies about Facebook (Joinson, 2008; Park et al., 2009; Quan-Haase & Young, 2010; Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008) and Twitter (Chen, 2011; Clavio & Kian, 2010; Liu et al., 2010).

One of the earliest Uses and Gratifications studies for SM was conducted to gain an understanding of why people used social networking sites, what their characteristics were, and what gratifications were met by these sites (Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008). During the time of the study in 2006, MySpace had 20 million users and Facebook had 9.5 million users. This is especially interesting because Facebook has over 500 million users and MySpace has dropped to 70 million users from 120 million a year ago (Hernandez, 2011). The results of the study were somewhat limited and predictable because they surveyed a group of only 115 university students and did not conduct a factor analysis to understand any underlying constructions that would explain usage. Yet there is one important finding in this study: the results indicated that 87% of the students had a Facebook or MySpace account and 96% reported using it to keep in touch with old friends.

Joinson (2008) recently conducted a study specifically designed to understand the uses and gratifications related to Facebook. To conduct the study, a two-stage approach was used to understand Facebook motivations (Churchill Jr, 1979). As part of stage one, a survey link was posted on a Facebook wall, requesting that people complete a survey with four open-ended questions. This stage produced 46 uses and gratifications to be tested during stage two of the study. During stage two, a survey was prepared with the 46 uses and gratifications and the respondents were asked to rate the following uses on a 7 point scale from 1 (very unimportant) to 7 (very important): “How important are the following uses of Facebook to you personally?” To gain a more in-depth understanding of what motivates users, an initial factor analysis using varimax rotation produced 7 significant factors: *social connection*, *shared identities*, *photographs*, *content*, *social investigation*, *social network surfing*, and *status updates*. Notably, this analysis found that items associated with *social connection* predicted more frequent visits for Facebook, while *content* gratification predicted the amount

of time spent on Facebook. These results suggest that gratifications relate differentially to patterns of usage. It is important for practitioners to understand that *social connection* through Facebook will drive visitation, however, content will keep them longer.

The largest Facebook Uses and Gratification study was conducted through a web survey with a group of college students (Park et al., 2009). The study sought to understand college students' uses and gratification for Facebook groups as well as their political and civic involvement. A total of 1715 students responded to the study in December of 2007. The major contribution of the study showed that users who seek more information are more likely to participate in civic activities. Overall, the highest rated factor for using Facebook groups was *socializing*.

A recent Uses and Gratification study by Quan-Haase and Young (2010) compared gratifications obtained from Facebook with those from instant messaging in an effort to understand how different SM fulfill user needs (Quan-Haase & Young, 2010). While both Facebook and instant messaging shared similar factor structures (*to have fun, to kill time, to relax, and to provide a form of escape from everyday pressures and responsibilities*), there were some differences in gratifications obtained. Facebook emerged as a tool for social information that allowed people to share information, whereas instant messaging emulated in-person conversation and allowed for a greater sense of intimacy and connection. Quan-Haase and Young (2010) suggested future studies should be similar to the study on television by Palmgreen et al. (1980), which compared gratifications sought with gratifications obtained.

Three recent Uses and Gratifications studies have focused on analysing Twitter use. The earliest study of the three by Liu, Cheung, and Lee (2011) attempted to explore the reasons for prevalent use of Twitter. The study initially identified dimensions of *content, process, social, and technology* gratifications from prior studies. To confirm these dimensions, an online survey was completed by 124 Twitter users and results were analysed using Partial Least Squares. The results of the study confirmed that primary drivers of user satisfaction for Twitter were *content* and *technology* gratifications. Examples of content

gratifications are things like providing information, sharing information, keeping a record, and 'to document my life'. Examples of technology gratifications included the most cost-effective way to publish, easier to maintain, convenient, and use anytime anywhere. In contrast to content and technology gratifications, *process* and *social* gratification did not exhibit significant impact on user satisfaction. The results of this study would suggest that people who continue to tweet are satisfied with the format due to ease of access for *content* and *technology*. Therefore, Twitter should focus on promoting their tweets as a source for *content* factors and not emphasize it as a source for *social* factors.

While the study by Liu, Cheung, and Lee (2011) identified *content* factors as a driver for Twitter usage, a Uses and Gratifications study by Chen (2011) found that active users of Twitter were more likely to find gratification from *social connection*. On the surface, this survey of 317 Twitter users would seem to be opposing the study of Lieu, Cheung, and Lee (2011), which suggested that *social* factors do not drive satisfaction. A detailed review of both research reports provides some insight into these conflicting findings: the Chen study was trying to understand what variables would help identify users' *need* to connect on Twitter, while the Lieu, Cheung, and Lee study was trying to measure the factors in Twitter that drive user *satisfaction*. In the Chen study, factors such as active months on Twitter, total tweets, and @ replies were identified as predictors of a need to connect with others on Twitter, suggesting that people who are heavy users of Twitter are interested in *social connection*. If the Lieu, Cheung, and Lee study segmented heavy users of Twitter in a similar format as Chen, the results supporting Twitter as a *social connection* platform may have been similar; however, the two studies were conducted using different factors, so comparing the results is difficult. One study focused on user satisfaction (Liu, Cheung, and Lee) and the other frequent usage (Chen).

The previous Twitter Uses and Gratification studies discussed (Chen, 2011; Liu et al., 2010) both used snowball sampling to target Twitter users. While snowball sampling is a recognized and accepted method for sampling, the results are not generalizable to an audience

and the researcher loses control over who receives access to the survey link. The results could be heavily skewed based on who is distributing the survey link. For example, the 437 respondents were recruited from the personal tweets, Facebook page links, and media blogs that the researcher controls. It could be argued that the respondents are therefore directly linked to the researcher and have already biased the results of the survey. Although both studies were relevant to understanding the use of Twitter as a form of technological innovation, they cannot be generally applied to any specific wants and needs of a Twitter audience.

The first study to analyse a specific Twitter audience of followers was conducted by Clavio and Kian (2010) on the followers of a retired female PGA golfer. From these 8300 followers, 216 completed a Uses and Gratification survey. Three factors for gratifications were identified: *organic fandom*, *functional fandom*, and *interaction*. The most salient factors were related to “elements of personal fandom and affiliation toward the athlete” (Clavio & Kian, 2010, p. 495). These factors demonstrated that many followers have always been a fan of the athlete, and can now enjoy what the athlete writes and respond to what the athlete has to say. This format of conducting a Uses and Gratifications study to analyse Twitter provides an effective research approach for improving Twitter as a communications platform: through an understanding of the most salient gratifications of her followers, the retired female golfer can tailor her Twitter message to the wants and needs of her audience.

This review of recent SM Uses and Gratification research confirms that it is a useful framework for conducting research about an audience. After reviewing the four Facebook and three Twitter Uses and Gratification studies, three observations can be made. The first observation is that the factors that drive Twitter are more *information-* or *news-*related and the factors that drive Facebook usage are more *social* in nature, which is consistent with the company’s mission statement: “Facebook’s mission is to give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected” (Facebook, n.d.).

The second observation is based on the overuse of the snowball technique to collect a general audience of Twitter or Facebook followers, who are often found through the online influences of the researcher or a student audience. While a group of students or a group of loose contacts related to the researcher do provide insights, it is difficult to take the findings from the research and apply them to the process of improving communication. Most of the audiences surveyed in these studies subscribe to follow many different Facebook or Twitter accounts and will have very different needs. For example, someone following a specific athlete on Twitter like Shaquille O’Neal (@SHAQ) will have very different needs than someone following a team like the Los Angeles Lakers (@Lakers) on Twitter. Support for this observation can be found in how different the gratifications sought for the female athlete were from the Clavio and Kian study and from the gratifications sought from the Liu, Cheung, and Lee study: followers of the female athlete were interested in the Twitter account for personal fandom or affiliation reasons — they are a fan of the athlete, enjoy what the athlete writes, and want to respond to what the athlete has to say — whereas the Liu, Cheung, and Lee study determined that *content* was the most important driver of satisfaction. While content has been identified as a driver of satisfaction, that content will only succeed if it is relevant to the different Twitter audiences. In order to make content relevant to different audiences, future Twitter Uses and Gratifications studies should focus on a clearly segmented group of users that subscribe to one category of Twitter accounts (i.e., a single sports team, a fashion designer, a particular news publication, etc.).

The third observation is about the overuse of university students as an audience group for media research. From a technology perspective, they are a relevant group to consider because they all have access to the Internet and, according to their age, would be considered a segment of the population that are innovators and early adopters of new technology (Rogers, 2003). However, these subjective perceptions are only relevant when targeting specific groups or segments of a population that *share a common interest* — age group alone cannot provide adequate information for SM to improve its offerings. By targeting research studies

at audiences of people with shared or common interests, communication experts will be better able to tailor their messages and content to drive satisfaction and usage.

A uses and gratifications approach was used after the completion of this research project to identify the differences and similarities in Twitter follower sets (Frederick et al., 2012). While the approach and findings from this study are relevant to this dissertation, they were not considered during the execution of the survey development or analysis stages for Chapter 7.

Satisfaction Uses and Gratification. A concept frequently overlooked in mass media research has been the concept of audience satisfaction. Satisfaction is an important factor because it determines whether a member of the audience will continue to use a form of media. Satisfaction is even more important during times of new media introduction. If a new media satisfies an audience in different ways than a traditional media, audiences are likely to shift their time to the new media. A good example of this is the online classified service Craigslist, which caused consumers to move away from classified advertising in newspaper (Weiss, 2006).

Satisfaction has previously been used in studies to predict newspaper readership (Burgoon & Burgoon, 1980) and cable subscription (LaRose & Atkin, 1988). For example, Burgoon and Burgoon (1980) determined that people would spend more time reading the newspaper if they were satisfied with the local product. As Perse & Ferguson noted:

Although several theoretical approaches contribute to understanding the area of satisfaction, most mass communications research has consider this to grow out of an expectation-confirmation process: When media content is consumed, if expectations are met, satisfaction results and consumption continues; if expectation are not met, satisfaction results and use discontinues (1997: p. 317).

Communications researchers Palmgreen and Rayburn (1979) challenged the traditional expectation-disconfirmation of satisfaction with a study about television news satisfaction. In this research, they determined that gratifications obtained were a strong predictor of television news satisfaction. They followed up this research by testing six different models for measuring media satisfaction (Palmgreen & Rayburn, 1985a). A

questionnaire was administered to 178 students to measure media satisfaction, belief, and evaluation (gratification sought [GS] and gratification obtained [GO]). Satisfaction was measured with a seven-point scale: “overall, how satisfied are you with the job television news programs do in providing you with the things you are seeking?” Fourteen gratifications sought were measured using a seven-point scale (from “definitely applies” to “definitely does not apply”). Respondents were asked how much each statement applied to them. To measure gratifications obtained, the study used the same fourteen items from gratifications sought, however, the question was re-worded. An example of the re-wording format can be found in Table 5.

Table 5
Expectancy-Value Discrepancy Model Question formats

Gratifications Sought Statement	Gratifications Obtained Statement
“I watch TV news to keep up with current issues and events.”	“CBS news helps me to keep up with current issues and events.”

As a control variable, the study measured general satisfaction with television news using a seven-point Likert scale. In order to test the six models, a hierarchical regression model tested each of the variables in the models. From the six models tested, the Expectancy-Value Discrepancy Model in Figure 3 was the best predictor of satisfaction.

$$\text{Media Satisfaction} = \sum_{i=0}^n e_i (GO_i - GS_i)$$

Figure 4 – Expectancy-Value Discrepancy Model (Palmgreen & Rayburn, 1985)

While the calculation was very simple, it only worked when all or most of the gratifications measured were evaluated positively. If gratifications were evaluated negatively, the model cannot predict user satisfaction. Fortunately, with Uses and Gratification research, most measures are positively evaluated. This model of measuring satisfaction is similar to the SERVQUAL method developed by Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1988), which is widely used in the measurement of consumer service satisfaction. In the SERVQUAL

method, satisfaction is measured by measuring the gap between customer expectations and customer experience. In the Expectancy Value Discrepancy Model, satisfaction occurs when GO is greater than GS. This model for measuring satisfaction with mass media was also recently used in an examination of Twitter use (P. Johnson & Yang, 2009).

The Johnson and Yang (2009) *Uses and Gratifications of Twitter* study used an online survey with a sample of 242 Twitter followers. As opposed to early Internet studies that treated the Internet as a single mass medium (Charney & Greenberg, 2002; Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000), Johnson and Yang treated the Internet as mass media with multiple forms. The Johnson and Yang (2009) study identified two factors for gratification obtained and gratification sought: social motives and information motives.

Social motives included: have fun; be entertained; relax; see what others are up to; pass the time; express myself freely; keep in touch with friends or family; communicate more easily; and communicate with many people at the same time. Information motives included: get information (facts, links, news, knowledge, ideas); give or receive advice; learn interesting things; meet new people; and share information with others (facts, links, news, knowledge, ideas) (Johnson & Yang, 2000: p. 17).

The results of this bivariate analysis of gratifications obtained from Twitter use confirmed that information motives are more important as an individual's use of Twitter increased and that social motives were not as important. This finding is another example of the unintended consequences of Twitter as a SM platform. It was initially set up for friends and family to keep in touch, but Twitter has become more of an information source. Interestingly, the Twitter home page appears to acknowledge Twitter as an immediate information source: "Find out what's happening, right now, with the people and organizations you care about".

A review of the literature related to the Expectancy-Value Discrepancy Model raises questions regarding its appropriateness within media studies. Since the model was tested in 1985, very few mass media-related Uses and Gratifications studies have been reported using it (Dobos, 1992; P. Johnson & Yang, 2009; Perse & Ferguson, 1993). Although many studies have not reported using this model, many have discussed the need or recommendation for

Uses and Gratification-based satisfaction research for media (Patwardhan, Yang, & Patwardhan, 2011; Quan-Haase & Young, 2010). Considering that the foundation of the model is widely used in consumer marketing, it raises some questions. Is the model valid and appropriate for use with SM? Do academic media researchers see their audience as consumers? Does academic media research view media as a product to be sold or marketed to consumers? Regardless of the answer to these questions, the understanding of satisfaction is important to the managers of sports communications. Sports communication is a management function that requires an understanding of public audience. With professional sports teams competing against traditional media for audience attention, it is increasingly important that teams understand audience satisfaction.

Based on how media brands market and sell themselves through continuous advertising and promotions to attract an audience, one could argue that media marketing is similar to consumer marketing. Even though there appears to be a lack of acceptance for the Expectancy-Value Discrepancy Model approach to Uses and Gratification research, media practitioners see value in learning about satisfaction. For the most part, Uses and Gratifications research for media has focused on the more traditional broadcasts — one-to-many media channels such as television or radio. However, with the introduction of the Internet and SM, which constitutes the many-to-many communication model, owners of media content are in greater competition with others. In the broadcast model of one-to-many, it is acceptable to understand only the gratifications sought by the media. However, in the social model of many-to-many, media companies and brands must understand not only what their audience seeks, but also whether their audience is satisfied. A satisfied audience will visit your platform more frequently and participate through SM if they receive the attention that they seek.

The testing of a Uses and Gratification method for measuring Twitter satisfaction is important to sports media stakeholders. If such a model for measuring satisfaction can be developed, it will provide sports communications staff with a management tool to help

increase the reach and frequency of their Twitter influence. An increased reach for a team's Twitter followers will provide the team with more control over the messages that fans receive. An increase in the frequency of Twitter use by the team will provide the organization with a stronger connection with their fans.

This approach of research to Chapter seven identified how teams used their Twitter accounts and also why people followed the teams Twitter account. By understanding why people follow team Twitter accounts, sports communications practitioners can use the information to be more strategic in how they apply the use of Twitter. The dual use of content analysis and online surveys is recognized as a common way for communications research to approach multi-method research.

Chapter 8 – The Changing Role

Chapter 7 was completed in May 2012, almost three years after the start of the research project. While the research conducted to date provides insight that can explain why people use Twitter as well as the risks related to Twitter, the question of how Twitter has changed the role of sports communication within professional teams had not been answered. However, prior research provided the researcher with context and the ability to critically interpret changes in social media. Importantly, the research approaches for *how* Twitter has changed the role of sports communications is very different than those that describe *what* Twitter does: the 'how' type question required a deductive approach to research rather than an inductive approach. Thus, to properly answer the research questions, a qualitative approach (long semi-structured interviews) was selected because it allows for some freedom to explore general ideas and opinion of sports communication employees. A form-structured approach (such as a survey or structured interviews) would not allow the researcher to probe or understand how Twitter has changed the role of sports communications. In order to conduct the interviews and analyze the results, a phenomenological approach was used.

Table 6
Chapter 8 Purpose, Question and Methodology Summary

Chapter/ Year of Study	Purpose Question	Research Type Method Theoretical Backing
8 2012	P3. The purpose of the research was to understand and interpret the use of social media in professional sports. Q10. How has Twitter changed sports media relations?	Qualitative Semi-Structured Long Interviews Phenomenology

In order to answer the question of how Twitter has changed sports media relations, it was not possible to use a quantitative approach. The use of SM in sports is such a new phenomenon that it requires a more flexible form of inquiry. The use of personal interviews with sports communications practitioners would allow me to gain deeper insight into the use of SM in sports. It was the lived experiences of the practitioners in the field that would help identify the issues related to how SM has impacted sports communications.

Phenomenology & Media Studies. Phenomenological research is a qualitative approach that seeks to understand the study of the lived experiences from the perspective of the individual. Pure phenomenological research will start unhindered by hypotheses or preconceptions in order to describe and explain without preconceptions or bias. Phenomenology is particularly effective at bringing experiences to the forefront that can be used to create practical theory and challenge traditional norms. For the aforementioned reasons, phenomenology has become a popular form of qualitative research in the social sciences (Moustakas, 1994). While the use of phenomenology to understand Twitter could not be found in the literature, phenomenology has been used in different public relations and sports-related studies. In order to justify the use of phenomenology to answer the research question, the researcher reviewed sports- and media-related phenomenology research.

From a sports perspective, phenomenology has been used to understand participation in extreme sports. Willig (2008) interviewed eight extreme sports participants to expand the understanding of the motivations for participation in extreme sport. Contrary to previous research that identified the thrill and excitement motivators for participating in extreme

sports, Willig's work revealed that participants make deliberate self-conscious decisions rather than just looking for thrill and excitement. Through the use of the phenomenological approach and analysis of lived experiences, it was possible for Willig to identify different motivations for participating in extreme sports.

Within a media perspective, phenomenology has been used to explore the experiences of women in public relations and the role of public relations in strategy development. For both studies, semi-structured long interviews were conducted with a small group of participants. The phenomenological approach helped identify significant themes related to women working in public relations (Krider & Ross, 1997) and revealed considerable differences in the level of public relations involvement in strategic decision making (Moss, Warnaby, & Newman, 2000). The authors of these articles expressed how the phenomenological approach contributed to the research:

...[bringing] a deeper understanding of the nature of the experience of being a woman in public relations firm during the feminization of the profession. This study went beyond prior survey oriented research focusing on salary, promotion and role discrepancies, and moved towards an understanding of the everyday life of being a woman in public relations (Krider & Ross, 1997: p. 451).

When trying to find the best method for answering a question about an emergent communications platform with limited published research, phenomenology appears to be the most appropriate approach.

Methodology Limitations

It is recognized that conducting three separate studies is not a traditionally accepted practice for a dissertation. However, the topic of research is based on an emergent media platform that is experiencing explosive growth. SM is also considered revolutionary to the practice of public relations (Wright & Hinson, 2008). From the start of the dissertation in May 2009 to the final chapters in May 2012, the adoption and usage of Twitter as a media platform has fundamentally changed. If the researcher had stayed with one research approach determined in May 2009, it would have limited the overall findings and relevancy of the research to the current and future practices of sports media relations. Unlike a traditional

dissertation that typically considers one method of research, this multi-method approach to research was not trying to test a new theory or hypothesize about the use of SM and sports. The primary purpose was to explore how SM is impacting the practice of sports communications.

The exploration was not only for the formulation of knowledge or insight, but also for the researcher to gain experience using different methods of inquiry. The use of exploratory research will help formulate a future theory. Based on the mixed methods and exploratory nature of the research, the methodology selected presents many limitations.

After careful consideration and a review of literature related to the challenges related to multi-method research, five limitations have been identified. The four limitations identified for this research method include incompatibility, generalizability, clarity, and experience.

While the systematic operation of qualitative and quantitative analysis was part of the Uses and Gratifications research, the selection of methods was not consistently applied throughout the dissertation. The methods and samples used for data collection were different from chapter to chapter and therefore are not compatible for contrast and comparison purposes. Due to the exploratory nature of the research, this lack of compatibility between the different chapters was not deemed to be a significant issue.

Similar to most studies that use qualitative methods of inquiry, the ability to use the results from this research to generalize are limited. This lack of ability to generalize also applies to the quantitative survey of the CFL Twitter followers. No matter how many responses the survey receives, the generalization of the CFL Twitter audience will be limited to a generalization that is relevant to the CFL Twitter audience. To assume that another audience would be similar in makeup to the CFL Twitter audience would be inappropriate.

The lack of a single research method or research problem makes the research results more difficult to write and discuss. While the research has one over-reaching purpose — to understand how SM is impacting the practice of sports communications — it is also

supported by individual purposes for each chapter and separate research questions for each chapter. The multiple questions and multiple purposes for the dissertation affect the overall clarity of the research. A research paper with one question and one purpose provides clarity for the reader and the researcher. To avoid this being an issue, a clear identification of individual chapters' questions and purposes will help provide more clarity.

While some may argue that the completion of a dissertation would make you an expert in a field of study, the use of multiple methods limits my ability to claim expert status. Because I have to learn multiple methods, I have not been able to master each of the methods enough to be considered an expert. This lack of experience with one method also makes you less effective in mixing the research methods effectively; while you are learning one method, you may not know how to effectively mix that method with others. Because there is a lack of research knowledge that combines mixed methods, the researcher must learn by trial and error in some situations.

While these limitations are all relevant to the use of a mixed-methods approach to the dissertation or research problem, none of them could be considered significant enough to switch the research from a multi-method approach to a single method approach.

This chapter presented the reasoning for using a multi-method approach to investigating the impact of SM on sport media relations. The chapter also presented the purpose, question, research method and theoretical backing that will be used for each of the investigations. The following three chapters will present the justification, results, and discussion for each of the different investigations. The investigations will be presented in chronological order according to when they were completed. The first investigation is designed to assist sport communications in the strategic management of athlete reputations.

CHAPTER 6

CRISIS RESPONSE AND LEGAL STRATEGIES

The contemporary SM revolution is actively changing the practice of communications and public affairs in the sports industry. The explosion of SM sites such as YouTube, Twitter, Blogger, Flickr, and Facebook increase the potential for dissemination of information, which has been harmful to the reputation of particular athletes and sports celebrities. According to Wright and Hinson (2009) “SM has had a staggering impact on the practice of public relations” (2009, p. 2). Messages about sports celebrities in SM sites like Twitter and Facebook have been the source of numerous news stories published through the mainstream media (Clavio, 2008b; Marobella, n.d.; Pew Research Center, 2008; Solove, 2007). If these stories have content that harms the reputation of the athlete or sports celebrity, the work of sports communication professionals can become more difficult. In some of these cases, when a SM issue has reached traditional media, legal strategies have been necessary to manage the reputation of the athlete or sports celebrity.

For athletes, a reputation of positive celebrity status creates opportunities to benefit from sponsorship and endorsement dollars, which allows the athlete to generate additional personal income up to three times their playing salary (Pedersen et al., 2007). The value of an athlete’s image to corporate sponsors is well documented in the celebrity endorsement literature (Alsmadi, 2006; Y. Kim & Na, 2007; Lear, Runyan, & Whitaker, 2009). Forbes reported that the top ten athletes in the world generated over \$600 million dollars, with most of those earnings from endorsements (Badenhausen, 2008; Thomaselli, 2008). The increased importance of the athlete endorser has generated considerable research to analyze the impact of athletes’ negative publicity. Studies of the image and reputation of athletes have found that athletes who become involved in a scandal have lost substantial amounts of followers and sponsorship dollars (Hughes & Shank, 2005; Summers & Johnson Morgan, 2008). For example, someone at a party took a picture of Olympic swimmer Michael Phelps smoking a marijuana bong, which was widely circulated within SM and popular press. When this photo

was published, his sponsor Kellogg's withdrew from a multi-million dollar endorsement deal (Associated Press, 2009a).

Research confirms that sponsors of celebrities grasp the asset value of an athlete's reputation and are prepared to protect their investments through reputation insurance (Belson & Sandomir, 2010). Sport communication professionals have begun playing an integral role in the creation and management of their clients' image (Rojek, 2001). Thus, SM has become a significant aspect of two primary roles of the sport communications professional: 1) find ways to raise public awareness for their athletes, and 2) manage media when things go wrong.

Traditional media such as newsprint and television filter content through news professionals who are trained to corroborate information from multiple sources for accuracy and apply stringent guidelines before stories are published (Solove, 2007). Conversely, SM provides teams and athletes with unmediated access to fans and poses a much greater risk than posted information could have negative repercussions. The term *SM crisis* has been created to describe these situations: *SM* refers to the initial posting of content on the internet through services such as Twitter, YouTube, and MySpace, and *crisis* is used to describe non-routine, undesired visibility for a player that causes damage to their reputation. While the term crisis seems alarmist, its usage in this research is consistent with the reputation management work of Doorley and Garcia (2006). A recent example of a SM crisis arose from the triple gold-medal winning athlete Stephanie Rice. While celebrating Australia's last minute victory over South Africa in rugby, it is reported that Rice tweeted "Suck on that," followed by a gay slur. She has since deleted the slur from her Twitter account and apologized (Associated Press, 2010). In response to this situation, Jaguar Corporation terminated her endorsement agreement. The story travelled from Australia through Associated Press and was published in newspapers, broadcast on sports channels, and posted on websites around the world.

Chapter 6 will contribute to the sport communication literature in two ways. First, the research uses content analysis to quantify responses and legal strategies to SM crises in sports. Second, the research categorizes SM crises into similar clusters. The clustering of similar crises is designed to assist sport communication professionals in strategically managing the reputations of athletes.

Social Media's Impact on Sport Communications

Traditional media theories, such as agenda setting theory, must be adjusted to apply to SM (Wright & Hinson, 2009) — particularly the two-step flow theory, which addresses the flow of information from mass media to opinion leaders and from opinion leaders to a wider population. Originally, agenda setting theory stated that information does not flow directly from mass media to individuals; rather, information is mediated by people of influence, like opinion leaders, who share information with uninformed people (see Figure 5). However, Robinson (1976) was able to demonstrate that information also flowed directly from mass media to individuals, often bypassing an influencer. SM also influences athletes who are opinion givers: they can now distribute their thoughts and content directly to opinion receivers, opinion givers, and mass media simultaneously. This shift is depicted in the dark lines from the Revised SM Step-Flow Sequence in Figure 5.

While the revised SM step-flow sequence depicted in Figure 5 has not been tested, there has been significant anecdotal evidence of the shift. For example, Lance Armstrong has given very few live interviews in his career, but primarily used Twitter to communicate with the public during his cycling comeback; unable to arrange interviews, reporters eventually started to base their stories on quotes that Armstrong tweeted. This phenomenon was also prevalent in the Vancouver Winter Olympics, where media would frequently report from athletes' Twitter accounts without interviews.

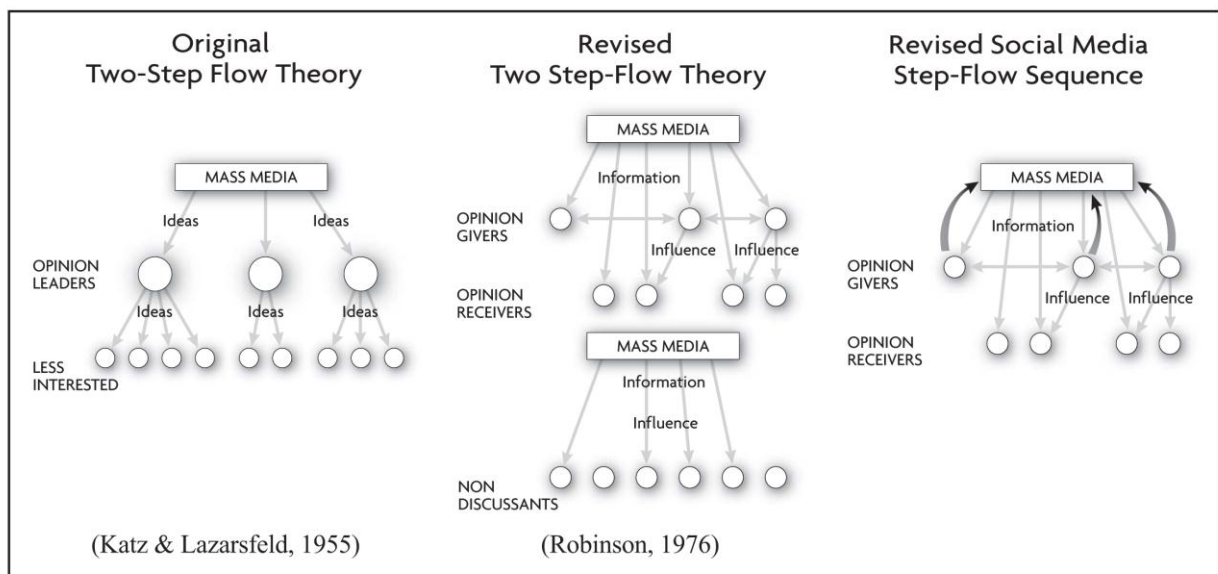


Figure 5 – Shifts in Step-Flow Communication

A further indication of the challenge to the step-flow communication theory is the usage of user-generated content by mainstream media. Recent research by Scheffer, Schultz, and Clavio (2010) points towards a shift in the news-media paradigm, while other researchers like Johnson (2009) suggest that Twitter will change the way we receive news. This recent research is supported by an increased reliance on user-generated content in the stories of mainstream media outlets. This study has offered numerous examples of traditional media rebroadcasting an athlete’s content from platforms such as Twitter. Research has also shown that reporters have increasingly relied on SM and blogs to find stories (R. W. Lariscy et al., 2009).

The experience of athletes on SM has challenged traditional media theories. Shaquille O’Neal of the Boston Celtics has 2.9 million followers on Twitter, yet the 150-year-old Boston Globe only has a readership of 561,000 (Scarborough Research, 2010). As the traditional centralized top-down media model, which invests control of content in publishers and producers, has begun to change (Gilmor, 2004; Solove, 2007), the gatekeeper of traditional media is vanishing, and athletes like Shaquille O’Neal can manage their image by controlling the time and content of the information they release (Boyle & Haynes, 2004). As the creator of content for social media, the athlete is redefining his role from the subject of the news to the producer and distributor of news. This significant shift in sport communication is evident in the 1137 athletes who have been verified on Twitter in the four

major North American leagues, according to the website www.Twitterthletes.com. As there are 3,240 official roster spots available in the four North American Leagues, this means that approximately one in three athletes publicly use Twitter (Biderman, 2009). Clearly, SM use is more than a technology fad and represents a need to further understand how the reputations of athletes can be managed by sport professionals in an increasingly complex and challenging communication environment.

New media and the shift in the distribution of content creation makes the role of the sport communication professional more complex and difficult to manage (Pedersen et al., 2007). Traditional sports media have relied on almost exclusive access to players for the ‘inside scoop’ or post-game interview in reporting to fans. The SM trend eliminates traditional media outlets as intermediaries, which has been viewed as a negative change by sport journalists (Poor, 2006; Schultz & Sheffer, 2010). For example, Poor (2006) found that the radio host he interviewed was displeased with Curt Schilling’s decision to reach his fans through the web rather than official shows; while fans were delighted with the opportunity to interact directly with the athlete, the broadcasters felt threatened. In another study of the impact of new media and sport, Schultz and Sheffer (2010) surveyed 146 sport journalists to understand how sport journalism is being changed by Twitter, and they found that print journalists and older journalists used Twitter for promoting printed work on other platforms. Interestingly, broadcast journalists and younger journalists used Twitter as a stand-alone entity for their own purposes but not often for the media company they work for.

Several SM studies provide useful insights on blogging as a modern communication tool (Bruns, 2007; De Choudhury, Sundaram, John, & Seligmann, 2008; Poling, 2005; L. V. Porter, Sweetser Trammell, Chung, & Kim, 2007). From a sports perspective, Sanderson (2008) observed that blogs are useful to counter negative media reports. While blogs were very popular in the early stages of SM, more modern tools like YouTube and Twitter are becoming more popular for fans. Overall, this transition from a reliance on traditional media to the more interactive Internet media empowers teams, athletes, and fans to communicate

directly using real-time communications without the filter of traditional media gatekeepers (Stafford, Stafford, & Schkade, 2004).

The recent emergence of SM accounts for the paucity of peer-reviewed articles about the impact of SM on traditional media. However, starting in 2006, Wright and Hinson have published an annual SM study for the *Public Relations Journal* (Wright & Hinson, 2009). The 2009 version of the study, based on the responses from 574 participants in an online questionnaire, confirms that SM continues to show “dramatically changing public relations” (Wright & Hinson, 2009: p. 21). The majority (93%) of the respondents spent part of their workday plugged into some form of blogging or SM. The percentage of respondents who believed that the emergence of blogs and SM has changed their organization increased from 61% in 2008 to 73% in 2009. This increased usage of SM by both fans and athletes reinforces the need for sport communication professionals to practice online reputation management strategies.

Athlete Reputation Management

The concept of reputation management is a relatively new discipline in the field of public relations. The definition of reputation management is also closely linked with corporate reputation, image management, and public relations. In Walker’s (2010) systematic review of literature, the research points to the lack of an accepted definition of corporate reputation, an ambiguity that also extends to terms like ‘reputation management’ and ‘image management’. For the purposes of this research, reputation management will be discussed from the perspective of an individual celebrity athlete rather than a corporation. While an athlete may share similar brand management needs as a corporation, the complexities about how to deal with a SM crisis on the individual level are very different.

The growing role of SM has made reputation management a popular topic in both academic and business literature. While SM has positive uses, the negative opinions and issues draw more media attention (Beal & Strauss, 2008). For example, traditional media rarely report on positive events that athletes post on social media; however, if an athlete posts

something controversial like a nude photo or berates another player through social media, the traditional media will report it. The reputation writings of Solove (2007) extol the risks associated with the shift in media power from the trained professional to the individual. Without editors or the application of professional industry standards, false information can spread more rapidly on the Internet.

The initial threat of a SM crisis can come from either a third party or from the individual athlete. To date, no published research explores the athlete as the threat for a SM crisis, but a recent case study about the shrinking privacy boundaries of athletes explored SM crisis situations that were initiated by third party fans. Sanderson (2009) cites three incidents of off-court or off-field activities of athletes that were recorded and posted by fans. In each instance, the team used the online posting as proof to reprimand the athlete. The increased adoption of mobile handheld technology that enables users to take pictures, send e-mail, surf the Internet, and connect to SM sites makes it easier for fans to record the off-court or off-field activities of athletes. Websites like drunkathlete.com further encroach on the private lives of players by providing fans with an opportunity to upload and comment about the off-court or off-field activities of players. While most of the pictures are harmless and represent a limited threat to the reputation of athletes, the mere existence of a website will encourage fans to continue to encroach upon their private lives.

The case study by Sanderson (2009) explored threats to athletes from fans, but there are many other sources for these threats. To combat these threats to reputation, professional leagues, colleges, and broadcasters are starting to introduce governance as a reputation management strategy for SM use. Both the NBA and NFL have instituted league rules around the use of SM before and after games (Stein, 2009). For example, the NBA introduced a policy to prevent players and other team personnel from tweeting during games. The NBA instituted this policy in response to a Milwaukee Bucks player who tweeted in the locker room during halftime. The new NBA policy will treat social-networking commentary in the same manner as comments made to the traditional media. If a comment in SM is deemed to be

inappropriate, the league has the power to sanction players. The NFL's policy is similar to the NBA, except it also does not permit players to use SM 90 minutes before and after a game.

This formulation of policies by sports teams and leagues to manage reputation is not limited to athletes. Sports media like ESPN instituted "Guidelines for Social Networking" in August 2009. The policy discourages ESPN employees from tweeting any content that they would not broadcast or write online (Schultz & Sheffer, 2010). Since most professional media also use SM like Twitter and Facebook to connect with their audience, they are exposed to similar threats that athletes experience. If reporters write something in a blog or tweet that is potentially offensive, there is the risk of negative public reaction.

The online connection between athletes and fans plays a role in fan identification as well (Wann, 2006). Fans want unfiltered access to the athletes to feel a closer connection, however, teams and leagues are starting to filter and control the usage of SM by instituting governance and restricting usage during games and other team-related events (Corazza, 2010; Stein, 2009). Ironically, negative publicity from a SM crisis could damage the reputation of an athlete, while at the same time improve the value of their image due to an increase in media coverage created by the issue (Haynes, 2007).

A report in the mainstream media demonstrates how serious an Internet crisis can become for an organization (González-Herrero & Smith, 2008). In a story that appeared in the New York Times, Solove (2007), a leading privacy and information technology expert, described how the Kryptonite lock could be picked with a basic pen in fifteen seconds. As a result, the number of people who read about the company on blogs jumped from 550,000 to 1,800,000 (González-Herrero & Smith, 2008). The speed that the Internet distributes information stresses the need for sport communication professionals to ensure they are well prepared.

Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) provides a basis for sport communication professionals to respond to and anticipate how stakeholders will react in response to a crisis. The SCCT is a widely recognized concept that is taught through textbooks

and practiced by communication professionals (Barton, 1993; Benoit, 1995; Coombs, 2007a; Dilenschneider, 2000). Some of the more common teaching methods for crisis communications are case studies and best practices (Taylor & Kent, 2007; Ulmer, Sellnow, & Seeger, 2007), which allows practitioners to identify similar situations from the past and apply the learnings to similar situations in the future (see Table 7).

Table 7
SCCT Crisis Response Strategies

Strategy	Strategy Description
Attack the accuser	Crisis manager confronts the person or group claiming something is wrong with the organization.
Denial	Crisis manager asserts that there is no crisis.
Scapegoat	Crisis manager blames some person or group outside of the organization for the crisis. Diminish crisis response strategies.
Excuse	Crisis manager minimizes organizational responsibility by denying intent to do harm and/or claiming inability to control the events that triggered the crisis.
Justification	Crisis manager minimizes the perceived damage caused by the crisis. Rebuild crisis response strategies.
Compensation	Crisis manager offers money or other gifts to victims.
Apology	Crisis manager indicates the organization takes full responsibility for the crisis and asks stakeholders for forgiveness.

To save time when responding to a crisis, practitioners and theorists suggest that communication managers have a Crisis Management Plan (Barton, 2001; Coombs, 2007b; Fearn-Banks, 2001), as a quick response shows that an organization is still in control. A lack of response shows that others are in control and suggests that the organization cannot control the situation (Arpan & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2005). The response strategies from SCCT have been studied extensively in communications (Allen & Caillouet, 1994; Benoit, 1995; Coombs & Holladay, 2002) because they are designed to repair reputational damage, articulating what a person or organization should say or do after a crisis (Coombs, 2007b). The SCCT response strategies listed in Table 7 are designed to respond to a reputation crisis, including options

such as attack the accuser, denial, scapegoat, excuse, justification, compensation, and apology.

This step-by-step guide for managing a crisis saves time because it serves as a reference source with contacts and pre-assigned tasks. Traditionally, news media have been a primary method of distributing information about a crisis response, however, in today's technologically advanced world, communication managers have access to a mix of phone, text messaging, voice mail, e-mail, and website postings. In a crisis, a website or other forms of electronic response provide communication managers with the ability to control information, which can be helpful when traditional news media choose to propagate a negative image of an athlete for a story.

SM and Legal Issues

Almost everything that is written in SM becomes a permanent and searchable web of content for others to view. While this is one of the great opportunities with the WWW and social media, it also presents associated threats such as privacy, defamation, and intellectual property infringement. According to Solove (2007), defamation and invasion of privacy are the two main bodies of law in the United States available to individuals whose reputation has been damaged through misinformation on the Internet. While these bodies have several different torts or claims within them, their ability is somewhat limited (Solove, 2007).

Privacy is one of the more challenging legal issues for SM (D. Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Most jurisdictions in democratic societies protect the freedom of speech for their citizens in laws that distinguish between privacy that deserves legal protection and privacy that does not. Hodge (2006) has argued that the legal decisions regarding privacy are not equipped for SM because the expectations of privacy for people who use SM is difficult to determine. As described by Prosser (1971), the right to privacy is protected by four torts of law: 1) intrusion upon seclusion, 2) public disclosure of private facts, 3) false light, and 4) appropriation. According to Solove (2007), the two most relevant privacy torts to protect the reputation of individuals on the Internet are appropriation and public disclosure of private facts.

The law of appropriation is closely linked with the commercial exploitation of a name or likeness. Within the sports literature, this law is commonly referred to as the Athlete's Right of Publicity (J. T. McCarthy & P. M. Anderson, 2000). The Athlete's Right of Publicity is a widely researched topic in academic and legal literature. Athletes will use this tort to vigorously defend the right to be paid for use of their name or likeness. As an example, Tiger Woods's ETB Corporation has sued six companies since 1997 about matters that range from the Franklin Mint to an artist who produced prints of Tiger Woods' 1997 Masters win (J. McCarthy & P. Anderson, 2000). According to Zuckman, Frieden and Kenedi (1999), the right of publicity protects economic interest. Part of the reason for the wide interest in the topic of the Athlete's Right of Publicity is the concern about protecting the image of the athlete for economic interests.

An important distinction in privacy law that makes it harder for athletes to protect their privacy is the distinction between a public and a private figure. Athletes are considered to be public figures and are afforded less protection than those who are considered private figures (Pedersen et al., 2007). Thus, the tort of public disclosure of private facts is not well suited to offer protection to athletes.

The second body of law that athletes could use to protect their reputation on the Internet is defamation, which protects people against rumours. The defamation tort comes in two forms: the first form is called slander and is based on oral communication, and the second form is called libel and is based on the written word. The distinction between a public and a private figure is important in libel law, making it harder for athletes to protect their privacy. As a method to protect one's reputation on the Internet, suing for defamation is a relatively ineffective tool against the spread of rumours (Solove, 2007). As an example, a fan could post defamatory information and remarks about an athlete on YouTube or Facebook, but because the athlete is deemed a public figure, they would have limited legal recourse to pursue the person who posted the defamatory information. While it is difficult to sue others for defamation successfully, it has not stopped the growth in defamation lawsuits. Internet-

based defamation suits are on the rise in the United States. The New York Based Media Law Centre tracked 110 web-related lawsuits in 2008 compared to 2548 web-related lawsuits in 2009 (Marr, 2010). The majority of these suits are connected to blog postings.

One of the more interesting and legally complex SM situations involved St. Louis Cardinal Manager Tony La Russa. La Russa filed a claim to sue Twitter for allowing an anonymous person to use his name. An imposter using a celebrity's name is referred to as "Twitterjacking" or "cybersquatting" (MacMillan, 2009). In comparison to other social network lawsuits, La Russa's case was well established in intellectual property (J Bluestone, 2010). While there are legal rules for resolving cyber squatters for Internet domain names like www.livestrong.com, the law has not caught up to SM or Twitterjacking (Seidenberg, 2009). La Russa did not win a legal battle with Twitter, but shortly after the lawsuit was filed, Twitter started to verify accounts for well-known people who are at risk of impersonation. Another sports celebrity, Shaquille O'Neal, was also faced with a Twitterjacking, but rather than causing further damage to his reputation by looking uptight and suing the fan for impersonation, his media strategist encouraged him to start tweeting under "TheRealShaq" to resolve the issue.

Another strategy that Solove overlooked (but is applicable within the sports environment) is contract law. The business of sports is well documented with respect to the contract that athletes sign with agents and teams, and the governance of players under the collective bargaining agreement contract. Examples of contract law include collective bargaining agreements between professional sports leagues and players unions, as well as endorsement contracts with sponsors. The bargaining agreements give power to the league commissioner to discipline a player for behaviour off the court or field (Parlow & Hall, 2010). Examples of this behaviour range from Ben Roethlisberger's suspension for an off-season visit to a nightclub in Milledgeville, Georgia (McCallum, Dohrmann, Epstein, Lawrence, & Segura, 2010) to Dennis Rodman being fined by the NBA commissioner for referring to Mormons as assholes (Dean, 1998). The increased media attention on player

mishaps has given rise to the more frequent decision to discipline players for off-court or off-field activities (Parlow & Hall, 2010). Endorsement contracts from sponsors will often have a ‘morals clause’ which is sometimes called the public image, good-conduct, or morality clause (Auerbach, 2005). This morals clause provides the endorsing sponsor the right to cancel an endorsement agreement in the event the athlete does something to damage the image of the sponsor or the image of the athlete. This clause was recently used by Jaguar to punish Stephanie Rice for her gay slur on Twitter.

The adoption and usage of SM in professional sports continues to grow along with corresponding legal issues. Athletes need to understand their legal rights, but they also need to understand the limitations of those rights. As Shaquille O’Neal and others have done, joining the SM movement and speaking directly to fans may be a more strategic move than pursuing legal action.

Research Questions

The following research questions were designed to provide sports communication practitioners with further insight into the legal strategies used when responding to a SM crisis. A review of the communication literature suggests that there is an increase in incidents of SM postings becoming part of the mainstream media. The review of the legal literature suggests that there are limited legal strategies available to protect the reputation of athletes. The research questions below will identify the strategies most used in previous SM crises.

Q1: To what degree is SM damage initiated by a third party or by the athlete?

Q2: What legal strategies have been used in response to SM crises?

Q3: What response strategies to a SM crisis are reported through the media?

To answer these questions, a review of media coverage was conducted to identify cases for analysis in accordance with the procedures outlined in Chapter 5 Methodology.

Methodology

In order to answer the research questions, a review of media coverage was conducted. The researcher was looking for media coverage that had the potential to become a crisis for

an athlete or team. As previously defined, a crisis was determined to be a non-routine situation that has ability to damage the reputation of the athlete. News articles in the United States and Canadian national media during an 18-month period between January 2009 and June 2010 were collected. Articles were chosen through key word searches of the following databases: Proquest Newsstand, ABI/Inform, Lexis/Nexis, and the New York Times. Key word searches included a combination of “social media”, “Twitter”, and “YouTube” with “athlete”, “legal”, “sports”, and “mishap”. A crisis was expected to cover four criteria: type of media, original source of crisis, media coverage, and threat to reputation.

In order to be considered, first a potential crisis needed to be featured in a traditional media such as newsprint, radio, or television. Second, the original source of the crisis needed to be from a SM posting such as Twitter, YouTube, MySpace, or other platform. Third, the media coverage for the crisis needed to be from a legitimate media that provides national or regional coverage. To confirm the legitimacy of the crisis featured in traditional media, the crisis needed to be covered by Associated Press, several large daily newspapers, or a national sports broadcast channel. In some cases this required the researcher to search several different sites to determine that the story received the media coverage deemed legitimate. A large daily newspaper was considered to be in a market with 1,000,000 people or more and have a daily circulation above 100,000 readers. A crisis reported in a national sport broadcast was considered if the channel featured multiple sports and was not a local television channel. National sports broadcasts were typically cable stations like ESPN, ESPN2, TSN, and Sportsnet. Similar to the Kryptonite lock crises described earlier, a SM crisis that was picked up by traditional media like large daily newspapers and national sports broadcasts would be considered more of a threat to one’s reputation. Finally, the story had to have posed a threat to the reputation of the athlete or sports celebrity. This measurement of threat was defined by the story being negative in nature, the athlete apologizing in the media, or the athlete being formally reprimanded by the team or league.

Forty crises were identified, but only 19 met the four criteria that were established. The content of each of the 17c stories was coded according to the three research questions. First, a crisis was coded according to whether it originated with the athlete or someone else. Second, the legal strategy was recorded: privacy, defamation, intellectual property, and contract law were documented. Third, the crises were categorized with the SCCT crisis response strategy used: attack the accuser, denial, scapegoat, excuse, justification, compensation, apology, or no strategy. For each of the three questions, only one coding was recorded. The study did not consider the final results or the detailed communication tactics that were employed to respond to the crisis, as it would not be possible to find the advice provided or withheld by a third party like a sport communication professional, lawyer, family member, or sport agent.

Lastly, each SM crisis was classified into groupings of crisis response strategies to describe common threats amongst the SM crises (Rosch, 1999). By categorizing the sources of the threat, the sport communication professional will be better positioned to determine the most appropriate image-repair strategy faster than if issues were not categorized.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to quantify strategies used in response to SM crises and to categorize them into predictable threat groupings. The use of clusters or groups to categorize threats will help the communications managers treat similar crises in a similar fashion (Coombs & Holladay, 2002). The review and quantification of the responses will provide sport communication professionals with deeper insight into the threats associated with social media. The results in Table 8 and 9 suggest four key observations.

Table 8
First Person Social Media Crises

Situation	Legal Strategies	SCCT Strategies	Threat Category
1. College football recruits at Strip Clubs (Staples, 2010)	No Legal Strategy	No crisis response	Rookie Reporter
2. Martellus Bennet YouTube video ("Report: Bennett fined for profane video," 2010)	Contract Strategy	Apology	Team Insider
3. Charlie Villanueva in game tweet (Associated Press, 2009b)	No Legal Strategy	Apology	Rookie Reporter
4. Kevin Love Tweets coach's departure ("Love: McHale won't return," 2009)	No Legal Strategy	Apology	Rookie Reporter
5. Brian Ching complains about referees (Goff, 2009)	Contract Strategy	Apology	Team Insider
6. Antonio Cromartie complains about food ("Cromartie tweets food, then gets fined," 2009)	Contract Strategy	Apology	Team Insider
7. JR Smith gangster association (Dempsey, 2009)	No Legal Strategy	No Crisis Response	Rookie Reporter
8. Michael Beasley with marijuana ("Kahn confident Beasley is maturing," 2010)	Contract Strategy	No Crisis Response	Rookie Reporter
9. Texas Tech suspends coach Mike Leach amid allegations of player mistreatment (Associated Press, 2009c)	No Legal Strategy	No Crisis Response	Team Insider
10. Agent tweets about player (E. Friedman, 2009)	No Legal Strategy	Apology	Rookie Reporter
11. Gilbert Arenas tweets about gun (Corazza, 2010a)	Contract Strategy	Apology	Team Insider
12. Darnell Docket nude shower live on UStream (Darnell, 2009)	No Legal Strategy	Apology	Rookie Reporter

The first relates to research question number one and the source of the typical SM crises. In 12 of the 17 crises reviewed, the athlete or subject of the crises posted the initial content on a SM tool. This finding indicates an important learning for sport communication professionals who work for teams or with athletes. When predicting or planning for future SM crises, the sports communication professional can target the typical sources of the crises. The athletes themselves pose a more frequent threat to their own reputation than third parties. In order to be prepared for this, sport communication professional should be teaching athletes about SM threats.

The second observation relates to research question number three and the SCCT crisis response strategies that were used. It was observed that a simple apology was the dominant strategy used in response to crises studied. A total of 11 of the 17 crises reviewed had an apology reported in the media. The responses lacked the use of denial or evasion of responsibility tactics that have been used in other celebrity image-repair strategies (J Sanderson, 2008). This difference in strategy used could be attributed to the transparent nature of SM. The use of denial or evading responsibility is not an option in SM, as most of these issues are backed up by a photograph or an actual message posted by the athlete in a SM platform like Twitter or YouTube. As a result, the source and evidence of guilt are not debatable, like an accusation of steroid use would be, and strategies like denial or evasion of responsibility could cause further damage to an athlete's reputation.

The third observation is that only 5 of the 17 issues reviewed were initiated by a third party. This observation seems counterintuitive: with websites like drunkathlete.com and deadspin.com, which exist to publish stories about celebrities in a compromising situation, one would think that more of these stories would reach the traditional media. Upon reviewing different sites like drunkathlete.com and deadspin.com, there are clearly more compromising situations of athletes published in blogs and SM than traditional media; however, when one searches for those same compromising situations in traditional media, these SM stories are not always covered. For the purposes of this research, issues that were not recorded in traditional media were not part of the study because they did not meet the established criteria. This could be explained by the professional standards of mainstream news journalists: a photo of a drunken athlete on a website alone does not make the event newsworthy and the source of the photo may be deemed inappropriate for a professionally trained journalist.

Table 9
Third Person Social Media Crises

Situation	Legal Strategies	SCCT Strategies	Threat Category
1. Greg Oden nude pictures ("Oden sorry photos have surfaced," 2010)	No Legal Strategy	Apology	Opportunist
2. Tony La Russa Twitter imposter (Matyszczyk, 2009)	Intellectual Property	Attack Accuser	Imposter
3. Patrick Kane shirt off in Vancouver (Halford, 2010)	No Legal Strategy	Apology	Opportunist
4. Scott Laggo Bronze medal pose ("Lago leaves Olympics after scandal," 2010)	No Legal Strategy	Apology	Opportunist
5. Brian Burke imposter (Wyshynski, 2009)	Intellectual Property	Attack Accuser	Imposter

The last observation is related to research question number two and the legal strategies used to respond to SM issues. In the five issues that started from a third party, only two of the responses used a legal strategy. Both of the legal strategy issues happened as a result of an impersonation of a coach, and in both situations legal repercussions using the intellectual property strategy were reported in the media. The fact that intellectual property was the only legal strategy used is consistent with the reviewed literature, as claims of privacy and defamation within SM are difficult to prove in a court of law. For both the crises that used an intellectual property response, the subject of the crises was a team manager or coach. The fact that no athlete reported in the media used a legal strategy to protect themselves from imposters or Twitterjacking is consistent with the recommendation that Shaquille O'Neal received. In situations with imposters and Twitterjackers, athletes should verify a username rather than come across as a 'heavy' by suing a fan for impersonation.

Categorization

Four distinct categories of threats were discovered in the analysis. The categories were based on predictable threat groupings and are summarized in Table 10.

Table 10
Categorization

Category	Key Element	Situation	Count
Rookie Reporter	1 st party	1, 3, 4, 7, 8, 10 & 12	7
Team Insider	1 st party penalized employer	2, 6, 6, 9, 11	5
Opportunist	3 rd party posting photo's	13,15,&16	3
Imposter	Twitterjackers	14 & 17	2

The “Rookie Reporter” group posted content through SM that was embarrassing and represented a negative image. The second category was the “Team Insider”, which is almost identical to the Rookie Reporter, except the Team Insider was eventually penalized by the league or team for the inappropriate use of social media. Team Insiders made comments in SM about their internal team activities or their sport that led them to be penalized. As an example, if an athlete commented on a coach, protested food at training camp, or complained about a referee, they were penalized. On the other hand, the Rookie Reporters were not penalized because their issue did not affect the team. In order to protect themselves, athletes, coaches, and managers will need to become more familiar with the accepted norms within SM and the governed SM rules of their team and leagues.

The third group, the “Opportunist”, was created to describe situations where a friend or a casual acquaintance of an athlete records their behavior and distributes it on the Internet. The person sharing the content can range from an ex-girlfriend to someone who attended the same party as an athlete. If athletes enjoy very colourful lives outside of the sport they play, they will need to find ways to protect themselves from the Opportunist.

The last group, the “Imposter”, is becoming more common in social media. The Imposter is defined as a person who uses SM claiming to be a sports celebrity. Services like Twitter have previously encouraged spoof-type imposters for the entertainment value and increased usage of their services. However, when the entertainment value stops and the tweets become unacceptable, Twitter steps in to monitor the situation. As a method of reducing the imposters, SM services are verifying accounts that claim to be a celebrity.

Although the categories represent an oversimplified approach to the complex world of protecting one's reputation in social media, from a sports communication professional perspective, these four categories can be used as a teachable point of view with athletes, coaches, and managers.

Limitations

This study has a number of limitations. First, the study cannot be generalized to all situations in which a sports story starts in SM and reaches traditional media. The study was limited to those stories that the researcher discovered using systematic online search methods. With billions of web pages and thousands of media sources, other stories that could have met the four criteria were not examined. For example, most of the stories discovered were related to North American sports because of the nature of the databases selected to conduct the searches. In addition, the content from the mainstream media that were reviewed did not always produce a clear answer to the research questions. In these cases, it was left up to judgment and additional online searches by the researcher to answer the questions accurately. For example, if it was not clearly reported that a legal strategy was used, other stories were searched to confirm that no legal strategy was reported in the media. In most cases, the stories were covered by the Associated Press and the core content elements of the stories were consistent among the different media reviewed. Finally, observations were limited by what was reported in the media. The longitudinal results of what was reported in the media could not be readily tracked and hence it was not always possible to determine the final outcome.

Conclusion

This study frames crisis and reputation management practices within social media. As SM is still a relatively new medium of communication, SM users will learn by using the technology themselves and learning from others who transgress societal expectations. In most cases, SM crises result from self-inflicted damage caused by inappropriate use by an athlete. As SM adoption among athletes grows, sport communication professionals will inevitably deal with inappropriate use of the medium by an athlete. This research has revealed

significant gaps in the sport communication literature that deal with the link between SM behaviour and traditional media coverage. The summary and categorization of issues serve as useful teaching examples for sports communication professionals.

The identification of threat categories is a strategic tool that can be used by sport communication professionals. The categories represent general groups of SM content producers that represent a threat to the reputation of an individual. The Rookie Reporter and Team Insider groups represent the greatest threat. In order to reduce the threat from these groups, sport communication professionals need to proactively provide training on the proper use of SM and monitor the behaviour of athletes. For example, the Team Insider was characterized as someone who was penalized for sharing information about the team. Athletes need to learn the boundaries of sharing team information — in the absence of detailed boundaries, athletes could benefit from understanding what makes something potentially damaging to reputation. While these boundaries might be provided by sports communication professionals, athletes must often learn from their own mistakes or those made by others.

Another proactive strategy is related to the threat from Imposters. This is one of the few areas where athletes can use a legal strategy to protect their reputation. If the likeness of an athlete is being used by a third party, or his or her name has been Twitterjacked, the athlete can use an intellectual property legal strategy in an attempt to stop the impersonation. As a further proactive step, athletes can register a unique username and officially verify it to protect the name from being used by others.

Lastly, the most difficult threat to protect athletes from is the Opportunist. An Opportunist could be a friend, family member, or casual acquaintance of the athlete. Athletes need to understand that SM and mobile technology create transparency. As Sanderson (2009) observed, the private behaviour of an athlete can be monitored both online and offline by complete strangers. The proactive use of threat groups to teach athletes how to use SM is a useful tool to help sport communication professionals with their job of managing reputations.

During the time it took to complete this chapter the use of Twitter by professional teams and organizations became the norm. By the time chapter six was complete, the *International Journals of Sports Communications* released a Special Issue on New Media and Social Networking. In the special, two of the six studies were about athletes' use of social media and in their final findings they suggested that future research be conducted using organization Twitter feeds (Clavio & Kian, 2010; (Hambrick et al., 2010). Recognizing this need to look into organization Twitter feeds, Chapter 7 will look at Twitter followers of team Twitter feeds.

CHAPTER 7

TWITTER FOLLOWER USES AND GRATIFICATION STUDY

The use of Twitter by professional sports teams, athletes, journalists, and sports media brands to connect with an audience has exploded. Virtually every professional team has a Twitter link featured prominently on their home page and can have anywhere from thousands to millions of followers. Following the Twitter feed of professional teams has become a popular activity for sports fans. Coyle Media's Sports Fan Graph (2011) has over 1500 sports teams listed and tracks the number of registered users each team has for either Twitter or Facebook. The teams listed can range from the large international sports brands, such as the Los Angeles Lakers with over three million followers, to the Toronto Argonauts with just less than 25,000 followers. In total, the Sports Fan Graph tracks over 31 million fans that follow teams on Twitter (Coyle, 2011).

Twitter is a SM platform that started in 2006 and exploded with extensive media coverage during Barack Obama's 2008 bid for presidency. Relative to the growth of past media like radio and television, the growth of Twitter in sports has been exponential. Because of this exponential growth, professional sports teams are continuously learning and experimenting with ways to connect with fans through Twitter. This rapid growth in the use of Twitter has happened organically with limited directives or regulations from league offices on the best way for teams to use the SM platform.

Similar to the introduction of the WWW, Twitter gives sports teams the ability to connect with their fans without their message being mediated by the traditional media. As a media platform within sports, Twitter has started to attract the attention of scholarly inquiry. Recently the use of Twitter in sports has been explored from the perspective of professional athlete usage (Clavio & Kian, 2010; Hambrick et al., 2010), effects on sports journalists, (Schultz & Sheffer, 2010), trademark infringements (J. Bluestone, 2010), and reputation management (Gibbs, 2011).

During the 2009 football season, all eight teams within the Canadian Football League (CFL) started using Twitter to communicate with fans. The CFL is the highest level of play in

Canadian football and the second-most popular major sports league in Canada, after the NHL (Canadian Press, 2006). The league and its teams started using Twitter in 2009, but because of resource and time issues, the league and teams have not had an opportunity to research what motivates people to follow them on Twitter.

Although literature on the use of Twitter by professional sports teams is limited, the fact that almost all professional teams are using Twitter, attracting millions of followers overall, demonstrates the need for greater research from a media sport perspective. The primary purpose of this chapter is to develop, test, and execute an online survey instrument that can be used by professional sports teams to get a better understanding of what content motivates and satisfies team Twitter followers. The survey instrument will be developed and tested on the eight CFL teams. The results of the survey will be relevant to the CFL and will add to the body of knowledge about new media sport communication through a scientific exploration of social media.

Twitter

As an increasingly popular form of communication, Twitter is starting to become a source for inquiries to understand how the platform is used as a form of media and communication. As a result of rapid adoption by users, Twitter has become a topic of discussion amongst popular culture press and academic researchers. A review of the most current inquiries will establish a deeper understanding of Twitter as a form of communication.

The book and magazine publishing industries have taken particular interest in Twitter. A search for books related to Twitter on Amazon.com produced over 11,391 titles that range from *Twitter for Dummies* (Fitton, Gruen, & Poston, 2010) to *Twitter Power 2.0* (Comm, 2010). For the most part, these books are 'how to' guides that provide instructions on getting started with Twitter. An insightful perspective about how Twitter will change the way people live was featured in Time Magazine (S. Johnson, 2009). In the article, Twitter is talked about as a "media experience like no other"; it is a personal communication tool, news distribution

vehicle, and celebrity connection tool all wrapped up in one. As an example, someone could be at a coffee shop looking at their smart phone and read a message about a family member getting into the university of their choice, a fire in New York City, or a charitable appearance by a celebrity. Although Twitter only features 140 characters, Johnson's (2009) work speaks about how Twitter is changing news, opinion, search, and advertising.

One of the first and most cited academic investigations into Twitter was done to understand why people tweet (Java et al., 2007). The study used a clique percolation method to detect communities within 1.348 million tweets from 76,177 users from April to May 2007. Clique Percolation is used to analyse the structure of networks and determine where there is overlap (Palla, Derényi, Farkas, & Vicsek, 2005). This exploratory research found that Twitter users have multiple intentions; however, the four most observed were *daily chatter, conversation, sharing information, and reporting news*. Yet since this study, Twitter's user base has grown from two million to 500 million (C. Smith, 2013) since May 2007 – similar to how Twitter users have created applications for Twitter, users have likely evolved with Twitter during the four years after the study. For example, the study reported that 13% of all tweets contained a URL link to another site, suggesting that Twitter was used for sharing information. While this may have been appropriate as a generalization for the 1.348 million tweets at the time, the usage of links is likely very different today. It is important for marketing and communication practitioners to understand that each group of followers within a Twitter community will have different usage patterns and purposes. Therefore, it is important for practitioners to understand their specific communities within Twitter and not rely on generalizations made from other research.

A similar study to Java et al. (2007) was conducted by collecting tweets from 307,240 users (Joinson, 2008). In their review of the tweets, 25% of posts were directed at a specific user by having the @username in the micro blog. This led to discovery that the number of friends is a more accurate signal than the number of followers when determining more active Twitter users. This is an important finding because it demonstrated that a link between two

people does not necessarily imply that there is an interaction between them. In fact, over 90% of people that have identified a user as a friend on Twitter will reciprocate that friendship back. When using Twitter for marketing or advertising purposes, it is important to understand that, just because someone has a lot of followers, it does not mean that they are more active or influential. The point in sharing this research is to further substantiate the issues raised from the work of Java et al. (2007). Each set of Twitter followers is its own community and each community is similar to a group of people who follow a television show: each television show has its own unique set of viewers with their own purposes for watching the show. When researching Twitter for marketing or other purposes, each Twitter community should be treated as a market segment with its own set of unique characteristics.

While the Twitter studies reviewed here focused on general Twitter users, studies have also been conducted on Twitter from a company-use perspective. Using a case study approach, Jansen, Zhang, Sobel and Chowdury ("Twitter Stats," 2011) analysed 149,472 tweets and determined that there is considerable use of Twitter as an information source, indicating that companies should monitor Twitter for brand management and customer inquiries. The communication patterns within Twitter indicated that a small number of users were active and that a larger number were more passive. This finding was similar to other user-generated media like listservs and wikis (Rafaeli, Ravid, & Soroka, 2004). The active use of Twitter by a small number of users is important for marketers to understand because it breaks Twitter followers into creators and receivers of content. A larger proportion of Twitter users will be receivers or consumers of the content and choose not to create content.

From a marketing perspective, if you are trying to create greater word of mouth, a focus on the creators of content will have greater impact than focusing on the receivers of content. If a creator of content likes the information that you are tweeting, they are likely to link or share it with their community. These connections of re-tweeting and linking content information is the most valuable marketing benefit of Twitter because its effect on search

optimization. SM practitioners understand that a large SM footprint that links to your content helps improve your organic search rankings in services like Google (Evans, 2008).

From a sports context, Twitter is becoming an increasingly popular topic of inquiry. Most of the studies to date have looked at Twitter as a SM platform for players. In a presentation by sports executive Paul Marobella Jr., he shared his thoughts on SM in sports from an athlete's perspective:

A large measurable social footprint and transparent personal following will make the athlete's brand more marketable to teams, sponsors and personal endorsement opportunities – the athlete, in essence, becomes a media property and content platform (Marobella, n.d.).

Examples of athletes' use of SM as a content platform include self-promotion by New York Yankees starting pitcher CC Sabathia and Cincinnati Bengals wide receiver Chad Ochocinco (Cacabelos, 2011). Sabathia used Twitter to encourage followers to vote for him in all-star balloting: "Vote for CC for the 2010 MLB Performer of the Year presented by Pepsi". Ochocinco used Twitter to promote his video game "MadChad" to his over 1.4 million followers. Ochocinco's promotion of "MadChad" game led to it becoming one of the top five apps on Apples iTunes Store within 24 hours of its release (Cacabelos, 2011). These examples demonstrate how some athletes are using SM as a media property and content platform.

Twitter use by athletes has been investigated in a case study approach, which showcased professional cyclists using Twitter to communicate during the 2009 *Giro d'Italia* (Kassing & Sanderson, 2010). The findings of the case study revealed that the athletes used Twitter to give followers a behind-the-scenes look at the race from a cyclist's perspective. Other athlete-centric Twitter research has looked at how players' privacy is being impacted by fans using SM to report off-court or off-field activities (J. Sanderson, 2009). The athlete perspective has also been used for a content analysis of professional athletes' tweets (Hambrick et al., 2010).

The content analysis study reviewed and coded 1962 tweets in order to understand how professional athletes use Twitter. This exploratory study found that Twitter could lead to

increased identification with the athlete through fans' accessibility to their personal lives. The study identified *entertainment*, *diversion*, and *information gathering* as factors of Twitter gratification. Both the cyclist and athlete content analysis studies highlighted the focus on the relationship between sports organizations and their target markets using Twitter (Hambrick et al., 2010; Kassing & Sanderson, 2010). Unfortunately, no research to date has been conducted to understand how sports organizations are using Twitter to connect with fans.

Due to the nature of Twitter as a form of communication, it has attracted the attention of sports media researchers trying to understand the impact of Twitter on sports journalism (Schultz & Sheffer, 2010; Sheffer & Schultz, 2010). The initial exploratory study was a purpose survey of 146 sports journalists collected in September 2009 by Schultz and Sheffer (2010). The results of the study suggest that print journalists use Twitter for breaking news and to promote other platforms. Meanwhile, broadcast journalists use it to give opinions and connect with fans. The results also indicate that the journalists' work routines generally stayed the same. Although the study used a purposive sample, which is not representative of a subset of a larger population, the purposive sample is appropriate to use in exploratory research (Deming, 1990).

A corresponding follow up study was conducted using content analysis of 1008 individual tweets from 297 different newspaper, radio, and television reporters in October 2009. Similar studies have attempted to determine the difference between reported attitudes and actual content from blogs (Sheffer & Schultz, 2009). While the previous survey work suggested that Twitter was used for *breaking news* and *self promotion*, the content analysis suggested that it is used more for *commentary* and *opinion*. Sheffer and Schultz (2009) suggest that the journalists could have felt pressured by management to implement the new technology while at the same time being resistant at a personal level. However, the conflict between reported attitude and content could also be attributed to a flawed research approach or the continually evolving use of Twitter. The research was flawed because it only considered a maximum of four tweets from each of the sports journalists. Rather than limit

the research to four tweets, it seems more appropriate to observe the patterns of media use over a prolonged period of time.

Since its start in 2006, Twitter has become a favourable form of communication used by sports teams, athletes, leagues, media, and sponsors. Much of the understanding about what motivates people to follow professional teams on Twitter has been learned through application and experimentation (McCauley, personal communication, May 2, 2011).

Academic researchers have started conducting studies to understand how teams are using SM to connect with their teams. For sports teams to understand the use of SM like Twitter, they need to understand what content motivates their audience.

In a sports Twitter study by Hambrick et al. (2010), 1962 tweets were collected from 616 athletes in order to understand how athletes were using Twitter. The study used motives identified from Seo and Greens (2008) examination of sports-related websites and Clavio's (2008b) Uses and Gratification study of intercollegiate sport message boards: *interactivity, diversion, information sharing, content, fanship, and promotional*. Interestingly, the factor with the most tweets was *interactivity*, likely because the study was based on a user-generated content form of media. This was one of the first times that *interactivity* was one of the most reported uses for a form of mass media. This interactivity provides fans with an inside look into an athlete's life and creates a closer connection with the athlete. The results of the study by Hambrick suggest that Twitter:

provides a more personalized, unfiltered method of communication not often found in mainstream media. In the past, athletes transmitted their messages via public relations personnel or through media outlets such as television broadcasts or newspaper and magazine. Now athletes can reach their fans in a more direct manner (2010: p. 463).

The results of the study represent the capacity of Twitter to become a game changing form of sports media.

After reviewing a comprehensive collection of research about Twitter use in a sporting context, four observations could be made. First, Twitter is an evolving and changing medium that continues to need exploratory research to understand how it is shifting sport

media. This observation is demonstrated by conflicting research findings that started with a survey and were furthered by content analysis (Schultz & Sheffer, 2010; Sheffer & Schultz, 2010). Second, the research methodologies used when performing a content analysis may want to look at the most recent tweets by a producer of the content; however, it could also look at a defined time period. The observation of tweets over a defined time period could provide a more complete picture of how a producer of content is using the communication platform. Third, the exploration of Twitter as an effective marketing tool should be conducted with specific, clearly defined groups to understand what motivates people to use the media platform. Every Twitter community has a different demographic of users with potentially differing motives. Finally, a significant gap in the research exists: the use of Twitter from a team perspective has not yet been explored and is an important part of understanding SM in a sport media context (Clavio & Kian, 2010; Hambrick et al., 2010). It can also be observed that most of the studies to date about Twitter are from a production perspective — very few studies have observed Twitter from an audience perspective. This scarcity of studies from the audience perspective is consistent with findings about sports media by Kinkema and Harris (1998). This shortcoming could be addressed by looking at a Twitter audience using the Uses and Gratification framework.

Statement of Problem

Due to limited financial and people resources available to manage SM platforms, non-major league sports franchises like CFL teams could benefit from external expertise to improve their use of SM to connect with fans. For example, an externally prepared and executed survey could help a team better understand the characteristics of gratifications sought and gratifications obtained by their Twitter followers. With team salary caps of \$4.3 million (CFL, 2012), CFL teams do not have the same financial resources that counterpart major leagues like the NFL, which have a salary cap of \$120 million (Wyche, 2012). Financial limitations are apparent in the staffing decisions made to launch and manage CFL teams' SM platforms. Interviews with CFL team personnel (conducted in Chapter 8)

demonstrate that almost all of the people who manage SM channels have multiple responsibilities, and the responsibility to tweet or do other SM work is considered an addition to existing responsibilities. This is somewhat different than teams who work in other major league sports within North America, who have the financial resources to hire professional managers and staff who are responsible for the entirety of their organizations' SM platforms (McCauley, personal communication, May 2, 2011). As a result of limited time to commit to SM platforms, it could be argued that CFL teams do not have the available time or expertise to analyze their SM audience.

However, similar to other media businesses like newspaper, radio, or even websites, it is important that CFL teams survey their audience to gain insights about their fans. If CFL teams can gain a better understanding of their audience's preferences during this process, they can be more effective at distributing SM content; furthermore, if people are more satisfied with the content from a team's Twitter feed, they are more likely to use it more frequently. If team Twitter feeds are being frequently used by fans, the team can use this tool to subvert potential media issues. For example, when the Saskatchewan Roughriders released their popular player Tad Kornegay (@Thatdiot) on the evening of July 19, the player tweeted his departure before the team notified the media. The tweet became very popular and the team's general manager had to hold a media event the next morning to address this coverage. At the end of the event, the team tweeted out a video posting of the full interview well in advance of the nightly sportscasts. Thus, fans were able to watch the team rebut the unpopular release of the player directly without having the content filtered through a traditional media platform. This form of immediacy provided the team with an improved situation, and the team could then manage the fans' impressions of an unpopular decision.

The primary purpose of this chapter is to develop, test, and execute an online survey instrument that can be used by professional sports teams to understand of what content motivates and satisfies team followers on Twitter. This direct connection between fans and the content distributor is new and requires teams to gain deep insight into the fans and the

ways they use Twitter. With a deeper understanding of their fans, teams can tweet according to what satisfies their followers the most. Teams are now the managers of a media platform and need to understand who their target users are, what they use the platform for, and what satisfies them the most about their Twitter feed (Clavio & Kian, 2010; Hambrick et al., 2010).

Research Questions

A series of exploratory research questions was developed based on the results of previous Uses and Gratification research that related to Internet, social media, and sports:

- Q4: What are the demographic characteristics and distributions for the followers of official CFL Twitter accounts?
- Q5: What are the characteristics of technology use and sports fan activity for the followers of official CFL Twitter accounts?
- Q6: Which gratifications sought and obtained are the most desired and least desired by CFL Twitter followers?
- Q7: What are the dimensions of gratifications sought for the followers of official CFL Twitter accounts?
- Q8: What are the dimensions of gratifications obtained for the followers of official CFL Twitter accounts?
- Q9: Based on the gratifications sought and gratifications obtained, are CFL Twitter followers satisfied?

To answer these questions, a Uses and Gratifications framework was used in accordance with the procedures outlined in Chapter 5 Methodology.

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to examine characteristics, uses, gratification sought, gratifications obtained, and satisfaction for followers of CFL Twitter accounts, in order for CFL teams to improve their anticipation of Twitter content that their followers most desire. The methodology used for this research was an online survey of CFL Twitter account followers. The collection of data was conducted for a three-week period from September 7, 2011, to September 30, 2011. The online survey method has been used frequently to examine Uses and Gratifications in a media context related to the Internet and social media.

The use of a survey to answer the research questions was chosen because surveying the audience for feedback is a primary method of research in Uses and Gratification theory.

Because the research was about understanding the audience for an Internet-based online community, the use of a telephone or mail-in survey were not considered as an option.

To ensure that the study follows effective survey methodology techniques, Wimmer and Dominic's *Mass Media Research An Introduction* (2006) was used as a reference tool. Along with a formal reference tool, several past studies about Internet and social media-based Uses and Gratifications were referenced. To describe the methodological steps used, four sections of the survey research chapter from *Mass Media Research and Introduction* were used to construct questions, design the questionnaire and pre-testing, and gather survey data.

The literature related to Uses and Gratification, Twitter, and professional sport communications recognizes the increased popularity and importance of Twitter, and outlines its potential ability to satisfy users through content gratifications. As a form of relationship marketing to fans, research is required to investigate the needs of the fans and effectiveness of Twitter to meet those needs (J. Williams & Chinn, 2010).

Constructing Questions. According to Wimmer and Dominick (2006), "survey research including online surveys, requires careful planning and execution, and the research must take into account a wide variety of decisions and problems" (2006, p. 185). After a review of the research problem and questions, the construction of survey questions took a three stage process: 1) a review of past surveys that were similar, 2) a content analysis of CFL team Tweets, and 3) a compilation of questions by the researcher.

The initial study that inspired the research and acted as an appropriate reference tool for constructing questions was Clavio's *Uses and Gratifications of Internet Collegiate Sport Message Board Users* (2008b). The study was published as part of a PhD dissertation and was conducted on the users of college sport message boards. Sport message boards are described by Clavio (2008b) as "a web page dedicated to asynchronous communication between users through the use of software protocols" (2008b, p. 74). Both message boards and Twitter offer fans the opportunity to post and read content about their team through the Internet, however, sport message boards have a moderator that is responsible for approving or

disapproving content whereas Twitter has no such controls. While sport message boards still exist today, they are largely a place for hardcore fans that prefer longer in-depth discussion, whereas the Twitter follower is often a more casual fan that is more interested in news about the team (McCauley, personal communication, May 2, 2011). Because of the similarities between sport message boards and Twitter, it was deemed that the *Uses and Gratification of Internet Collegiate Sport Message Board Users* was an appropriate example to follow. Other Internet-based Uses and Gratifications online surveys were also reviewed. These studies were based on various audiences that included Internet (Ferguson & Perse, 2000; Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000; Stafford et al., 2004) and SM use (Chen, 2011; Clavio & Kian, 2010; Hambrick et al., 2010; P. Johnson & Yang, 2009; 2008; Quan-Haase & Young, 2010).

Most of the studies reviewed had three types of categories: demographics, usage, and gratification. Amongst the studies, the demographic questions were somewhat different depending on the sample group selected for the study. This research study mirrors many of the similar categories that other studies used related to general demographics such as age, sex, education, and relationship status. The collection of demographic information will help determine the segments or sub-groups of the Twitter user population to understand the characteristics of a typical follower.

Similar to demographic questions, most of the surveys collected information about usage. While the Internet studies focused on understanding Internet use (i.e., how much time did they spend per week on the Internet), the SM studies were trying to understand usage of SM (i.e., hours on Twitter per week). For the most part, these questions attempt to rank users into different categories based on the amount of time they spend doing a particular activity during a set period of time. Other usage questions in this study were taken from Clavio and Kian (2010), which included how often they check Twitter and what devices they use to check Twitter. The question about the device used to check Twitter is particularly interesting because of the rapid adoption of smartphone mobile devices (Perreault & Ruths, 2011). Some people will argue that a driving force behind Twitter use and adoption is the increase in the

number of people who have mobile devices that can engage Twitter (McCauley, personal communication, May 2, 2011). The purpose for the collection of usage questions is somewhat similar to the collection of demographic questions, which helps to determine sub-groups and understand the basic characteristics of a typical follower.

To identify the most appropriate motivational statements, a three-stage process was used. In stage one, a content analysis of CFL Tweets was conducted; in stage two, a collection of motivational statements were collected from three different sport-related SM studies; and in the last stage the statements were written and reduced down to the final fifteen that would be used.

Content Analysis – CFL Tweets

A content analysis was conducted of CFL team tweets from September 1, 2010, to October 31, 2010. This process of conducting an analysis of Twitter messages to construct questions for a survey has been successfully used before (Clavio & Kian, 2010). To conduct the analysis, a six-step approach was followed from Hansen (1998):

1. Definition of the problem
2. Selection of media and sample
3. Defining analytical categories
4. Constructing a coding schedule
5. Piloting the coding schedule and checking reliability
6. Data-preparation and analysis

With the first step already completed, the second step of selecting the media and sample was started. The media selected for the study was the Twitter feeds from all eight teams in the CFL. The analysis was based on tweets from Twitter's public stream, downloaded using the online tool "Searchtastic" — an online tool that pulls public Tweets of a chosen user and provides the results in an excel file, allowing the researcher to conduct a qualitative categorization and a quantitative examination of the tweets.

Previous research and content analysis have only used the most recent 20 tweets from a chosen user (Hambrick et al., 2010). I believe this is a flawed approach, as following the most recent tweets would not provide a complete enough picture of how and what teams are

tweeting about. For example, if you pulled 20 tweets starting on a game day, your sample would be heavily weighted toward game day activities for Twitter because the teams tweet a substantial amount of their messages around a game day. By covering all teams and all tweets in the league for a one full month, a researcher can access a cross-section of Twitter use when the team is competing during the regular season. During the time period for this study, a total of 1527 Tweets were collected. A review of the Twitter account profiles for each team in Table 11 shows that the teams are very active on Twitter and that teams' use and popularity on Twitter varies. On average, the teams are tweeting six messages per day from their account, have been tweeting for approximately two years (712 days since 2009), and they have 5359 followers per team.

Table 11
CFL Twitter account profiles

Team	Total Tweets	Oct Tweets	Oct Tweets/Day	First Tweet	Days Tweeting	Followers	Following
BC Lions**	4,329	273	8.8	27-Feb-09	819	6,503	1,436
Calgary Stampeders**	6,464	204	6.6	7-Sep-09	627	4,830	70
Edmonton Eskimos	3,826	355	11.5	29-Aug-09	636	4,377	31
Saskatchewan Roughriders	1,244	67	2.2	12-Aug-09	653	7,128	77
Winnipeg Blue Bombers	1,485	147	4.7	8-Sep-09	626	3,946	166
Hamilton Tiger Cats**	3,687	113	3.6	19-Feb-09	827	3,241	12
Toronto Argonauts	3,044	250	8.1	19-Feb-09	827	5,008	2,041
Montreal Alouettes	3,941	118	3.8	18-Jul-09	678	7,839	2,256
Grand Total	28,020	1,527			5,693	42,872	6,089
Averages	3,503	191	6.2		712	5,359	761

* As of and including May 26, 2011.

** Indicates that the team had two official Twitter accounts. The second account was included in the counts.

Step three of the approach defined the analytical categories for the tweets. In the development of the categories, the researcher reviewed a sample of tweets from each team to become immersed in the content, structure, and general nature of the texts. Although the researcher was informed by the content from the literature and personal experiences, pre-conceived categories were avoided in order to capture unknown bodies of information from the texts. Each tweet was coded into a category and a sub-category. The use of categories and sub-categories was part of Stage 4: constructing a coding schedule (see Appendix B). After

the coding schedule was created for both categories and sub-categories of tweets, the coding was completed as part of stage 5 and was checked for reliability.

An undergraduate student was provided two hours of training and the coding schedule in Appendix B to check the reliability of the coding. In terms of reliability, the student coded 1413 (out of 1527) tweets identically to the researcher. To address the conflicting results for the remaining 114 Tweets, the researcher and the undergraduate student met and discussed each of the tweets until they agreed on the final coding analysis. With the coding completed and the reliability tested, the final stage was data-preparation and analysis.

Using the detailed coding schedule, five initial categories were identified: *In-Game*, *News*, *Promotion*, *Interactive*, and *Other*. The *In-Game* category represented any tweets that happened during a game, which was the case more than four out of every ten tweets sent. Items in the *News* category consisted of tweets that would be potential content for a traditional media platform. This category has the most varied in type of information sent and the tweets represented three in every ten tweets sent. The *Promotion* category consisted of tweets that were more of a marketing or promotional message — frequently these items had a call to action or link to an external page whereby the fan could enter a contest or poll. Tweets that were related to a fan discussion involving the team and the fans — such as re-tweets, replies, or encouraging discussion — made up the *Interactive* category. The final category *Other* consisted of tweets that did not fit into any of the previous four categories. Only 1% of tweets were coded as *Other*.

The results of the initial tweet coding in Table 12 demonstrated that the teams used their Twitter accounts in different ways. Teams like Edmonton, Hamilton, and Montreal use *In-game* Tweets much more than the other teams. The Toronto Argonauts appear to be the most *Interactive* with their use of Twitter: more than half their Tweets were in the *Interactive* category. This demonstrates that, although all of the teams in the CFL participate in the same business and have very similar needs for revenue generation and fan connection, their usage of the Twitter platform appears to be very different (see Table 12).

Table 12 – Initial Tweet Categories

Tweet Categories	BC	Calgary	Edmonton	Sask	Winnipeg	Hamilton	Toronto	Montreal	Total
In-game	85	91	167	52	51	132	19	100	697
News	104	66	142	10	34	77	17	26	476
Promotion	58	37	25	4	19	27	13	12	195
Interactive	22	6	19	1	9	12	66	9	144
Other	4	4	2			2	3		15
Total	273	204	355	67	113	250	118	147	1527

The initial tweet categories were divided into sub-categories to provide further insight into how Twitter was being used by the teams. These sub-categories were used to provide direction for the survey instrument and the writing of gratification statements, as the initial tweet categories were too broad and did not provide the detail required for writing the gratification statements. In total there were 17 sub-categories coded. The results in Table 13 further identify how different the teams use Twitter.

Table 13 – Tweet Sub-Categories

Tweet Sub-Categories	BC	Calgary	Edmonton	Sask	Winnipeg	Hamilton	Toronto	Montreal	Total
In-Game									
In Game Updates	64	91	154	50	48	116	17	88	628
In Game Photo Sharing	21		13	2	3	16	2	12	69
News									
Team Roster Updates	5	17	33	4	18	13	4		94
Video Sharing Links	19	9	62		1	15	2	10	118
Upcoming Game	26	15	17	3	10	18	5	11	105
Player/Coach/Blog	16	13	12	2	2	10	3	5	63
Photo Sharing	12	1	7	1	3	15	3		42
Post Game News	8	6	11			6			31
Audio Sharing	18	5							23
Promotion									
Promote External Media	11		2	1	7	16	7		44
Promote Contest	26	18	18	2	11	3	3	8	89
Promote Poll/Vote	17	14	3	1	1	5	3		44
Promote Ticket Specials	4	4	2			3			13
Promote Merch Discounts		1						4	5
Interactive									
Direct Fan Communication @	17	5	7	1	8	11	44	3	96
Retweets & Discussion	5	1	12		1	1	22	6	48
Other									
Other	4	4	2			2	3		15
Total	273	204	355	67	113	250	118	147	1527
External Links	164	105	161	14	22	86	25	44	621

With the coding complete and the reliability tested, the analysis of the tweets was completed.

The results of the content analysis of the CFL Twitter accounts provided direction that would

help write the questions. The content analysis identified the uses like in-game tweeting and the linking of tweets to other content. The use of Twitter as a linking or pointing device to other more rich forms of media such as pictures, contests, or other websites is a regular practice. Four of every ten tweets by the teams linked to an external location on the Internet. With the analysis completed, a review of the different sport-related SM studies was used to assist the researcher in writing the gratification statements for the survey.

Previous Motivational Statement Review

The second stage of the construction of questions was to review the motivational statements from three different sports-related SM studies (Clavio, 2008b; Clavio & Kian, 2010; P. Johnson & Yang, 2009). These three studies were used because they were specific to sports-related audiences and user-generated content like Twitter and sport message boards. The studies were also deemed to have an audience most similar to CFL Twitter followers and thus be more likely to be accepted and understood by the audience to be surveyed. A list of 71 statements from Internet-based Uses and Gratification scholarly publications were collected from these three studies. The mean scores for the statements were used to help rank the statements from highest to lowest score. This ranking was done to provide context to help decide which statements should be included in the survey. This step of using the mean scores to provide context was added to the process because a survey with too many questions can result in a low completion rate (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006) and context was needed to reduce and eliminate potential questions. While the process for using previous Internet Uses and Gratifications concepts from scholarly publications has been used before (Clavio & Kian, 2010), using the results of the studies to reduce the number of questions has not been reported.

Motivational Statement Reduction. The final stage of the three-stage process was to come up with a list of the 20 most appropriate statements for each gratification sought and gratification obtained. Through a review of the content analysis and a review of the 71 statements from other scholarly publications, the list of statements was narrowed down to 20

statements. Finally, the researcher examined the 20 statements using the results of the content analysis and the review of the 71 previous statements to further narrow down the number of statements. After examining the information, a final list of 15 statements for both gratifications sought and 15 statements for gratifications obtained were finalized by the researcher. With the motivational statements complete, the design of the questionnaire was started.

Questionnaire Design

When designing the questionnaire, the researcher considered the wording of questions to determine the order and appropriate scales to use. For example, the researcher was able to acquire a copy of the survey instrument used by Clavio's study on sport message boards. Along with the example survey, the researcher referenced works by Wimmer and Dominic (2006), Mazzochi (2008), and Lietz (2010). *Mass media research: An introduction* (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006) was used as the initial reference tool for designing the questionnaire because it is highly cited within communications literature. Other sources were used when more detail was required to understand effective questionnaire design.

The development of survey questions is a complex communication process that aims to foster genuine interaction between the researcher and respondent to create shared meaning (Foddy & Foddy, 1994). Recognizing the importance of the survey as a communication tool, and to avoid negative impact on sample quality due to non-response (deLeeuw & deHeer, 2002), time was spent reviewing questions for length and choice of wording. Wherever possible, questions were re-worded to be less than 16 words. This threshold of 16 words was established based on work by psychologist Brislin (1986). Longer questions are more difficult to read and more time consuming for the respondent. With regards to word choice, the research avoided using words that indicate vagueness wherever possible (Brislin, 1986), as well as questions with two concepts (Fink, 1995).

The order of the questions for the survey was carefully considered because it can influence response rates and minimize the non-response errors. Consistent with Clavio's

(2008b) research and through the guidance of Wimmer and Dominic (2006), the question order started with simple screening questions and progressed to gratification statements, finishing with demographic questions. Aside from the screening questions, which are necessary at the outset, the gratification questions were asked first because they were deemed to be the most important. For both the gratifications sought and gratifications obtained questions, a medium length introduction preceded the questions, as short introductions to questions concerning the same topic were deemed to increase data quality (Blair et al., 1997; Andrews, 1984). After the introduction to the gratification sections, the questions were presented in random order to avoid the effects of habituation, whereby respondents select the identical choice for every question. Twitter usage questions followed the gratification statement questions (see Appendix C).

In order to determine the most appropriate scale to use with the motivation statements, a detailed review of select Uses and Gratifications studies was conducted. Most of the studies reviewed used a 5-point Likert scale to measure motivations (Chen, 2011; Clavio & Kian, 2010; P. Johnson & Yang, 2009; Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000; Quan-Haase & Young, 2010; Stafford et al., 2004). However, one study used a 7-point semantic scale (Stafford et al., 2004) and another used a 7-point Likert scale (Joinson, 2008).

Before making a decision on the most appropriate scales to use, both Likert and semantics scales were considered. The basic difference between Likert and semantic scales is the labeling of each rating point. A Likert scale will typically list and number from lowest to highest: '1 = Not at all satisfied' to '5 = Extremely satisfied'. A semantic scale simply places one statement like 'bad' on the left and 'good' on the right and asks the respondent to pick a place on the scale where they fit. Likert scales are typically used for the measurement of attitude while semantic scales are concerned with the measurement of meaning. The ability to sum and total Likert scales along with the ability to measure attitude are likely why Likert scales are the "most commonly used question format for assessing participants' opinions of

usability” (Finstad, 2010). Because of the widely accepted use of Likert scales with Internet studies, the researcher elected to use Likert scales.

Similar to the scale decision, careful consideration was made to determine whether to use a seven-point or a five-point scale for research questions. The majority of Uses and Gratification studies have used a 5-point Likert scale, but there is relatively recent evidence to suggest that a 7-point scale might be more appropriate. In a recent study that compared the 5- and 7-point scales, Finstad (2010) suggested that “the 7-point scale may represent a sweet spot in survey construction” (p. 108) because it is compact enough to be responded to efficiently and large enough to minimize interpolations. Historically, it has been reported that 7-point scales have been more reliable because they create a greater differentiation of response (Alwin, 1997; Finn, 1972; Masters, 1974). Thus, the researcher chose to use a 7-point Likert scale. The only major issue with selecting a 7-point scale is the difficulty in comparing the results to previous studies, however, Dawes (2008) has demonstrated that a rescaling and arithmetic adjustment can facilitate the comparison between the 5- and 7-point scale.

Pre-Testing. With only eight teams in the CFL and an indication that many Twitter followers would subscribe to multiple accounts, the researcher was unable to select one team or Twitter account to conduct a pre-test of the survey without the potential of a fan receiving a version of the e-mail survey more than once. For this reason, more time and effort was spent reviewing survey questions and scales from other studies that would be appropriate.

After compiling an initial copy of the survey, it was sent out for ethics review at both Stirling University and Ryerson University. The initial survey was also sent out to a group of individuals that were professors at Ryerson University, University of Ottawa, and Indiana University, as well as contacts within the CFL and sports marketing professionals. In total, nine professionals reviewed the initial survey and offered feedback and input. Elements of the original survey were modified based on these comments. Some of the modifications included the re-wording of the gratification questions, elimination of income and race questions to

avoid offending people, and the reduction of screening questions to reduce confusion. Because of the length of the survey and the desire to have people complete a somewhat lengthy survey, it was decided after the initial survey to introduce an incentive for completion; this type of incentive for completion of a survey is common within media research. Due to the large number of potential followers and limited financial resources, a raffle for a \$250 Future Shop gift certificate was deemed to be most appropriate incentive versus a standard monetary payment for completion.

Gathering Data. The study used a convenience sample to select followers of CFL team Twitter accounts. A convenience sample was used rather than a random sample because the researchers were not able to select designated Twitter users. Within Twitter, you either send a message to all your followers or you do not send a message; there is no way to segment the groups further. A number of new media researchers have used convenience samples in the past (Chen, 2011; Clavio, 2008b; Clavio & Kian, 2010). Given that the focus of this research is on examining a particular form of SM as opposed to a specific group of people, a convenience sampling method seems appropriate. While the convenience sample lacks random probability sampling and cannot be extrapolated to a cross section of Twitter accounts, the focus of this study is related specifically to Twitter use and CFL teams. The study will not and cannot be used to extrapolate Twitter usage by other sports teams or leagues.

The research was conducted with the permission and participation of Jaime Stein, the Manager of Digital Media with the Canadian Football League. Each team within the study was contacted prior to the survey being built to discuss participating in the study. In order to participate, each team needed to forward a link to the survey encouraging their Twitter followers to complete the survey. Over the course of a three-week time period, each team would be asked to forward the link at least three times. This method for distribution of a questionnaire has been successful in previous new media, Twitter, and Uses and Gratification studies (Chen, 2011; Clavio & Kian, 2010; P. Johnson & Yang, 2009). Suggestions were

provided for the wording of the tweet (see Appendix D), but teams were also encouraged to customize the wording to be consistent with how they communicate with their followers. The three-week time period of September 7, 2011 to September 30, 2011 was chosen because it represents the height of the CFL season leading up to playoffs. The CFL season is 19 weeks long and this time period represented weeks 11-13. It was felt that this timing would provide the best response rate for the research.

The survey software that was chosen for this research was Opinio, a platform which allows researchers to design, customize, and host their own web-based survey. The software is made available through a license at Ryerson University and complies with ethics board standards, whereas more popular survey software like www.surveymonkey.com does not. To respond to the survey, a simple URL link was developed using a bit.ly, a tinyURL service that allows users to make a complex survey link smaller and easier for the user to type. The link name chosen for the study was bit.ly/CFL_Tweets.

From the list of eight teams within the league, all teams agreed to participate in the study with the exception of the Montreal Alouettes. The Alouettes chose not to participate in the study because of language issues and the lack of an online survey that was in French. The idea of translating the survey into French was considered, however, it was abandoned due to timelines and budget concerns. A full list of the Twitter accounts included in the convenience sample for this research can be found in Table 14.

Table 14
List of CFL Twitter Accounts in Sample

Team	Twitter Account	Followers as of 09/08/2011	Following as of 09/08/2011
Canadian Football League	@cfl	17020	8316
Saskatchewan Roughriders	@sskroughriders	11676	91
BC Lions	@BCLions	9135	1538
Winnipeg Blue Bombers	@Wpg_BlueBombers	7878	167
Calgary Stampeders	@calstampeders	6899	154
Toronto Argonauts	@TorontoArgos	6644	2827
Edmonton Eskimos	@cfl_esks	6333	31
Hamilton Tiger Cats	@Ticats	4974	15
Montreal Alouettes**	@mtlalouettes	10162	2269
Total		80721	15408

* As of and including September 8, 2011.

** Montreal did not send out a survey link to followers, followers of the Montreal twitter account also follow other CFL Twitter accounts.

Throughout the survey process, responses were monitored to ensure that the URLs and links operated properly. The Opinio survey software was programmed to close after September 30. At that time, an e-mail was sent to all of the league and team personnel thanking them for their cooperation and participation in the study. The survey was no longer active at this time and data was extrapolated from Opinio and downloaded for analysis.

Data Analysis. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences Version 18.0 (SPSS) was used to analyze the data, and descriptive statistics were used to examine the distributions and frequencies of demographic and usage data. Means, standard deviations, and histograms were reviewed for all variables within the dataset. Frequency analysis was also undertaken for all variables analyzed (see Tables 15 to 27). Because the results were not compared with other measurements, simple descriptive statistics were deemed to be appropriate.

To derive the most and least desired factors for Question 3, a Pearson Correlation test was done. The Pearson test is a simple correlation test used to determine the extent to which values of the 15 variables are related to each other. In order to determine the most sought-

after variables, simple means could have provided the results; however, the Pearson test provides more rigor and also highlights any cluster of results that are similar.

To derive factors based on the 'gratification sought' and 'gratification obtained', all variables were entered into the factor analysis function of SPSS and were run using a varimax rotated principle components factor analysis. The factor analysis was undertaken in order to derive an understanding of the groupings in which the fifteen factors naturally fell, allowing for a reduction and simplification of the dataset.

Authors such as Charney and Greenberg (2002), Larose and Eastin (2004), Papacharissi and Rubin (2000), Stafford and Stafford (2001), and Stafford et al. (2004) have also used factor analysis within media or Internet studies. Only those factors that contained loadings of .40 were kept for analysis (Hunter, 1980; Tabachnick & Fidell, 1983). This method of analysis was used because of its inclusion in similar studies (Ferguson & Perse, 2000; Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000).

Results

The purpose of this study was to examine characteristics, uses, gratifications sought, gratifications obtained, and satisfaction for followers of CFL Twitter accounts so that the teams can better anticipate Twitter content that their followers most desire. In order to examine the characteristics of Twitter followers, a survey instrument was used to collect feedback from sports fans that followed CFL teams. Statistical analysis using regression, factors, and general frequencies were conducted to examine the data. This chapter will review in detail the results of the data analysis.

General Results. From September 6, 2011 to September 30, 2011, the Opinio online survey software at Ryerson University was used to collect surveys. Twitter followers were able to access the survey through a bit.ly web link that was sent to them through Twitter by different team and league Twitter accounts. The completed surveys represent the total sample size (n=539) for this research. People accessed the survey through a link that was tweeted to them by the teams that they follow on Twitter. The link to the Opinio software had 1034

clicks during the three week time period. From those clicks, 95% happened in the first week of the study. This would suggest that in future studies, a shorter timeline could be appropriate. From the 1034 clicks, 662 people attempted the survey and 539 actually completed all gratifications obtained questions. This means that 123 followers started the survey but did not finish it, and were thus excluded from the study analysis. As it was expected that most followers would follow more than one CFL team, only one survey link was used to collect the information.

In total, the online survey yielded 539 usable responses. The actual response rate is somewhat difficult to calculate because of the low number of active followers on Twitter and the fact that 59% of the CFL Twitter followers reported following two or more accounts. Based on 70,559 Twitter followers of the CFL accounts at the start of September 2011 (not including Montreal with 10,162), this number would represent a very low response rate. In a previous Uses and Gratification study of a female athlete's Twitter followers (Clavio & Kian, 2010), the athlete had 8300 followers and the number of active followers was estimated to only be 17%, producing a response rate of approximately 15%. The definition of active followers was based on "one who has at least 10 followers, follows at least 10 people and has tweeted at least 10 times" (Barracuda Laboratories, 2009). By 2010, the same company that defined active Twitter followers estimated that 43% of Twitter followers were active (Barracuda Laboratories, 2010). According to Barracuda, the dramatic increase was attributed to mobile devices. To account for a Twitter user following more than one team, a weighted average of Twitter followers was calculated using the number of Twitter followers at the start of the survey (see Table 16). Using the weighted average of Twitter accounts from Table 16 (45,893) and the estimate of active Twitter followers (43%) the estimated response rate would be 3%.

While the response rate of 3% is low, the format of distributing a survey through Twitter is new. According to Pew Research Center, surveys are facing a growing difficulty in reaching people. The response rate for Pew telephone surveys has decreased from 36% in

1997 to only 9% in 2012 (Pew Research Center, 2012). This decline in response rates is happening across all types of surveys in the United States. The only similar study of Twitter followers resulted in a response rate of 15% based on sample of 216 responses (Clavio & Kian, 2010). While larger sample sizes help improve the confidence in the findings for this research project, the issue of implementing effective Twitter-based surveys is something that should be investigated in the future.

As shown in Table 15, the most-followed Twitter account amongst the sample size is the official @CFL team feed. This is not surprising, considering that the @CFL account has 17,020 followers and the average of the eight team Twitter accounts reviewed is only 8819 followers. The @CFL Twitter account was also the first account to tweet the link to the survey; therefore, if the CFL followers were sent the link later (from a team account) they would not be likely to click on an identical link to a survey that they have already completed. If CFL followers attempted to take the survey a second time, Opinio was programmed to prevent multiple responses from the same Internet Protocol address. The team with the most number of reported followers was Saskatchewan and Montreal had the least number of followers (see Table 15). It is not surprising that Montreal had the least because the team did not Tweet out the link to the survey.

Table 15 – Frequency of CFL Twitter Accounts Followed

Team	Twitter Account	Frequency
Canadian Football League	@cfl	314
Saskatchewan Roughriders	@sskroughriders	158
BC Lions	@BCLions	133
Winnipeg Blue Bombers	@Wpg_BlueBombers	133
Edmonton Eskimos	@cfl_esks	118
Calgary Stampeders	@calstampeders	92
Hamilton Tiger Cats	@Ticats	81
Toronto Argonauts	@TorontoArgos	76
Other	n/a	56
Montreal Alouettes	@mtlalouettes	50
Total		1211
Total Respondents		539
Average Twitter Accounts Followed per Respondent		2.2

With a reported average of 2.2 CFL Twitter accounts followed per respondent, an analysis was conducted to understand the most common number of accounts that a sports fan would follow. The majority of respondents (314) followed the CFL Twitter account, while 22% followed three or more official CFL Twitter accounts. Only 221 (41%) respondents followed one account and 204 (38%) respondents followed two accounts. This would suggest that CFL Twitter accounts are being followed by hardcore fans that use Twitter to follow multiple teams.

Table 16 – Distribution of CFL Twitter Accounts Followed

Number of Twitter Accounts Followed by Respondents	Followers (%)	Weighted Average of Followers
1 account	221 (41)	28930
2 accounts	204 (38)	13353
3 accounts	60 (11)	2618
4 accounts	14 (3)	458
5 accounts	1 (0)	26
6 accounts	4 (1)	87
7 accounts	2 (0)	37
8 accounts	3 (1)	49
9 accounts	21 (4)	305
10 accounts	9 (2)	118
Total	539	45983

Summary of General Results. The results of this research reveal a total sample size of 539 respondents across nine different Twitter accounts. The Twitter account with the greatest number of respondent followers was @CFL (n=314) while the Twitter account with the least number of respondent followers was @mtlalouettes (n=50). Fans that follow CFL Twitter accounts are very active with 64% of them following three or more teams.

Research Questions

Research Question 1. The first research question examined the demographic characteristics for official CFL Twitter accounts. The first demographic question asked about the respondents' gender. The results summarise in Table 17 indicate that the followers of CFL Twitter accounts are predominantly male (67%).

Table 17 – Gender of Respondents

Gender	Total (%)
Female	173 (33)
Male	353 (67)
Total	526

In terms of age, anyone under 18 years of age was screened out of the study because of ethics review board standards at Ryerson University. In total, only 16 respondents answered that they were under 18 years of age in the screening question and these were not included in the sample size. The distribution of respondent ages can be found in Table 18. The most frequently reported age group was 25-34 year olds (39%) and the second-most frequently reported age group was 35-44 year olds (25%). By taking the median of each age range and then calculating the average it was possible to derive an average age of 35.

Table 18 – Age of Respondents

Age	Followers (%)
18 or 19	21 (4)
20-24	63 (12)
25-34	206 (39)
35-44	133 (25)
45-54	76 (14)
55-64	23 (4)
65-74	3 (1)
Total	252
Average Age	35

Survey participants were asked the highest level of education that they achieved. The greatest number of respondents indicated that the highest level they achieved was a university or undergraduate degree (42%). The results also show that the second greatest number of respondents indicated that they achieved some college or college diploma (37%). When you compare the Stats Canada 2006 results with the education level of respondents, it would suggest that the CFL Twitter followers are more educated than the overall Canadian population. In the 2006 census, only 61% of respondents (Statistics Canada, 2009) had education beyond high school whereas 88% of CFL Twitter followers have education beyond high school.

Table 19 – Education Level of Respondents

Education Level	Total %
Some high school	5 (1)
High school diploma or equivalent	54 (10)
Some college or college diploma	192 (37)
Some university or university undergraduate degree	220 (42)
Postgraduate degree (Master or Doctorate) or professional degree (e.g. MD, LLB)	48 (9)
Total	519

Respondents were asked about their marital status, as well as the number of children that they were either the primary or secondary caregiver for. Table 20 shows that the majority of respondents were either married or in a common law relationship (53%). However, single or never married respondents were not far behind (42%). Only 34% of respondents reported being a primary or secondary caregiver. As indicated by Table 21, 65% of respondents were not responsible for children.

Table 20 – Marital Status of Respondents

Marital Status	Total %
Single or never married	219 (42)
Married or common law	277 (53)
Widowed, divorced or separated	30 (6)
Total	526

Table 21 – Number of Children for whom Respondents are Primary or Secondary Caregiver

Children	Total %
0	338 (65)
1	54 (10)
2	85 (16)
3	30 (6)
4 or more	11 (2)
Total	518

Respondents were also asked where they live, and the results are provided in Table 22. The overwhelming number of respondents (97%) lived in Canada. An insignificant number of respondents reported coming from places other than Canada (3%).

Table 22 – Country of Residence

Country	Total %
Canada	511 (97)
United States	12 (2)
Europe	1 (0)
Asia	2 (0)
Total	526

Research Question 2. In addition to demographic questions, respondents were asked to indicate how frequently they check Twitter. Most CFL Twitter respondents check Twitter several times per day (79%), while very few respondents (2%) check Twitter once per week or less (see Table 23).

Table 23 – Frequency Checking Twitter

Checking Twitter	Total %
Several times or constantly per day	421 (79)
At least once per day	97 (18)
At least once per week	12 (2)
Almost never	1 (0)
Total	531

In terms of which devices respondents used to check Twitter, most respondents indicated that they used their personal cell phone/PDA (40%) or personal home computer (38%) to check Twitter (see Table 24).

Table 24 – Devices Used to Check Twitter

Devices	Total %
Personal computer at home	390 (38)
Business or work computer	168 (16)
Personal cell phone or Personal Digital Assistant	414 (40)
Business cell phone or Personal Digital Assistant	60 (6)
Total	1032

Respondents were also asked what SM service they use on a regular basis.

Respondents also use other SM outlets such as Facebook (48%) and YouTube (30%) the most. The career SM website LinkedIn only had 11% of the respondents as users (see Table 25).

Table 25 – Other SM Used

Social Media Service	Total %
Facebook	448 (48)
YouTube	279 (30)
LinkedIn	102 (11)
Myspace	12 (1)
Foursquare	56 (6)
Other	34 (4)
Total	931

In addition to asking questions about the usage of SM, respondents were also asked to indicate their usage of the Internet and Twitter. The most commonly reported usage of the Internet was the category of 26 or more hours per week (31%). With Twitter, the most commonly reported usage was 1-5 hours (31%). More than a third (44%) of all respondents spend more than 21 hours per week on the Internet. Of the average 17.5 hours that respondents spend on the Internet, 8.5 hours, or 49.7% of that time, is spent on Twitter (Table 26).

Table 26 – Hours per Week on Internet and Twitter

Hours	Internet (%)	Twitter (%)
0	0 (0)	2 (0)
1-5	41 (8)	250 (47)
6-10	81 (15)	133 (25)
11-15	97 (18)	56 (11)
16-20	81 (15)	27 (5)
21-25	68 (13)	20 (4)
26 or more	163 (31)	43 (8)
Total	531	531
Average	17.5	8.7

Survey respondents were asked about the number of live sporting events, live CFL games, and CFL games on television they watched. As Table 27 indicates, a total of 1-5 live

sporting events per year (38%) and 1-5 CFL Games Live (46%), were the most commonly identified level of sports fan activity. When it came to CFL games watched on television per year, the most commonly identified level of sports fan activity was more than 20 games watched (48%). The average respondent attended 8.5 live sporting events per year, 57.6% (4.9 events) of which were CFL games. Many of the respondents watch more than 11 CFL games per year (78%) with the average respondent watching 15.6 CFL games per year (Table 27).

Table 27 – Frequency of Sporting Fan Activity

Sporting Events per year	Live Events in Person (%)	CFL Games Live (%)	CFL Games on TV (%)
0	23 (4)	102 (19)	5 (1)
1-5	200 (38)	245 (46)	46 (9)
6-10	130 (25)	112 (21)	65 (12)
11-15	84 (16)	55 (10)	69 (13)
16-20	25 (5)	10 (2)	87 (17)
More than 20	65 (12)	3 (1)	255 (48)
Total	527	527	527
Average	8.5	4.9	15.6

Research Question 3. Question three focused on understanding what were the most desired and least desired gratifications sought and obtained for CFL Twitter followers. The most desired gratifications sought by respondents are the following (see Table 28): ‘Hear about player or roster moves as they happen’ (6.02), ‘Find out information about the team(s) faster than other people do’ (5.88), ‘Read tweets if I cannot watch the game on television’ (5.64), and ‘Read about upcoming games’ (5.35). In contrast, the four least desired gratifications sought by respondents are the following three items: ‘Receive discounts on merchandise or tickets’ (4.00), ‘Interact with other followers’ (4.20), and ‘Give my input and opinions’ (4.35).

Table 28 – Most and Least Desired Gratification Sought Variables

Gratification Sought Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation
Hear about player or roster moves as they happen	6.02	1.456
Find out information about the team(s) faster than other people do	5.88	1.677
Read tweets if I cannot watch the game on television	5.64	1.922
Learn about upcoming games	5.35	1.662
Access special promotions	4.44	1.960
Give my input and opinions	4.35	1.966
Interact with other followers	4.20	2.023
Receive discounts on merchandise or tickets	4.00	2.000

Research Question 4-6: In addition to the demographic, Internet usage, and sports fan activity, respondents were asked to respond to a series of motivational and usage questions. Research Question 4 focused on the gratifications sought. Research Question 5 focused on the gratifications obtained. Finally, Research Question 6 focused on determining how satisfied CFL Twitter followers are based on gratifications sought and gratifications obtained. The responses to these questions were given on a 7-point Likert-type scale, with “1” representing “Strongly Disagree”, “2” representing “Disagree”, “3” representing “Disagree Somewhat”, “4” representing “Neither agree nor disagree”, “5” representing “Agree somewhat”, “6” representing “Agree”, and “7” representing “Strongly agree”.

Research Question 4. The principal component analysis for Research Question 4 yielded four explainable factors of gratifications sought for CFL Twitter followers: *Interaction, Promotion, Live Game Updates, and News*. These four factors collectively accounted for 70% of the variance after Varimax rotation. All of the factors exceeded a reliability-testing threshold of .40. In fact, the lowest reliability score amongst the four factors

was .45. Table 29 summarizes the factor analysis and motives for following CFL Twitter accounts.

The first factor, *interaction*, accounted for 39.2% of the variance. It contained four items from the original 15 statements included in the questionnaire (Cronbach's $\alpha = .89$). From the four variables identified, they dealt with the responding, participating, interacting or providing input through Twitter. The factor loadings for the *interaction* dimension are portrayed in Table 29.

Promotion was the second factor that contained three items from the original 15 statements (Cronbach's $\alpha = .88$), and accounted for 12.9% of the variance. The factor contained statements related to promotions, discounts, and contents. Table 29 contains the factor loading for the *promotion* dimension.

Live Game Updates, the third factor, accounted for 10.1% of the variance (Cronbach's $\alpha = .78$), and the loadings for this factor can be found in Table 29. The four items in this factor included game- and television-related information. Game-related information included the ability to learn about upcoming games and to follow games while they happen, while television-related information included reading tweets while they watched or could not watch the game on television.

Factor 4, *news*, accounted for 7.7% of the variance (Cronbach's $\alpha = .74$), and included four statements from the original list of 15 statements included in the questionnaire. The items within this factor included language related to team information. Two of the factors were related to receiving either highlights after the game and receiving photographs or videos. The other two factors were related to receiving timely information related to players or the team.

Table 29 – Factor analysis Gratifications Sought of measures of gratifications sought $N = 539$
(principal components analysis and varimax rotation)

Variables*	M	SD	Factor 1 Interaction (I)	Factor 2 Promotion (P)	Factor 3 Live Game Updates (G)	Factor 4 News (N)
"I follow my team(s) Twitter feed to ..."						
Learn about upcoming games. (G)	5.35	1.662			0.4476	0.4456
Receive highlights after the game. (N)	5.22	1.793			0.4633	0.5125
Hear about player or roster moves as they happen. (N)	6.02	1.456				0.8114
Receive photographs or videos. (N)	4.83	1.777				0.5855
Follow the games as they happen. (G)	5.30	1.912			0.8871	
Read tweets while I watch the game on television. (G)	4.77	2.086			0.6214	
Read tweets if I cannot watch the game on television. (G)	5.64	1.922			0.8437	
Access special promotions. (P)	4.44	1.960		0.8508		
Receive discounts on merchandise or tickets. (P)	4.00	2.000		0.8497		
Enter contests related to the team(s). (P)	4.69	2.031		0.8376		
Respond to what the team(s) has to say. (I)	4.63	1.887	0.7549			
Find out information about the team(s) faster than other people do. (N)	5.88	1.677				0.7763
Participate in discussions about my team(s). (I)	4.58	1.918	0.8545			
Give my input and opinions. (I)	4.35	1.966	0.8577			
Interact with other followers. (I)	4.20	2.023	0.8482			
Average of Mean Scores by Factor			4.44	4.38	5.27	5.49
Average Item Loadings			0.83	0.85	0.70	0.67
Eigenvalues			5.8766	1.9364	1.5091	1.1595
% of total variance accounted for			39.1776	12.9091	10.0607	7.7298
Cronbach's α			0.8940	0.8820	0.7790	0.7400

Note: Responses were coded 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Disagree somewhat, 4 = Neither agree nor disagree, 5 = Agree somewhat, 6 = Agree, 7 = Strongly agree.

*Variable factors were either coded as news (N), promotion (P), live game updates (G) or interaction (I).

Research Question 5. The principal component analysis for Research Question 5 yielded four explainable factors of gratifications obtained by CFL Twitter followers: *interaction*, *live game updates*, *promotion*, and *news*. These four factors collectively accounted for 75.6% of the variance after Varimax rotation. All of the factors exceeded a reliability-testing threshold of .40. In fact, the lowest reliability score amongst the four factors was .50. Table 30 summarizes the factor analysis and motives for following CFL Twitter accounts.

The first factor, *interaction*, accounted for 46.7% of the variance. It contained four items from the original 15 statements included in the questionnaire (Cronbach's $\alpha = .93$). The items within this factor related to Twitter helping followers to respond, participate, interact, or provide input. The factor loadings for the gratifications obtained *interaction* dimension are portrayed in Table 30.

The second factor, *Live Game Updates*, contained four statements related to game information. The statements related to Twitter helping followers to receive highlights after the game and to follow games while they happen. Two of the statements related to Twitter are used by followers while they are either watching a game or not able to watch the game. The *Live Game Updates* factor accounted for 12.4% of the variance (Cronbach's $\alpha = .85$).

Promotion was the third factor that contained three items, which explained how Twitter helped followers from the original 15 statements (Cronbach's $\alpha = .91$) and accounted for 9.4% of the variance. The factor contained statements related to Twitter helping a follower to access promotions, receive discounts, and enter contents. Table 30 contains the factor loading for the *promotion* dimension.

The last factor, *news*, accounted for 7.1% of the variance (Cronbach's $\alpha = .80$) and included four statements from the original list of 15 statements included in the questionnaire. Two of the factors related to learning about upcoming games or receiving photographs or videos. The other two factors related to receiving timely information related to players or the team.

Table 30 – Factor analysis of measures of gratifications obtained, $N = 539$
(principal components analysis and varimax rotation)

Variables*			Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
"My team(s) Twitter feed helps me to ..." M	SD		Interaction (I)	Live Game Updates (G)	Promotion (P)	News (N)
Learn about upcoming games. (N)	5.51	1.633		0.4324		0.5289
Receive highlights after the game. (G)	5.41	1.668		0.5108		0.4546
Hear about player or roster moves as they happen. (N)	5.92	1.448				0.8425
Receive photographs or videos. (N)	5.07	1.715			0.4351	0.5099
Follow the games as they happen. (G)	5.50	1.773		0.8722		
Read tweets while I watch the game on television. (G)	5.17	1.897		0.7679		
Read tweets if I cannot watch the game on television. (G)	5.70	1.744		0.8199		
Access special promotions. (P)	4.67	1.841			0.8673	
Receive discounts on merchandise or tickets. (P)	4.26	1.964			0.8461	
Enter contests related to the team(s). (P)	4.84	1.904			0.8415	
Respond to what the team(s) has to say. (I)	4.94	1.802	0.8392			
Find out information about the team(s) faster than other people do. (N)	5.78	1.615				0.8260
Participate in discussions about my team(s). (I)	4.84	1.797	0.8643			
Give my input and opinions. (I)	4.74	1.861	0.8564			
Interact with other followers. (I)	4.61	1.897	0.8473			
Average of Mean Scores by Factor			4.78	5.45	4.59	5.57
Average Item Loadings			0.8518	0.7427	0.8517	0.6768
Eigenvalues			7.0070	1.8580	1.4030	1.0680
% of total variance accounted for			46.7150	12.3890	9.3520	7.1220
Cronbach's α			0.9280	0.8500	0.9060	0.7950

Note: Responses were coded 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Disagree somewhat, 4 = Neither agree nor disagree, 5 = Agree somewhat, 6 = Agree, 7 = Strongly agree.

*Variable factors were either coded as news (N), promotion (P), live game updates (G) or interaction (I).

Research Question 6. In order to determine the satisfaction of Twitter users, the correlated t-tests comparing mean differences between gratifications sought and gratifications obtained can be found in Table 31. Based on the results from this analysis, it could be stated that CFL Twitter followers are satisfied. From the 15 variables measured, 14 had statistically

significant mean differences between gratifications sought and gratifications obtained. From the 14 statistically significant mean differences, 12 variables had a positive variance and 2 had a negative variance.

The twelve positive variances indicate that gratifications obtained were higher than gratifications sought. The results would suggest the Twitter followers are satisfied with how the team uses Twitter for that variable. The three highest mean differences suggest that the highest satisfaction comes from the following: 'Interact with other follower' (.42), 'Read tweets while I watch the game on television' (.40), 'give my input and opinions' (.39). Two of these three variables were part of the *interactive* gratification factors.

The two negative variances indicated that gratifications obtained were lower than gratification sought. The results suggest that the Twitter followers are not satisfied with how the team uses Twitter. The two variables that Twitter followers were not satisfied with are: 'Hear about player or roster moves as they happen' (-.10) and 'Find out information about the team(s) faster than other people do' (-.10). Both of these variables were *news* gratification factors.

Table 31 – Wilcoxon Signed Ranks tests for gratifications sought (GS) and gratifications obtained (GO) variables (n=539).

Variables*		Factor	M	SD	Mean Diff	Z	Sig.	Sig.																																																																																																																																																																																	
Learn about upcoming games.	GS	G	5.35	1.66	0.16	-3.00	0.003	$p < .001$																																																																																																																																																																																	
	GO	N	5.51	1.63					Receive highlights after the game.	GS	N	5.22	1.79	0.19	-3.38	0.001	$p < .001$	GO	G	5.41	1.67	Hear about player or roster moves as they happen.	GS	N	6.02	1.46	-0.10	-2.21	0.027	$p < .05$	GO	N	5.92	1.45	Receive photographs or videos.	GS	N	4.83	1.78	0.24	-3.48	0.001	$p < .05$	GO	N	5.07	1.72	Follow the games as they happen.	GS	G	5.30	1.91	0.20	-3.11	0.002	$p < .05$	GO	G	5.50	1.77	Read tweets while I watch the game on television.	GS	G	4.77	2.09	0.40	-5.44	0.000	$p < .001$	GO	G	5.17	1.90	Read tweets if I cannot watch the game on television.	GS	G	5.64	1.92	0.06	-0.70	0.483	<i>ns</i>	GO	G	5.70	1.74	Access special promotions.	GS	P	4.44	1.96	0.22	-3.33	0.001	$p < .05$	GO	P	4.67	1.84	Receive discounts on merchandise or tickets.	GS	P	4.00	2.00	0.26	-3.84	0.000	$p < .001$	GO	P	4.26	1.96	Enter contests related to the team(s).	GS	P	4.69	2.03	0.16	-2.35	0.019	$p < .05$	GO	P	4.84	1.90	Respond to what the team(s) has to say.	GS	I	4.63	1.89	0.30	-4.37	0.000	$p < .001$	GO	I	4.94	1.80	Find out information about the team(s) faster than other people do.	GS	N	5.88	1.68	-0.10	-1.97	0.049	$p < .05$	GO	N	5.78	1.62	Participate in discussions about my team(s).	GS	I	4.58	1.92	0.26	-3.85	0.000	$p < .001$	GO	I	4.84	1.80	Give my input and opinions.	GS	I	4.35	1.97	0.39	-5.68	0.000	$p < .001$	GO	I	4.74	1.86	Interact with other followers.	GS	I	4.20	2.02	0.42	-5.97	0.000
Receive highlights after the game.	GS	N	5.22	1.79	0.19	-3.38	0.001	$p < .001$																																																																																																																																																																																	
	GO	G	5.41	1.67					Hear about player or roster moves as they happen.	GS	N	6.02	1.46	-0.10	-2.21	0.027	$p < .05$	GO	N	5.92	1.45	Receive photographs or videos.	GS	N	4.83	1.78	0.24	-3.48	0.001	$p < .05$	GO	N	5.07	1.72	Follow the games as they happen.	GS	G	5.30	1.91	0.20	-3.11	0.002	$p < .05$	GO	G	5.50	1.77	Read tweets while I watch the game on television.	GS	G	4.77	2.09	0.40	-5.44	0.000	$p < .001$	GO	G	5.17	1.90	Read tweets if I cannot watch the game on television.	GS	G	5.64	1.92	0.06	-0.70	0.483	<i>ns</i>	GO	G	5.70	1.74	Access special promotions.	GS	P	4.44	1.96	0.22	-3.33	0.001	$p < .05$	GO	P	4.67	1.84	Receive discounts on merchandise or tickets.	GS	P	4.00	2.00	0.26	-3.84	0.000	$p < .001$	GO	P	4.26	1.96	Enter contests related to the team(s).	GS	P	4.69	2.03	0.16	-2.35	0.019	$p < .05$	GO	P	4.84	1.90	Respond to what the team(s) has to say.	GS	I	4.63	1.89	0.30	-4.37	0.000	$p < .001$	GO	I	4.94	1.80	Find out information about the team(s) faster than other people do.	GS	N	5.88	1.68	-0.10	-1.97	0.049	$p < .05$	GO	N	5.78	1.62	Participate in discussions about my team(s).	GS	I	4.58	1.92	0.26	-3.85	0.000	$p < .001$	GO	I	4.84	1.80	Give my input and opinions.	GS	I	4.35	1.97	0.39	-5.68	0.000	$p < .001$	GO	I	4.74	1.86	Interact with other followers.	GS	I	4.20	2.02	0.42	-5.97	0.000	$p < .001$	GO	I	4.61	1.90								
Hear about player or roster moves as they happen.	GS	N	6.02	1.46	-0.10	-2.21	0.027	$p < .05$																																																																																																																																																																																	
	GO	N	5.92	1.45					Receive photographs or videos.	GS	N	4.83	1.78	0.24	-3.48	0.001	$p < .05$	GO	N	5.07	1.72	Follow the games as they happen.	GS	G	5.30	1.91	0.20	-3.11	0.002	$p < .05$	GO	G	5.50	1.77	Read tweets while I watch the game on television.	GS	G	4.77	2.09	0.40	-5.44	0.000	$p < .001$	GO	G	5.17	1.90	Read tweets if I cannot watch the game on television.	GS	G	5.64	1.92	0.06	-0.70	0.483	<i>ns</i>	GO	G	5.70	1.74	Access special promotions.	GS	P	4.44	1.96	0.22	-3.33	0.001	$p < .05$	GO	P	4.67	1.84	Receive discounts on merchandise or tickets.	GS	P	4.00	2.00	0.26	-3.84	0.000	$p < .001$	GO	P	4.26	1.96	Enter contests related to the team(s).	GS	P	4.69	2.03	0.16	-2.35	0.019	$p < .05$	GO	P	4.84	1.90	Respond to what the team(s) has to say.	GS	I	4.63	1.89	0.30	-4.37	0.000	$p < .001$	GO	I	4.94	1.80	Find out information about the team(s) faster than other people do.	GS	N	5.88	1.68	-0.10	-1.97	0.049	$p < .05$	GO	N	5.78	1.62	Participate in discussions about my team(s).	GS	I	4.58	1.92	0.26	-3.85	0.000	$p < .001$	GO	I	4.84	1.80	Give my input and opinions.	GS	I	4.35	1.97	0.39	-5.68	0.000	$p < .001$	GO	I	4.74	1.86	Interact with other followers.	GS	I	4.20	2.02	0.42	-5.97	0.000	$p < .001$	GO	I	4.61	1.90																					
Receive photographs or videos.	GS	N	4.83	1.78	0.24	-3.48	0.001	$p < .05$																																																																																																																																																																																	
	GO	N	5.07	1.72					Follow the games as they happen.	GS	G	5.30	1.91	0.20	-3.11	0.002	$p < .05$	GO	G	5.50	1.77	Read tweets while I watch the game on television.	GS	G	4.77	2.09	0.40	-5.44	0.000	$p < .001$	GO	G	5.17	1.90	Read tweets if I cannot watch the game on television.	GS	G	5.64	1.92	0.06	-0.70	0.483	<i>ns</i>	GO	G	5.70	1.74	Access special promotions.	GS	P	4.44	1.96	0.22	-3.33	0.001	$p < .05$	GO	P	4.67	1.84	Receive discounts on merchandise or tickets.	GS	P	4.00	2.00	0.26	-3.84	0.000	$p < .001$	GO	P	4.26	1.96	Enter contests related to the team(s).	GS	P	4.69	2.03	0.16	-2.35	0.019	$p < .05$	GO	P	4.84	1.90	Respond to what the team(s) has to say.	GS	I	4.63	1.89	0.30	-4.37	0.000	$p < .001$	GO	I	4.94	1.80	Find out information about the team(s) faster than other people do.	GS	N	5.88	1.68	-0.10	-1.97	0.049	$p < .05$	GO	N	5.78	1.62	Participate in discussions about my team(s).	GS	I	4.58	1.92	0.26	-3.85	0.000	$p < .001$	GO	I	4.84	1.80	Give my input and opinions.	GS	I	4.35	1.97	0.39	-5.68	0.000	$p < .001$	GO	I	4.74	1.86	Interact with other followers.	GS	I	4.20	2.02	0.42	-5.97	0.000	$p < .001$	GO	I	4.61	1.90																																		
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Read tweets if I cannot watch the game on television.	GS	G	5.64	1.92	0.06	-0.70	0.483	<i>ns</i>																																																																																																																																																																																	
	GO	G	5.70	1.74					Access special promotions.	GS	P	4.44	1.96	0.22	-3.33	0.001	$p < .05$	GO	P	4.67	1.84	Receive discounts on merchandise or tickets.	GS	P	4.00	2.00	0.26	-3.84	0.000	$p < .001$	GO	P	4.26	1.96	Enter contests related to the team(s).	GS	P	4.69	2.03	0.16	-2.35	0.019	$p < .05$	GO	P	4.84	1.90	Respond to what the team(s) has to say.	GS	I	4.63	1.89	0.30	-4.37	0.000	$p < .001$	GO	I	4.94	1.80	Find out information about the team(s) faster than other people do.	GS	N	5.88	1.68	-0.10	-1.97	0.049	$p < .05$	GO	N	5.78	1.62	Participate in discussions about my team(s).	GS	I	4.58	1.92	0.26	-3.85	0.000	$p < .001$	GO	I	4.84	1.80	Give my input and opinions.	GS	I	4.35	1.97	0.39	-5.68	0.000	$p < .001$	GO	I	4.74	1.86	Interact with other followers.	GS	I	4.20	2.02	0.42	-5.97	0.000	$p < .001$	GO	I	4.61	1.90																																																																									
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* Responses were coded 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Disagree somewhat, 4 = Neither agree nor disagree,

Note: GS = gratifications sought, GO = gratifications obtained.

Discussion

The primary purpose of this chapter is to develop, test, and execute an online survey instrument that can be used by professional sports teams to get a better understanding of what content motivates and satisfies team Twitter followers. In order to achieve this, a survey instrument was designed to examine the characteristics, uses, gratification sought, gratifications obtained, and satisfaction for followers of CFL Twitter accounts. Through the

use of statistical analysis of demographic and usage data, knowledge was gained about the characteristics of CFL Twitter followers. To understand the Twitter followers' motivations and satisfaction with the Twitter accounts that they follow, the study used the Uses and Gratifications approach to analyse the results of the survey.

Research Question 1. Research Question 1 examined the demographic characteristics for the followers of CFL Twitter accounts. Overwhelmingly, the followers of the CFL Twitter accounts live in Canada, which is not surprising as the league operates in Canada. The followers are predominantly males, aged 35 years old, mostly without children, and with some university or post-secondary education. While the most reported form of marital status was "Married or common law", "Single or never married" was also highly reported. Because the reporting of marital statuses between the two was so close, the CFL should be cautious not to program content exclusively for one of the married segments versus the other.

When comparing the demographics of the CFL Twitter followers, it is difficult to find a study to compare to because a similar study has not been conducted. From an academic journal perspective, the closest study would be the Uses and Gratifications study done by Clavio (2008a) with users of collegiate message boards. In that study, the message boards had predominantly more male users reported than the CFL Twitter followers (88% vs. 67%), had a higher reported incidence of being married than the CFL Twitter followers (62% vs. 53%), and tended to be older than the CFL Twitter followers (77% reported to be 30+, while only 83% reported to be 25+). When compared with industry-reported demographics of Twitter from the SM marketing agency Digital Surgeons, CFL followers are predominantly more male than US Twitter users (67% vs. 48%), slightly younger than US Twitter users (39% reported to be 25-24 years old vs. 30%) and somewhat more educated than US Twitter users (88% with at least some college educations versus 76%) (Digital Surgeons, 2010).

One of the surprising findings when comparing Twitter demographics with previous studies is the proportion of female responders. While it has been reported that more users of Twitter are female (52%) (Digital Surgeons, 2010), previous sports-related studies have

reported a substantially lower female participation (12%) (Clavio, 2008a). It could be argued that the popularity of Twitter and the CFL amongst females has helped to create a Twitter following that is higher than expected for a sports property. Overall, the CFL Twitter audience is primarily a well-educated Canadian resident without children who is between 25-44 years old.

Research Question 2: The results of Question 2 examined usage data for Twitter, social media, devices used to check Twitter, the Internet, and CFL games. For usage data of Twitter and social media, the results revealed that users check their Twitter account several times or constantly throughout the day through their personal computer or cell phone. When compared with industry-reported demographics from the SM marketing agency Digital Surgeons, CFL followers are using their personal cell phone or Personal Digital Assistant to check Twitter more often than Americans (40% vs. 30%) (Digital Surgeons, 2010). The followers are also users of SM platforms like Facebook and YouTube. This in itself is not surprising because Facebook is the most popular social networking platform and YouTube is the most popular video sharing service. CFL Twitter followers can be considered heavy users of the Internet, spending significantly more time on the Internet than the average American, as measured by comScore (17.5 hours per week compared to 8 hours for Americans) (comScore, 2010a). This finding is also supported by comparing Internet use from Clavio's study on collegiate sport message board users (59% spend 16+ hours per week compared to 50% of Americans) (Clavio, 2008a).

For an indication of fan usage of Twitter during CFL games, respondents were asked how many games they attend in person and how many games they watch on television. While there is no previous research to compare the results to, it could be argued that CFL Twitter followers are heavy users of CFL content both live and on television. With an 18-game season plus playoffs and pre-season games, CFL Twitter followers reported that they attend almost five games in person per year and watch almost 16 games on television, which gives fans plenty of opportunities to become heavy Twitter users.

Research Question 3. Research question three examined the most and least desired variables for Twitter followers. The top four variables were from the *Live Game Updates* and *News* factors and the bottom four variables were from *Promotion* and *Interaction* factors. When you compare this finding to the results from the Twitter content analysis, the two most tweeted factors are *Live Game Update* and *News* factors. This comparison would suggest that the CFL team's actual usage of Twitter is consistent with their follower's most and least desired variables.

This finding cannot be compared to any other past studies, because none of the previous academic investigations about Twitter and sports asked a similar question.

Research Question 4. The purpose of research Question 4 was to examine the dimensions of gratifications sought by CFL Twitter followers. There were four dimensions uncovered via factor analysis: *Interaction*, *Promotion*, *Live Game Updates*, and *News*.

The items that made up the *Interaction* dimension indicated that survey respondents followed CFL Twitter accounts for the purposes of interacting with the team. The interaction took the form of social characteristics like responding to the team, participating in discussion, giving input, and interacting with other followers. From these four dimensions, *interactivity* explained the highest percentage of variance (39%) and had the highest item loadings. With the total variance for the *interaction* dimension more than three times the next nearest dimension, it indicates that CFL Twitter followers whose usage falls under the *Interaction* dimension are most interested in interacting with the CFL through Twitter. Interactivity or social motive factors were previously identified in a Uses and Gratification study of a retired female athlete's followers (Clavio & Kian, 2010), Twitter users (Johnson & Yang, 2009), and college sport message board users (Clavio, 2008a). Based on previous findings, interactivity was expected to account for a large share of the variance. When looking at the findings of the Uses and Gratification college sport message board users, *interactivity* also explained the highest percentage of variance, but it also had a much lower mean score for the *interactivity* factor than other factors like *news/information gathering* (Interaction 4.44 vs. News 5.49).

This could indicate that interactivity may be a less salient reason for using Twitter than this study's results have indicated.

The second factor, *Promotion*, accounted for 13% (second highest) with an average mean score of 4.38 (lowest mean score). Based on previous Uses and Gratifications research, this is the first time that a promotion-related factor has been identified, which is an important finding because it highlights a new use of Twitter within the media sport literature. The promotion factor includes such items as 'Access special promotions', 'Receive discounts on merchandise or tickets' and 'Enter contests related to the team'. Similar to the interaction factor, promotion explained the second highest percentage of variance, but it also had the lowest mean score compared to other factors like *news/information gathering* (Promotion 4.38 vs. News 5.49 & Live Game Updates 5.27). This could indicate that promotion may be a less salient a reason for using Twitter than the results have indicated.

The third factor, *Live Game Updates*, was also identified within a Uses and Gratifications study for the first time. As a factor, it had the third highest loading (accounting for 10% of the variance), the second highest mean score (5.27), and represented the greatest percentage of the overall tweets by the teams (46%). In order of highest loading factor to lowest loading factor, the *Live Game Updates* dimension includes such factors as 'Follow the games as they happen' (.8871), 'Read tweets if I cannot watch the game on television' (.8437), and 'Read tweets while I watch the game on television' (.6214). Within the *Live Game Updates*, the factor 'Learn about upcoming games' (.4476) also loaded to the *News* factor (.4456). Based on the overall tweets by the teams (46%), it could have been predicted that *Live Game Updates* would be identified as a factor. Within the average mean scores for items within the factor, 'read tweets if I cannot watch the game on television' had the highest score. When you combine this finding with the previous research about the mobility of Twitter (Lenhart & Fox, 2009), it suggests that Twitter and the mobile sports fan can become an important segment of fans to communicate with. Based on the trends towards more mobile

devices, the *Live Game Updates* factor should continue to grow in importance for professional sports teams.

The last factor, *News*, accounted for only 8% of the variance, but it had the highest average of means scores for the variables (5.49). In order of factor loading, the *News* variables included ‘Hear about player or roster moves as they happen’ (.8114), ‘Find out information about the team(s) faster than other people do’ (.7763), ‘Receive photographs or videos’ (.5855), and ‘Receive highlights after the game’ (.5125). While news or information-related factors have been identified in previous research related to Twitter followers (Johnson & Yang, 2009), the most interesting finding is how the variables are desired by the followers. Two of the most desired factors were news-related and were specific to team-related information: ‘Hear about player or roster moves as they happen’ (6.02) and ‘Find out information about the team(s) faster than other people do’ (5.88). These two most desired factors could indicate that news could be deemed more important as a factor for Twitter users than the factor analysis would indicate. When you look at this result and compare it to the content analysis, tweets with news look somewhat like a directional-pointing device. News-related tweets accounted for 476 out of the 1527 tweets. From the 476 Tweets, 383 or 80% of the news tweets featured a link to an external website or source.

When the results of all the gratification factors and the content analysis of tweets are combined, the *Interaction* and *Promotion* factors account for 52% of the variance versus *Live Game Updates* and *News* (18%); however, the variables that make up the *Interaction* and *Promotion* factors have the lowest average mean scores (4.44 & 4.38 vs. 5.27 & 5.49). This relationship can also be found within the content analysis of tweets by the teams: *Interaction* and *Promotion* account for 22% of the tweets while *Live Game Updates* and *News* account for 77% of the tweets. Teams’ usage of Twitter is directed at the most desired activities by its followers, but the greatest variance is explained by the *Interaction* and *Promotion* factors. This finding would suggest that teams should consider increasing the use of Twitter for *Interaction* and *Promotion* purposes, while continuing to use it for *Live Game Updates* and

News. The focus of live game updates and news should be about providing the fans with content faster than other forms of communication.

Research Question 5. The purpose of research Question 5 was to examine the dimensions of gratifications obtained by CFL Twitter followers. There were four dimensions uncovered via factor analysis: *Interaction*, *Live Game Updates*, *Promotion*, and *News*.

Rather than report on each of the factors individually, the differences between the factor analyses of the gratifications obtained was conducted using gratifications sought. The gratification obtained factor analysis identified the same four factors as the gratifications sought with slightly different characteristics. The *Interaction* factor increased its percentage of total variance from 39% to 47% and the *Live Game Updates* factor became the second highest reported variance, replacing *Promotion*. Overall, the variance explainable by the four factors went from 70% for gratifications sought to 75% for gratifications obtained. This same relationship existed in the Uses and Gratification study about Twitter followers (Johnson & Yang, 2009), where the factors went from 42% for gratification sought to 46% for gratification obtained. No other significant differences were discovered when comparing the gratifications sought to the gratifications obtained.

Research Question 6. The purpose of research question six was to determine if CFL Twitter followers were satisfied. Using the Expectancy-Value Discrepancy model (Palmgreen & Rayburn, 1985b) it was determined that CFL Twitter followers were satisfied. This method and finding was consistent with Johnson and Yang's (2009) Uses and Gratification study of Twitter followers. The primary difference between the two studies was the difference in scales used and the difference in the number of significant variables for satisfaction. With the current CFL study a 7-point scale was used, whereas the Johnson and Yang study used a 5-point scale. In addition, the CFL study had 14 of 15 variables deliver a significant difference between gratifications sought and gratifications obtained, whereas the Johnson and Yang study only had 7 of the 15 variables with a significant difference. The use of a 7-point scale

could help to explain the large number of significant differences in the variables in the CFL study.

Limitations

This study did have some limitations. First, the nature of the technology makes it difficult to calculate the response rate, which affects the process of determining non-response bias. The low response rate may also affect the generalizability of the results. Second, the effectiveness of the survey relies on the respondents accurately answering the questions. Third, due to the emerging nature of the Twitter platform, the results may only be generalizable to the specific point in time that the study was conducted. Fourth, the study did not include any results from the Montreal Allouettes because of bilingual requirements. Finally, results from a league like the CFL may be different than results from other leagues or teams.

Conclusion

CFL Twitter followers are a group of well-educated predominantly male individuals. When compared to other studies, the CFL has a higher percentage of female followers. The CFL Twitter followers are also heavy users of CFL content both live and on television. They spend a substantial amount of time on the Internet and check their Twitter accounts constantly throughout the day on either the cell phone or home computer.

The most desired uses for the CFL Twitter followers were related to variables that help find news about the team fast. In terms of the least desired uses for CFL Twitter followers, users reported variables such as interaction with other users and discounts. These findings suggest that Twitter users want faster information distribution more than they want promotional offers or opportunities to socially connect.

However, the factor analysis identified *Interaction* and *Promotion* as highly salient motives for the use of Twitter, and *Live Game Updates* and *News* as less salient motives for Twitter use. This finding is not what would be expected and suggests that further investigation may be required to confirm the most salient reason for Twitter use by CFL fans.

The most significant factor from the Uses and Gratifications study is the identification of two new factors for Twitter use: *Live Game Updates* and *Promotion*. In previous studies, neither of these factors was identified. They appear to be unique factors to the specific audience of CFL Twitter followers, which supports the need for other sports or even non-sports related studies to conduct Uses and Gratification studies to identify specific user motivations. The method of conducting a detailed content analysis to motivate the gratification statements has also proven to be successful, as the motivations statement explained 70% of the variance in this study while other studies had much lower results.

Based on the gratifications obtained and the gratifications sought, CFL Twitter followers are satisfied with the content provided by the teams overall, but there are areas to consider for improvement such as speeding up the access to team and league information. In order to satisfy CFL Twitter followers, Twitter should become the first source of news delivery about the team.

Future studies should consider clustering the CFL Twitter users into categories that will help improve the understanding of different types of user, which will help CFL organizations to target communications at specific segments of audiences. Using this information, a study could combine the demographic- and use-based results with the user motivations.

This study fills a gap in the literature relating to sports communications and Uses and Gratifications research. The targeting of a specific audience of Twitter users has demonstrated new strategies for maximizing the medium's potential and confirmed the value in conducting research on specific audience groups when trying to understand what motivates the user. With growth in the use of SM platforms such as Twitter within sports communications, the use of a survey instrument can help teams gain a better understanding of what satisfies their followers. Now that teams are also in the business of communicating directly with their fans through platforms such as Twitter, improving satisfaction is a strategy that teams can use to increase usage.

Based on the results of Chapter 6 & 7, it was clear that Twitter had become a regular daily part of a team's communication with fans. Twitter was used by teams, athletes, and fans alike. Recognizing the increased importance of Twitter in sports media, I noticed it was changing the role of sports media relations. The last investigation will use the lived experiences of professionals working in sports media to understand how Twitter has changed the nature of media relations in sport.

CHAPTER 8

THE CHANGING ROLE

Since 2008, Twitter has become a widely used SM platform for professional athletes, teams, journalists, broadcasters, sports leagues, and fans. Within hours of the NHL's Stanley Cup on June 11, 2012, where the Los Angeles Kings beat the New Jersey Devils, thousands of messages were posted. A collection of those messages demonstrates how many different groups use Twitter: a player from the Los Angeles Kings, Dustin Penner (@Dustinpenner25), tweeted about his pride for the city of Los Angeles and his teammates, and traditional media outlets from Canada — including the radio station The Fan 590 (@FAN590), newspaper The Globe and Mail (@globeandmail), and broadcast station SportsCenter (@SportsCentre) — tweeted congratulations to Los Angeles. The NHL, through their @NHL account, tweeted a link to the game and even the hockey sponsor Bauer Hockey from @BauerHockey tweeted a message to congratulate one of the players they represent. This small sample of users and tweets demonstrates active use of Twitter by all stakeholders within the sports media nexus. All of the Twitter exchanges happened in real time directly with the audiences and without filtering from the Los Angeles Kings or the NHL media relations departments.

Twitter has linked all major sports media stakeholders. Removing the intermediary or the “middle-man” in the sports communication process does not just circumvent sports media relations staff, but also sports journalists. Sports fans can now engage directly with the athletes or teams they follow through Twitter, which undermines the traditional distribution channels for sports. Direct links through Twitter bring together communications in multiple formats to form conversations and audiences. As Twitter has created a significant shift in the sports communication paradigm, it is important to understand how it is affecting sports media relations.

For the purposes of this dissertation, this discussion will be focused on sports media relations and not sports public relations; while similar, these forms of sports media relations are distinct and different. According to Stoldt, the author of the textbook *Sport Public Relations*:

Sport public relations is a managerial communication-based function designed to identify a sport organization's key publics, evaluate its relationships with those publics, and foster a desirable relationships between the sport organization and those publics (Stoldt, Pratt, & Dittmore, 2007, p. 2)

For sports media relations, he writes:

Media relations aims to foster desirable relationships with members of the mass media. Media relations programs are designed to generate favorable publicity and minimize unfavorable publicity (Stoldt et al., 2007, p. 9)

Both terms are based on the management function of media, but media relations is solely focused on "members of the mass media" as opposed to sport public relations which focuses on "key publics". This research will investigate how Twitter has changed media relations in sports based on an analysis of empirical evidence. While Twitter has been the subject of empirical studies related to athlete tweets (Clavio & Kian, 2010; Hambrick et al., 2010; Pegoraro, 2010; Shockley, 2011), athlete fan interaction (Kassing & Sanderson, 2010), and sport journalism (Schultz & Sheffer, 2010; Sheffer & Schultz, 2009), no study to date has addressed how it is changing sports media relations.

To start this chapter, a literature review was conducted to justify the study and provide background. The literature review was focused on the concept of disintermediation and the use of phenomenology within media studies. This literature review has been reduced because significant content about sports media has already been covered in previous chapters and there is limited research to date about Twitter and sports media relations. A limited literature review is also deemed appropriate given the nature of phenomenology: unlike ethnography or other qualitative methods which tend to build on a body of existing literature, phenomenology is an approach to inquiry that often develops comprehension without reference to the existing literature (Creswell, 2008). Previous chapters have also already addressed issues related to sports media relations that could be relevant to this chapter: media convergence, Twitter SM impact, and Twitter disruption.

Disintermediation

When you visually compare the different models of communication reviewed in Chapter 4 (Figure 2 & 3) and Chapter 6 (Figure 5), the visual element that stands out the most prominently is the change in communication flow. Historically, models of communication to large audiences have followed a one-way broadcast model; today, however, with the advent of the Internet and the ubiquitous use of SM platforms like Twitter, technology provides a direct mode of communication, connecting fans with their favorite team or athlete without traditional filters. While sports media will continue to exist in its many different platforms, Twitter is having a significant impact on traditional roles within sports communications.

From a management perspective, sports media relations focuses on the management of communications with the public; for people working in sports media relations, it is now their job to directly communicate with fans through Twitter and also manage different media stakeholders. This 'disintermediation' between the fan and the traditional media, and the team and the traditional media, is a significant shift in the role of sports media relations that has occurred in the past ten years. The term disintermediation has been defined as "the elimination of an intermediary in a transaction between two parties" (Merriam-Webster Inc., 2003). Within a sports and media context, the word has been used to explain the increasing number of individuals and media reaching audiences without the filter of traditional media (Pavlik, 2001). This context of the word disintermediation is appropriate to consider with sports and Twitter.

The Internet has been a driving force behind disintermediation in business. Within industries such as travel, consumers have less of a need to use a travel agent to book flights or hotels because they can easily book travel from home through the Internet. Within an entertainment context, the Internet has played a role in the demise of the traditional record store or video rental store because consumers can simply sample and download content from the comfort of their own home. Within the business of traditional media, Berman et al. (2007) examined the clash between new and traditional media to explore future industry scenarios by

conducting 75 interviews with senior media executives. One of the key findings of the research was that the new media landscape would pit the content owners against the media distributors in a struggle for growth:

...content owners will be increasingly interested in new open distribution channels that lead to greater licensing volume, brand extension and market disintermediation. Conversely, media distributors will want to bolster closed or “walled” communities, driving more subscriber loyalty and higher margins from interactive features, user-created content and niche experiences. As a result of these competitive struggles, we expect traditional media companies to seek growth in new business models (Berman et al., 2007).

This form of disintermediation in traditional media, predicted in 2007, is happening within sports communications today. Sports teams no longer exclusively channel content through the traditional media distributors and now use open Internet-based distribution channels such as Twitter, YouTube, and their own team websites. Prior to the Internet, teams almost exclusively communicated with fans through the traditional media; after the Internet became established as a dominant media channel of its own, teams were able to directly communicate with fans with the only mediation being public relations experts; and now, with the ubiquitous use of SM platforms such as Twitter and Facebook, teams have even more ways to directly communicate with their fans.

Since the advent of the Internet, the traditional role of public relations or media relations has been altered drastically (Springston, 2001). The ubiquitous use of SM platforms has even made the role of media gatekeeper less important. Twitter has enabled the almost instant bypassing of the “gate-keeping functions of journalists, publicists and sports official” (Hutchins, 2011, p. 237). When a journalist is looking for access to a player, they can simply go to the player’s Twitter account and contact them directly or find a quote that they are interested in. The disintermediation of the gatekeepers is decreasing the distance between the athlete and their followers. Tweets from athletes provide the fans with an inside look into their lives and build a sense of common experience (Hutchins, 2011). We are still at the beginning stages of understanding the effects of the disintermediation in sports and how the direct linking of athletes with their followers will change the role of sports communications.

Highlights from the Earlier Literature Review

The literature review in this dissertation discussed the relevant literature related to Twitter as a disruptive form of media in sports and as a theoretical model about sports communications, and highlighted studies that were related to SM in sports that could impact media relations.

While empirical investigations into Twitter and sports have recently been published, none of these studies properly explain how Twitter impacts sports media relations. The most related research to Twitter and media relations for sports was an exploratory study on Twitter for sports journalists (Schultz & Sheffer, 2010). While this study contributes to the literature about SM and sports, it does not speak to Twitter's impact nor does it speak specifically to the role of media relations. As Twitter is arguably one of the most disruptive SM platforms, and because media relations is an important management function in professional sports, it is imperative that researchers focus on Twitter's impact on sports media relations.

At the present time, the only theory to help explain media relations in sports is the modern model of sports-media-audience communication, which was influential from the 1950s to 1980s (Schultz, 2012). While this model addresses many of the elements related to the changes in sports communications, it is not specific to Twitter and does not address media relations as a form of management in sports.

Research Question

Unlike previous chapters of this research, which had multiple questions per chapter that were exploratory research 'what' type of questions, there is only one question for this chapter and it is a 'how' type question. The question is inductive in nature and designed to inform theory development:

Q10: How has Twitter changed sports media relations?

To answer this question, a series of semi-structured questions and a phenomenological research design was used in accordance with the procedures outlined in Chapter 5 Methodology.

Methodology

This study focused on understanding how Twitter has changed sports media relations. A qualitative research approach was used to help develop the theoretical framework inductively (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Miles & Huberman, 1984). The study used semi-structured long interview questions and a phenomenological research design to understand how Twitter has impacted sports media relations. Due to the limited research available about the topic, an inductive approach was deemed appropriate for this study.

Nature and Design of the Study. A review of the literature identified a lack of academic research available about Twitter and sports media relations. A qualitative research approach is appropriate for research topics that represent a relatively new phenomenon and have limited academic research available (Creswell, 2008). When selecting the research approach, the research problem, the research purpose, participant characteristics, and researcher's beliefs were considered.

The purpose of the research was to understand and interpret the use of SM and therefore it was not appropriate to use a quantitative approach. A quantitative approach would require a much larger sample size and take significantly more time to complete. For this approach, the ideal study participant should be people with substantial experience in sports media that have an inside perspective on the process of media relations before Twitter; given these unique characteristics, getting a large sample of these individuals would represent a challenge. A more flexible research format was also needed in order to provide direct evidence of Twitter's impact on media relations rather than indirect evidence provided by such methodologies as content analysis, experiments, or surveys.

In order to determine the best qualitative approach for the research, five options for qualitative methods, as outlined by Creswell (2009), were considered: ethnography, grounded theory, case studies, phenomenological research, and narrative research. Further reading was done to understand whether grounded theory or phenomenology would be the best approach:

Grounded theory is a strategy of inquiry in which the researcher derives a general, abstract theory of a process, action or interaction grounded in the views of the participants.

Phenomenological research is a strategy of inquiry in which the researcher identifies the essence of human experiences about a phenomenon as described by participants (Creswell, 2008, p. 13).

As the purpose of the research was not to develop a theory but to describe and inform future theory, grounded theory was not considered as an approach. While both research strategies explore the views and descriptions of the participants, grounded theory focuses on the researcher deriving a “theory of a process” while phenomenological research “identifies the essence of human experiences”.

Phenomenology is a method of inquiry commonly used to discover lived experiences of the people involved in the phenomenon that is being researched (Goulding, 2005). Due to the emergent nature of Twitter in sports, the lived experiences of people who work in sports media appears to be the best way to identify and demonstrate the impact of Twitter. One challenge with phenomenology as a method for this research project is the need for the researcher to approach the data without preconceptions. To avoid this, the researcher did not use literature as a source of data — the primary reason for the literature review in previous chapters was to justify the study and provide a context for the reader.

Informants. At the start of this project, only media relations managers with professional teams were the subject of interviews. However, following several pilot interviews at the start of the research process, three issues with this process were identified: 1) just because someone worked in a media relations role does not guarantee that they had any prior knowledge about sports media relations before Twitter — a person who has worked in media relations for 2-3 years only knows the post-Twitter media role and lacks the historical perspective needed to explain the change that Twitter caused; 2) interviewing only one role within the sports media relations community narrows the expertise and knowledge available; and 3) collecting data from different types of informants is a form of data triangulation that allows input from different perspectives (Groenewald, 2004).

From these considerations, two sets of criteria were established for the informants. First, they had to have worked in sports media prior to 2008. As usage of Twitter in sports became popular around 2009, this would ensure they had experience prior to Twitter and could comment on the changes that they had witnessed. Second, they had to have worked in sports media in a team, league, broadcast, news publication, or athlete capacity. This range of sports media backgrounds offered broader perspectives and more insight. Following McCracken's "less is more" approach to conducting long interviews (1988), a minimum of ten informants was deemed appropriate. While ten informants would be considered unacceptable with quantitative research methods, Creswell (1998) recommends long interviews with up to ten people for a phenomenological study.

The informants were recruited through a mix of personal contacts and the snowball technique (one interviewee nominates others). Based on the informant requirements, a list of contacts was prepared as a list of primary informants. At the end of each interview with a primary informant, additional informants were recommended.

The informants were contacted via e-mail in advance and asked to schedule one hour of time for the interview. A total of 17 people who work in sports media were interviewed. From the 17 people interviewed, the average number of years of work experience in sports media was 16 years. From that group, seven had team media relations experience, four were sports journalists, three were sports media consultants, two worked in new media for either a league or team, and one was sports communications with the Olympics. Many of the informants had more than ten years of experience, having worked in multiple different roles throughout their career. For a detailed breakdown of the characteristics of the informants, see Table 32.

Table 32
Sports Media Interview Sumamry

Informant	Date of Interview	Role	Started in Sports	Years of Experience
1	May 2, 2012	Team Media Relations	2000	12
2	June 21, 2012	Team Media Relations	2008	4
3	July 12, 2012	Team Media Relations	2008	4
4	July 18, 2012	Team Media Relations	2002	10
5	July 21, 2012	Team Media Relations	2003	9
6	May 30, 2012	Team Media Relations	2006	6
7	May 31, 2012	Sports Journalists	1995	17
8	June 4, 2012	Sports PR/Digital Expert	1985	27
9	June 5, 2012	Sports PR/Digital Expert	2005	7
10	June 6, 2012	Sports PR/Digital Expert	1996	16
11	June 6, 2012	Sports Journalists	1995	17
12	June 7, 2012	Team Media Relations	1995	17
13	June 8, 2012	Sports Journalists	1993	19
14	June 8, 2012	Sports Journalists	1976	36
15	June 8, 2012	Team Media Relations	1980	32
16	June 11, 2012	Team Media Relations	1988	24
17	June 12, 2012	Sports PR/Digital Expert	1988	24
18	June 18, 2012	Sports PR/Digital Expert	1982	30

Interview Procedures. Prior to the interviews, a list of potential candidates with sports media experience was prepared. Most of the candidates had either worked with the researcher or were acquainted with the researcher. The list was categorized into the different roles within sports media: team media relation, sports journalist, team, and league. The researcher first sent an e-mail to each of the contacts introducing the research topic and the request for an interview. If the e-mails did not receive a response, the researcher phoned them personally. If the potential candidates did not respond or did not want to participate in the study, the researcher continued to contact another person on the list. Once the contact was reached and agreed to participate in the study, details about the interview were e-mailed as well as a possible list of questions. In the e-mail with the question, they were asked to reflect on how Twitter has changed sports media relations. Along with the e-mail that contained the questions, a time and date for a telephone interview was established.

Telephone interviews were conducted in two stages. The first stage was a call to the informant to introduce the research and review consent requirements. If the informant agreed

to the consent requirements, a second call was made to interview the informant and the conversation was recorded. The research was deemed to have limited risks because there was no collection of sensitive or personal information. For this reason, informed consent was collected verbally. In the first stage, a list of informed consent conditions were reviewed with the informants based on a summary from Creswell (2009: p. 89). The conditions included identification of the researcher, purpose of the research, guarantee of confidentiality, confirmation that the call would be recorded, and assurance that the participant can withdraw at anytime. If the informant clearly understood and agreed to the conditions of the research, a second call was made to the informant using NoNotes.com.⁷

A formal interview protocol was used to ensure that the interviews were conducted using standard procedures throughout the interview process. The form of interviewing used was semi-structured long interviews (see Table 33). This meant that the interviewer had a pre-set list of five questions to ask and a pre-set list of probing questions to follow up, asking the participants to further explain or elaborate on what they had said. While all five of the questions were asked, not all of the probing questions were asked. The structured portion of the interview was established because arranging a second interview with informants may not be an option and the structure ensured that the researcher collected answers for the key questions. During the interviews, the researcher would frequently follow up with more questions or ask for further explanation in order to probe deeper into the phenomenon. The recording and transcribing of the interviews allowed the researcher to focus on listening and inquiry rather than note taking. In keeping with the phenomenological approach to the research, the probing questions were “directed to the participant’s experiences, feelings, beliefs and conviction about the theme in question” (Welman & Kruger, 1999).

⁷ NoNotes.com is an online service that performs call recording and transcription services.

Table 33

Semi-structured Interview Questions

Question	Question and Probing Questions
Screening	How long have you worked in sports media? When did you start?
1	Based on your experience, what has been the most disruptive SM platform for sports media relations? Probe: How about Facebook, Twitter, <u>Linkedin</u> ? Probe: How would you rank the different platforms and why?
2	How has Twitter changed the daily activities that you perform for your job? Probe: What things do you not do or do differently than you have done before? Probe: How will Twitter continue to change sports media relations?
3	What does Twitter enhance, amplify or intensify? For example, radio amplifies news and music via sound Probe: What other examples to you have? Probe: In what situations is _____ more prevalent?
4	What does Twitter make obsolete or replace? What does the medium drive out of prominence? For example, radio reduced the importance of print, and e-mail reduced the importance of the facsimile machine. Probe: What other _____ are made obsolete? Probe: How does Twitter make _____ obsolete?
5	How has Twitter changed media relations in sport? Probe: What do you mean by _____? Probe: How have you found this change? Probe: What do you feel Twitter has changed within sport media?
6	What is the best example you have that can describe how Twitter has impacted media relations? Probe: Do you have other examples of how Twitter has changed media relations in sports?
Close	Thank you for taking the time to discuss Twitter and its impacts on sports media relations. Is there someone else in the world of sports media that you would recommend I speak with about Twitter and sports media relations?

Explication of the Data. Upon completion of the interviews, the researcher had all of the interviews transcribed into text. As soon as the researcher had both the completed interview and the text version, the researcher used the five steps for data explication described by Groenewald (2004), which were developed based on Hycner's (1999) guidelines. The use of the five steps was a way of interpreting the data. The only modification the researcher made was related to Step 4: each interview was not summarized and reviewed with the interviewee, as time limitations made it impossible to set a second interview to review the summary. To offset this missing step, the researcher spent extra time in the review

and coding process to ensure the lived experiences of the informants were captured. The five steps were:

1. **Bracketing and phenomenological reduction.** Bracketing is the process of the researcher not allowing their own presupposition to impede the meaning and interpretation of an informant's interview.
2. **Delineating units of meaning.** A list of units of relevant meaning are extracted from each interview and further shortened.
3. **Clustering of units of meaning to form themes.** Clusters of themes are formed by grouping units of relevant meaning together.
4. **Summarizing each interview, validating it, and where necessary modifying it.** For each interview, a summary is completed and, if possible, that summary is reviewed with the informant to ensure that the interview captured their intended meaning.
5. **Extracting general and unique themes from all the interviews and making a composite summary.** Once the process was completed for Steps 1-4 for all interviews, the researcher looks "for the themes common to most or all of the interviews as well as the individual variations" (Hycner, 1999: p. 292)

Findings

In this study, Twitter emerged as the most used and influential SM platform within sports media relations. While the literature review alluded to this aspect of Twitter, the interviews with sports media informants confirmed their belief that Twitter was the most influential form of social media. The following excerpts supplies examples of these comments:

I think Twitter has fundamentally changed the landscape because there is such immediacy to it (Informant #7).

The most disruptive I suppose it would have to be Twitter and that's the app if you will that has probably gotten the most headlines and caused the most challenges just because it's real-time and so convenient and can travel with players in the locker room or on the sidelines (Informant #9).

Twitter, because it has given a direct voice for the athlete, the coach, and the manager to the fans. It's completely changed the communication dynamic between fans and the people that they follow (Informant #15).

With the identification of Twitter as the most disruptive SM platform confirmed, the ways in which it has changed sports media relations varied slightly according to the role of the informant: Team Media Relations, Sports Journalist, or Sports Public Relations Digital Expert. Three categories of change emerged from the interviews: general media relations, mechanical job functions, and changes specific to sports media relations. Together, these three categories provide insight from the lived experience into how Twitter has changed sports media relations.

General Media Relations. The category 'general media relations' includes the lived experiences that changed as a result of Twitter and other forms of digital technology, which are applicable to media relations in sports and other verticals or industries. This category was labeled and segmented out from other categories because it provides general insights into lived experiences that are relevant to all forms of media relations and technology — not just sports or Twitter. Overall, two clusters of concepts emerged from the informants' experiences: speed and media competition.

Speed. The speed of Twitter as a news distribution platform was one of the most mentioned experiences by informants. When discussing the speed of Twitter, informants frequently highlighted Twitter in comparison to other forms of media: "It's an avenue to break things much, much faster than traditional medias (Informant #6); "I think Twitter has fundamentally changed the landscape because there is such immediacy to it. Twitter is faster to access things" (Informant #18). When sharing experiences about Twitter, many informants discussed the speed of Twitter in comparison to the past: "where in the old days ... prior to that if there was a big story it would take hours and maybe days to germinate, while on the internet it takes seconds and minutes to germinate" (Informant #14); "he is in such a hurry to get the information out there that there are even like spelling mistakes in his messaging... whereas [this wasn't the case] 10 years ago or so maybe even less"(Informant #6). The results

of the increased speed means media relations must react more quickly to issues as they arise.

This speed and reaction time is best told through the experiences of an informant that has been in sports media business for 32 years:

...time is not on your side anymore, time used to be on your side, you used to be able to think it through and talk it through and have another meeting and deal with it, but by the time in this day and age in 2012 if you do that it festers and then we go back into the world of blogosphere and all of a sudden there are bloggers out there saying two and two equals five, and it doesn't really equal five but you still have to address that it doesn't equal five and therefore you've given the blogosphere credibility and that becomes a real issue (Informant #14).

Media Competition. The media competition category consists of comments about how Twitter has increased the competition amongst traditional media outlets and how teams now compete against traditional media. The experiences discussed by the informants are also relevant to media relations in a non-sporting context because journalists are often in competition with other forms of new media. The increased competition amongst journalists was observed through comments by team media relations informants:

People are being judged based on their ability to break news. So I think it's forcing, at least in sports, reporters to become more investigative because their credibility and essentially their end worth is how much news they can break on Twitter (Informant #2).

Twitter nowadays is like the biggest source of competition for members of the print media (Informant #6).

In order to increase the amount of followers that one has, you have to improve your content so however these guys decide amongst themselves to improve their content like that's the competition so while they are all competing amongst the one another (Informant #6).

Exactly. Or I found out the trade first – like who reporting trades, who's reporting injuries first – like they're [Sports Journalists] in there like hounds trying to, as opposed to filing once a day, like essentially they're filing 20 times a day. Every time they're tweeting on Twitter, to me it's like they're filing a story (Informant #2).

The impact of the increased competition as lived by sports journalists has meant a change in their roles and job opportunities.

Competition has gotten really, really intense for information and between all media sources right now because you are seeing a lot of higher paid jobs in

media printing and that traditional career disappear ... I would say it's a real time of flux right now (Informant #8).

Ironically, the most common experience reported by informants about competition relates to how the teams are now competing for attention against the traditional media platforms. Team media relations informants boldly speak about how they are competing with traditional media.

If your team is a special team, if your goal isn't to be the primary and biggest place online where people come for news about your team, then you might as well get out (Informant 9).

We try and beat everybody because otherwise it felt like it was fruitless and they were getting credit for something we had told them so we were coming to the back room and there was almost like yeah you are late with this information team. This broadcast knows more than you do and you are like 'Well no, he wouldn't have that if it wasn't for us.' So it is almost become gamesmanship; in a silly way. It's forcing you to do some of these different things (Informant #16).

The experience of competition applies to all media elements that the team controls. Teams understand that their job is to be the source of news and therefore operate within several different media channels to become the channel of choice for the fans. Attempting to lead in this multi-platform experience is best described by a team media relations informant speaking about teams having to work across multiple platforms with diverging audience needs.

We think SM will supplement our existing media. With a fragmented multi-platform environment, a team's website will become the hub for communications where fans can go and learn how, when and where to interact with their team. If mobile is your thing, you go to MapleLeafs.com to find out if we have a mobile app. If you are a Facebook user, you might go to the website to find out the Facebook page. If you are at work late and cannot get home to watch the game, you might go to the website to find out if the game is being streamed live over the Internet. No matter what all the different media platforms do, you are always going to need a hub or channel that links with everything. The teams need to put content and tell people the best ways to interact 24/7 (Informant #1).

Mechanical Job Functions. The 'mechanical job functions' category was derived from comments related to new job functions — now performed by sports media relations staff — that did not exist prior to Twitter. Unlike the general media relations category items,

which could have been caused by other forms of digital technology or could be applicable to media relations in other verticals or industries, the mechanical job functions category is specific to Twitter and may not be applicable to other industries or verticals. This category includes a summary of the lived experiences of people who work in sports media and new tasks that they perform. The term ‘mechanics’ came from one of the informants with 21+ years experience, who described how Twitter has changed sports communications.

I can say the mechanics of the communications job has changed. When I came in, one of the new fangled tools that was really cool was people could call in and get a recording that me and my staff would have of the next day’s practice schedule. They called in the radio hotline and they would call in and they could get tomorrow’s breakfast could be 10:30 or they could also call and get results (Informant #15).

Two clusters of concepts emerged from the informants’ experiences: monitoring Twitter and tweeting.

Monitoring Twitter – Importance. By far the most reported changes in the lived experience of sports media relations are related to the function of monitoring Twitter. What was particularly interesting about these monitoring activities was the cross-monitoring between the different informants: both team media relations and sports journalist informants reported monitoring each other and also monitoring players. The most insightful lived experience that captures this cross-monitoring of the different groups was from a public relations consultant with 21+ years of experience in sports media:

Now journalists are mandated to scour the insights in the internet and SM morning, noon and night. There have even been surveys that show it’s changed the angles on those stories changes what they are covering who they are using as their expert spokespeople etcetera...well the same holds true for the people on the property side. It’s you know now they can’t just be looking at what the media is saying and getting eclipsed reports. They’ve got to be looking at SM to see what’s being said and monitoring their athletes and their managements and their...competitors all the time to see what issues they need to be aware of so they are not blindsided. So it’s changed the rhythm of sports where it was bad enough. It now truly is 24/7 365 (Informant #17).

The theme of 24/7 monitoring represents a viewpoint about how important Twitter is to sports media. Several informants expressed experiences related to the importance of monitoring Twitter: “I keep my Twitter feed all day” (Informant #13); “Twitter is the first

place that I go when I get off a plane to know what's going on" (Informant #7); "It makes us follow SM a lot during the day" (Informant #12). Twitter has become so important to some sports journalists that it has become their primary monitoring tool. One informant, who spends five hours a day online and used to follow four or five websites every day, now only monitors Twitter; if their story or content is interesting, the informant will then go to websites (Informant #11). For team media relation staff, the importance of monitoring Twitter is similar to sports journalists.

It's such an important tool... when I'm on the road with the team, I'm probably only physically watching maybe... between 50 and 60 per cent of the game... in the concourse or in the hallway or in the elevator, I'm constantly on my phone checking (Informant #6).

The lived experiences of team media relations staff demonstrates the necessity of monitoring different groups for different purposes at different times, providing further insight into how Twitter has changed the job functions of sports media relations.

Monitoring Twitter – Fan Service. Prior to Twitter, sports media relations staff would have very limited contact with individual sports fans; their primary focus was the relationships with traditional media outlets and the team. With Twitter, media relations staff are reporting the use of Twitter to monitor fan activity and respond to fan issues.

I'll kind of monitor the Twitter account during games and if people send me a question, even if it's something about where is the section or something I can get back to them in 30 seconds whereas they might be on hold for 10 or 15 if they try and call the ticket office and find out. Or maybe then can find a host or something. It's just such an easier form of communication and it is very informal and everybody can see it. Is the game still going, is the game blacked out, all of these questions that are answered easily (Informant #3).

The interesting part of monitoring fan tweets is related to the importance of a speedy response and the new significance of fan tweets. Several informants shared experiences where monitoring Twitter during a game allows them to respond to fan issues. In some cases, the issues were related to the television broadcast and one was even about game officiating. The media relations staff understand the importance of direct contact with individual fans and their expectation of immediate response. One informant's comments captured the essence of

monitoring fan tweets.

There are a lot of companies out there saying that you need a SM monitoring tool to tell people to tell you at the drop of the hat what people are saying about your brand. But right now, we found that the best way to know what people are saying about your brand is to have somebody live that brand in SM by interacting with the fans. If you are using resources to pay someone to tell you what people are saying, you are too late. If a fan goes to a game and complains through SM about not getting a player bobblehead when they entered the building, you need to respond. When you do respond and get them a bobblehead, you create a fan for life. If you wait for a monitoring tool like Radian6 or KISSmetrics to tell you what happened, it is too late (Informant #1).

In the end, if you know that 45% of people said something negative and 55% of people said something positive, you cannot impact that. Fans who post content on SM platforms are your most avid fans. They will all have opinions and issues with the team. Your job is to monitor SM for issues that can be solved live versus getting a report about it the next morning. (Informant #1)

The lived experiences of team media relations monitoring suggest a new role for team media relations staff: to be serving fans at all times.

Monitoring Twitter – Players. All team media relations staff reported monitoring the players' Twitter activities. The purposes of monitoring player activity varied from looking to find positives to watching for risks.

I monitor. I flag. I don't necessarily regulate because I want them to do it and I treat them as brand ambassadors and try to encourage them to be part of it (Informant #3).

So we follow all our players and monitor their feeds. And more often than not, it's not a big brother scenario, if something arises we need to know about it, but more often than not if it's a message that we want all of our fans to see we just re-tweet the stuff and that's the main reason we follow them (Informant #5).

I definitely monitor, but also provide support to athletes who are you know curious about SM and wanting to connect with fans that way (Informant #6).

Most of the players are on Twitter so it's kind of hard to keep a real close watch during non-business hours and weekends. We see a good tweet by a player and we'll say that's very smart, that's the way you should be using it and if someone sends us something that is a little off side we will certainly be there to say you can't be doing that. You are just bringing unwanted attention to yourself and it's going to lead to problems (Informant #12).

An interesting phenomenon within the monitoring of Twitter for player activity was the difference between the young and old players. From the experiences reported, it appears that

younger players require more training and monitoring than older veteran players.

You would have to worry about the 18 to 22 age bracket that are really not cognisant of the landscapes of the coverage of the team. I think the veteran guys know that if they screw up its going to bring on unwanted attention on the player of the team so they are more cautious, but it's the young guys that are just coming to the organization that you have to make sure they understand the ramifications of it and that you are always on record (Informant #12).

As far as training goes I mean really the biggest thing is you know I remember the last year especially with the young prospects we kind of did a 45-minute tutorial session on the dos and don'ts of Twitter, providing examples (Informant #6).

The general tone of the experiences with Twitter and monitoring athletes was positive. Comments generally focused on good tweets that players have made. Team media relations staff also use past tweets as a way to coach and encourage players to connect with fans. Rather than seeming frustrated at the new activity, which was hypothesized to be the case as a result of increased workload, informants typically did not consider it burdensome, considering the act of monitoring Twitter as a new job function. We posit that this positive attitude towards increased responsibilities could be linked to several motivations: 1) people working in sport media are often also devout fans, which may lead them to find these insights into a player's life to be interesting and noteworthy; 2) managing a player's brand through Twitter may have made their job more streamlined, as it offers a single platform by which sport media personnel can manage a sport brand in real time. For example, many sport media staff reported spending less time on the phone and face-to-face with other media professionals, which many would see as a significant advantage of Twitter; and/or 3) being proactive with this new media platform may give media relations staff an advantage over colleagues who have not embraced this new communication tool, which could help in their career advancement.

Monitoring Twitter – Media. The last group that team media relations frequently monitor were sports journalists. Monitoring sports journalists was done to keep them aware of issues in order to brief players or coaches. Media relations staff are responsible for staying

aware of issues to prepare their coaches or players to handle a media crises.

It really will enable the media relations department to stay one step ahead of the media and I guess that's really your ultimate goal as a media relations representative to be as prepared as possible (Informant #6).

So the media is really one step ahead of you by going to approach the person that made inappropriate comment and if we didn't track it we wouldn't have any opportunity to warn the person that hey what you said was really out of line. It's making a lot of headlines right now so we're always following on tweet deck and just try to be a step ahead of the media or on the same step at least with the media (Informant #12).

This monitoring of the media is related to the speed of communications and the need for the media relations staff to prepare their coach or players before media has an opportunity to meet with them.

Tweeting – Press Release. Team media relations all monitor Twitter, and they also all tweet information. Two common techniques emerged from the team media relations informants: reduced emphasis on the press release, and timely game updates and issue management. Several informants reported that the traditional press release was no longer important because of Twitter. While they still produce press releases, they may use Twitter first and, if given a choice, will tweet versus a press release.

Press releases are pretty useless because by the time you send it out, the news is already out there on Twitter (Informant #2).

We continue to e-mail newsletters and press releases and still deal with the media on a daily basis. [But Twitter] probably reduced the emphasis on it (Informant #4).

I can envision the time that if I ever was tight for time, and I was limited to one option there will come a time when that one option will be to protect Twitter site, just because you know in my day-to-day job the emphasis on Twitter is great now (Informant #6).

Tweeting – Updates. Prior to Twitter, sports media relations staff would be in contact with the traditional media outlets to update them on roster issues related to injuries, trades, or other items. Now these updates are simply tweeted out.

We tweet out...It's affected what we do Pre-game: we tweet out our starting lineup; we tweet out any injuries. Same thing within games with the records or anything that is interesting, we'll tweet it out where we never did anything like

that before (Informant #16).

I mean I love it from the standpoint that we can get out information immediately on our team like I said our injuries, any kind of updates that we have. I just think it is great that way (Informant #16).

I would say things like sending out an announcement for tomorrow's practice time; teams tweet about this stuff out. Today you see teams tweeting, like football is really good at this. So, the PR guy would tweet out who is sitting out practice out today; he just tweets the numbers out. They would say not practicing today number seven, number 17, number 24 so forth. He won't say why but that sends some news out to a reporter and a reporter can follow up if they want to know why (Informant #15).

By simply tweeting out these updates, the experience of the team media relations staff suggests a change in the amount or importance of other forms of traditional communication. Similar to the decrease in importance of the press release, informants have experienced a decrease in the use of phone calls as a form of communication with sports journalists.

Now more than ever I spend less and less time on the phone than I ever have before (Informant #6).

In some cases it reduces face-to-face dialogue with reporters. Instead of me going around to 25 reporters spread out the arena watching and practice to relay an item of information I can just send out a tweet saying, here is what's happening with this player, done and they all get it. So I mean it's a great way to send a blanket message instantaneously and it takes me 20 seconds to key stroke on the Blackberry. So it does take away the face-to-face dialogue (Informant #12).

Specific to Sports Media Relations. The category specific to media relations consists of the lived experiences related to how Twitter is changing the role of sports media relations. Three clusters of concepts emerged from the informant experiences: direct access, management control, and changing hierarchy.

Direct Access. This cluster of concepts is related to how Twitter is eliminating the intermediary in the sports communications paradigm. While it can be argued that the Internet and team websites helped reduce the importance of intermediaries in sports communications over time, the concepts that emerged in this study are based on informant experiences over

the past years that are driven by Twitter. Within the category of direct access, there were three clusters of concepts: filter elimination, direct fan access, and closer fan connection.

The concept 'filter elimination' is based on the experiences of team media relations staff and how Twitter allows them to speak to a sports fan without the traditional media. Prior to Twitter, the facilitation of communication between media relations staff and sports fans was limited to in-person experiences and web-based communication platforms like chat rooms.

It's an unfiltered connection to our fans, we don't have to worry about newspaper writers or radio guys putting their own spin on things or misinterpreting things (Informant #5).

One media person said to me he said you know 'We used to compete with other media members; we still do but now we compete with the teams because its like you guys put out the information first'. And I said 'Well it is just another form of us getting the information to you whether it be a release or whether we just say it to you'. 'Now you tweet but then we have to re-tweet it', and so I say 'Well you are not getting any credit for it now are you?' and he doesn't. He said 'No, this credit is going to the team,' and I'm like 'We are our own publicity tool now, where in the past we weren't'. And that is one of the good things about also being in Twitter is you control your message a little bit more because you are the one that is actually saying, 'Oh, that came from Raptor's PR so that must be the official; the official team voice is on that.' So you can control the message (Informant #16).

You never communicated; the media communicated with them.... we were the ones that gave the information to the media and the media communicated to the fans. Now the teams can directly communicate with the fans (Informant #16).

It can actually become a greater source to reach out directly to the hockey fan as opposed to having it always filtered through mainstream media (Informant #14).

The elimination of the media as a filter is not exclusive to these team media relations informants' lived experiences. Sport journalists have also experienced the change and have expressed concern over their livelihood.

What I have seen is that it's almost given the team's carte blanche to circumvent the mass media; a little scary because I am not sure how much they will need us anymore. They disseminate their message directly to their best customers now, which is what we used to do. And now I am Knicks fan of course I am going to follow the Knicks on Twitter and then the team's official feed is direct to customer now. There is no middle man; that is the

biggest change. It is that the middle man can and has been cut out (Informant #13).

Teams no longer view the mainstream media as the only way to tell their story (Informant #7).

The second concept within the direct access category that was experienced by informants is related to direct access that media relations staff have with a team's fans. The media relations informants are aware of this change in the sports media paradigm and embrace the opportunity to directly communicate with fans.

We didn't have many opportunities to be directly engaged with our fans even at a game we can wander around and shake hands, but it's only a small percentage of the people that are there (Informant #5).

Wow I have this direct access to the fans I didn't have before, it is kind of cool (Informant #17).

On the positive side [Twitter] allowed us to interact better with fans and communicate to fans (Informant #16).

The direct access to fans has brought about a change in sports entities' communication strategies. A review of the lived experiences of sport communications informants would suggest that Twitter promotes a closer connection between the sports entity and the fan; recognizing this ability of Twitter, team media relations staff have modified how and what they tweet.

We will re-tweet fun things. Or just humorous, fun for our fans. If there was something we were going to put out anyway, and I see someone already did I will just re-tweet instead of putting it out. The positive response we get when someone is re-tweeted is actually fun to see because they feel like they're being included. They are being included. And it's helped building another connection. Sometimes we will re-tweet reporters who have written really good stories about our guys and we want the fans to see it (Informant #4).

It makes the players a little bit more human – it humanizes them (Informant #7).

It really enhances the return of engagement, I can engage with fans (Informant #3).

You get a hot and cold pulse of what fans are saying if you're on the fan forums and running conversations on Twitter, so I think the fans sort of have more attachment to what's going on now. They're able to express their opinion and have their opinion be heard on these forums or platforms (Informant #12).

Twitter, because it has given a direct voice for the athlete, the coach, the manager to the fans. It's completely changed the communication dynamic between fans and the people that they follow (Informant #15).

Management Control. Through the direct access and unfiltered connection with fans, it could be argued that team media relations staff are using Twitter to enact more control of the team's communications. However, experiences of the sports media informants would suggest that Twitter can be tough to control during a conflict: elements of Twitter make communications more controllable, while elements of Twitter also make it more uncontrollable. A review of the lived experiences will identify these conflicting viewpoints.

Below are examples of lived experiences that identify Twitter as a controllable communications tool:

Trying to set the record straight prevents the coach after the game from having to answer a speculative question from the media. Then hopefully that question doesn't get asked because we've put out the information out prior to the game that this is the situation so don't bother trying to read more into it than something simple (Informant #12).

We are the first ones to break this information; it used to be you would kind of like want to make sure that it kept quiet. You would be like okay I better get this release done so we are the first ones to break this news but now you are not breaking news. Sometimes you are even scooping yourself on news with Twitter; we have our own Twitter account. So I don't feel the need... I feel more relaxed in that standpoint; I don't feel the need to have to try and beat everybody to the punch or try and keep a secret. Like I said we are basically just confirming what everybody knows now with our releases (Informant #16).

We are our own publicity tool now, where in the past we weren't. And that is one of the good things about also being in Twitter is you control your message a little bit more right because you are the one that is actually saying... So you can control the message (Informant #16).

Below are examples of lived experiences that identify Twitter as a communications tool that can become uncontrollable for sports teams:

There's nothing stopping a member of the organization, whether in the office or an athlete, from expressing their views to thousands of followers and then you have to respond to it (Informant #12).

What my job is... I have to make sure everybody is on the same page and the message is controlled. Prior to the Internet and SM you kind of had an idea of what was going to be in the sports section of the Toronto Star and the Toronto Sun the next day just by who they talk to and the angle the story is pretty

evident. But with Twitter, an irrational tweet can just totally up end the apple cart and that kind of definitely keeps us on our toes and that's something we didn't have to deal with many years ago that's for sure (Informant #12).

Oh it's created unpredictable environment. You know a guy could tweet out something long after I've gone to bed and I could wake up turn on the radio and its leading off the newscasts on all sports radio. So you really are crossing your fingers a lot of time there isn't anything stupid out there based on someone's error judgment (Informant #12).

...far less manageable because time is not on your side anymore (Informant #14).

But now with athletes just tweeting out their feelings and other things, news and so forth directly the team doesn't usually know about it until...well, after the tweet is out there or the news is out there. And it's just, it's almost impossible to manage or control a message now through Twitter (Informant #15).

We always joke too that your iPhone or your Blackberry should have a breathalyzer with it so if you are tweeting after 10' o'clock at night you have to blow less than .08 to get your tweet out (Informant #8).

Twitter is a complex form of communications to manage; some believe it provides management with more control and others find it makes communications less manageable. In order to manage Twitter effectively, teams need to understand the nuances of the system that make it controllable and uncontrollable. Without an understanding of the nuances, it makes the sports communication process much more challenging for media relations staff.

Hierarchical Change. Another theme from the interviews identified how Twitter is changing traditional hierarchical roles within sports. Traditionally, team sports have been a very hierarchical business: the players must follow the coach's instructions or risk losing playing time, and the coaches follow the general manager's instructions or risk losing their job. The management of teams is tightly controlled and the actors within the business stay on course for fear of being fired. Lived experiences of the informants suggest that Twitter is changing hierarchical roles:

Exponentially changes their work load. It changes the coloration of what their work is; they no longer have the control, and this is something I talk about often. In sports, it's a very hierarchical culture. The GM tells the coach to do X, the coach tells the players to do Y, the coach tells the trainer to do Z etcetera, and then you had to follow because they had, they could send you, they could freeze you out whatever the case maybe. Now social media, it's

anything but hierarchical. It's the exact opposite. And so these hierarchical cultures don't know how to deal with it and the communications people used to be able to say: 'alright I can keep you from having access to X player of from X coach or we are not going to give you a pass to the game' (Informant #15).

There is a firewall between the marketing and team guys and the players and the media relations guys (Informant #9).

There was a basketball situation; I can't remember the team now I want to say Minnesota but I might be wrong. Somebody was traded last year or the year before, and they broke it on Twitter before the team announced it and the player that was involved from the other team didn't know about it. I remember that was a fiasco (Informant 17).

Conclusion

In examining the lived experiences of people working in sports media, three themes emerge about how Twitter has changed sports media relations: general media relations, mechanical job functions, and changes specific to sports communications. The first theme, general media relations, reflects the lived experiences related to changes caused by Twitter and other forms of digital technology that are applicable to media relations in sports and other verticals or industries. The second theme, mechanical job functions, relates to new job functions that did not exist prior to Twitter. The final theme, changes specific to sports communications, demonstrate how Twitter is changing the role of sports media relations staff. In the conclusion of the dissertation, each of these themes will be reviewed to answer the research question about how Twitter has changed sports media relations.

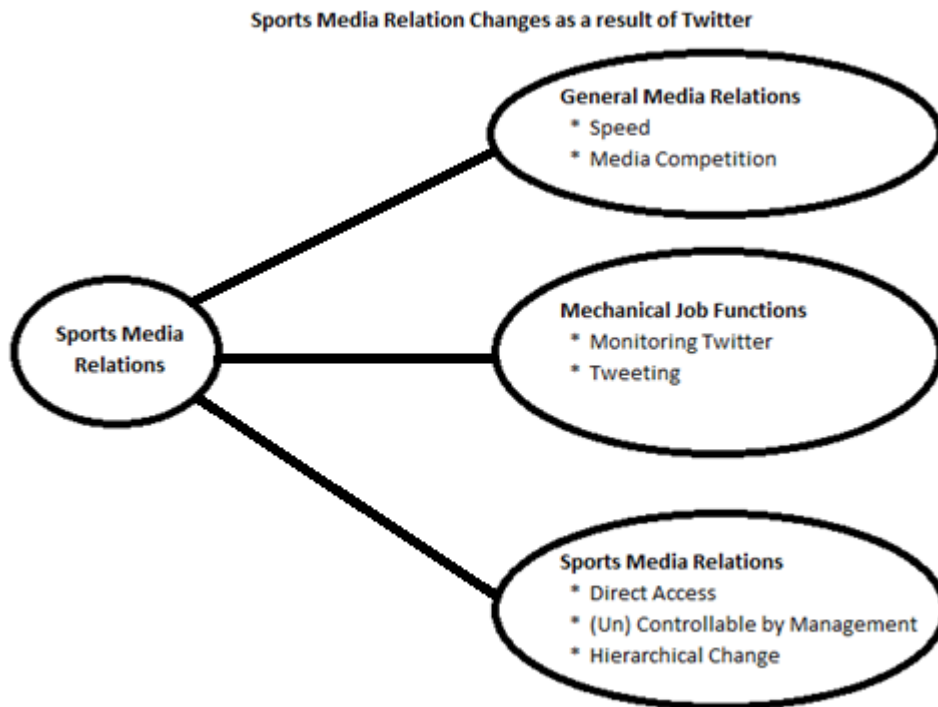


Figure 6 – *Model of Sports Media Relations and Twitter*

Within general media relations, two categories were discovered: speed and media competition. Twitter's impact on increasing the speed of communication flow has been discussed recently in a sporting context (Zung, 2012), and amongst the informants increased speed of communications received the most attention. This increased speed of communications facilitated a second category of general media relations: media competition. Because there are virtually no barriers to communicate using Twitter, almost anyone can tweet information to an audience. Interestingly, Twitter has created competition between traditional media and professional sports team's staff. The team as a producer and distributor of content is a relatively new role for sports media relations, and its impact on traditional media has yet to be fully explored.

The second theme, mechanical job functions, had two categories of change: monitoring and tweeting. The mechanical job functions theme is related to the new job functions that Twitter has created that did not exist before. The concept of monitoring messages is not new to the media relations role, however, the concept of monitoring messages using Twitter in two-way conversations with fans is new to sports media relations.

Before Twitter, media relations rarely provided feedback for a fan, but now with Twitter they are in a position where they must monitor and respond to fan issues. When teams started to use Twitter, it created new work for media relations staff; most of them are required to tweet them information about the team on a regular basis. Tweets have become so important as a function that they are replacing the traditional press release.

The final theme highlights the changes that are specific to sports caused by Twitter, which demonstrates three ways that Twitter has changed the role of media relations. The first change is related to direct access: through Twitter, media and fans have direct access to the players, which they never had in the past. The second change, management control, is the most interesting of the changes because it has both benefits and drawbacks to the professional role of media relations: in some ways, Twitter permits less control for media relations because they cannot control what players or coaches say and when they say it, which has created sports media crises as reviewed in Chapter 6, but in other ways, Twitter has provided media relations staff with more control over their own content. Sports media relations staff now have a management tool at their disposal that allows them to communicate unfiltered messages directly to an audience. The third change that is specific to sports is the changing hierarchy within organizations. Prior to Twitter, what a player said or did outside of the dressing room rarely made its way into the mainstream press; there was a strict hierarchical structure through which messages were sent to the mainstream media and that structure was controlled by the team. With Twitter, teams have less control of the structure and activities outside of sports that often make their way into the mainstream media.

The phenomenological approach in this study has brought a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of sports media professionals and how Twitter has impacted the role of media relations. This study made contributions beyond survey research that only focuses on the characteristics and quantitative results, using qualitative interviews with experts in the industry to better understand how Twitter has changed sports media relations. This approach helped to identify concrete ways in which sports media relations have been impacted by

Twitter. The final chapter will triangulate the findings from the three different investigations in order to explain how Twitter has changed the role of sports media relations.

CHAPTER 9

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

The empirical evidence supports the statement that Twitter is the dominant SM platform in sports, causing paradigm shifts in the management of sports media relations and flattening the sports media hierarchy.

Professional sports media relations have successfully adapted their strategies to incorporate SM, responding to athletes that cause SM crises, giving fans direct access to their teams, and creating new job responsibilities that have changed the role of media relations within professional sports. These new forms of communication within the sports media nexus have not replaced the traditional forms of media such as television and newsprint, but have provided an important additional layer to the process.

Specifically, Twitter has caused the most change within media relations in professional sports. Teams that have exclusively used traditional media platforms to communicate with the public must now compete against the traditional media platforms for the attention of sports-obsessed Twitter followers. Twitter has made the role of media relations in sports more complex and requires people to learn new communication platforms and strategies to manage what Hutchins and Rowe (2012) refer to as networked media sport.⁸

This final chapter will summarize the diverse impacts of Twitter on sports media relations in the context of the existing literature about media sport. This chapter will systematically review the five central elements of the dissertation. First, the empirical findings in each of the three chapters of investigation will be considered and linked to past literature and theories, followed by a discussion of the ways that Twitter has reshaped sports communications with particular reference to items that are new to sports media relations. This will lead to a consideration of the role that academic research can contribute to the practice of sports media relations.

The chapter will then turn to a review of the limitations that were encountered in the dissertation. Finally, new questions for future research will be identified along with strategies for addressing them.

⁸ Networked media sport is a term created by Hutchins and Rowe (2012) to explain the operation of media sport in the digital age.

Review of Empirical Findings

This research sought to explore how SM impacts the practice of sports communications. This research used a multi-method approach whereby three studies using different methods (content analysis, online survey, and long interviews) were conducted over a period of three years. The use of a multi-method approach provided the researcher with the opportunity to explore different types of questions related to SM and sports communications. The review of empirical findings will follow the order that the different studies were conducted.

Chapter 6 Crisis Response & Legal Strategies. The purpose of the first investigation into the impact of SM and sports was to quantify and categorize the crisis response strategies used when a SM crises happens. The investigation took place during an 18-month period between January 2009 and June 2010. This time period coincided with the time period when Twitter experienced phenomenal growth, starting in early 2009 (Hutchins & Rowe, 2012). While some research used one to three case studies to review Twitter and sports media (J Sanderson, 2008; J. Sanderson, 2009), at the time the study was completed no other study had looked at several sports media crises to quantify strategies used and predict threat groupings.

The use of multiple case studies and the simple categorization techniques could be criticized by other academics because it may not be considered a typical path for academic investigations. However, the method had been used before by Fitzpatrick and Rubin (1995) and, although an investigation into only two or three situations would have provided a deep understanding of each crisis, it would have a limited the overall understanding of different SM threats.

The empirical investigation into SM threats identified Twitter as the most common platform used as the initial source of information about a SM crisis. Twitter was the initial SM platform source for 11 of the 17 situations reviewed. While the research did not intend to identify the specific platform used, it quickly became apparent that Twitter was going to be

more influential for sports media relations than other platforms like Facebook or YouTube. In addition, this is the first study to attempt to classify or cluster the various types of SM crisis situations.

This chapter extends the contribution of Coombs (2007b) to crisis response strategies. Coombs' work on SCCT attempted to match crisis situations with crisis response strategies in order to preserve organizational reputation (Coombs, 2007b). After identifying 17 cases of SM sports crises, the source and crisis response strategy were identified. From this analysis, four types of threats were identified for media relations practitioners: *Rookie Reporter*, *Team Insider*, *Imposter*, and *Opportunist*. The most common source for the SM crises reviewed was classified as the *Rookie Reporter*; in this case, the greatest risk for creating SM crises is the actual athletes themselves. The research also reviewed strategic responses used to respond to a SM crisis. From seven crisis response strategies (Table 8), *apology* was the most reported response strategy used.

In April 2012, almost two years after the study about SM crises response and legal strategies, Hutchins and Rowe (2012) defined such situations as *information accidents*. While the term crisis seems alarmist, its usage in this research is consistent with the reputation management work of Doorley and Garcia (2006). It could be argued that, because of the empirical work involved in tracking and sourcing eighteen months of case studies and because of the linkage to Coombs' crisis communication literature, that the word crisis is still appropriate; however, the use of *information accident* terminology would also be appropriate for future case study investigations.

Chapter 7 Uses and Gratifications. While studies have previously used Uses and Gratifications in a sporting context to investigate Twitter (Clavio & Kian, 2010; Frederick et al., 2012), this was the first study to explore the use of Twitter from a sports team perspective. Using both qualitative and quantitative methods, this chapter reviewed 1527 tweets produced by teams within the CFL and conducted a league-wide survey with 529 respondents. The study identified four factors that explained 70% of the variance by CFL

Twitter followers: *Interaction, Promotion, Live Game Updates, and News*. This was the first known research using Uses and Gratification theory to analyse team Twitter followers for professional teams. The large number of responses and the high percentage of variance can explain Twitter use by followers, demonstrating the effectiveness of this methodology.

The study had four objectives related to the use of Twitter by a professional sports league and its teams, using a multi-method approach to the inquiry (long interviews, content analysis, and survey) to successfully achieve these objectives. The results of the study have implications for sports communications professionals who work for teams, as well as for academics and the existing literature related to Twitter and sports. The first objective related to understanding how teams are using Twitter to gratify fans. Informed by a content analysis of 1527 tweets, sports teams are using Twitter to provide fans with in game updates (46% of Tweets), news (31% of Tweets), and linking fans to other team content that sits outside Twitter (41% of Tweets).

This use of Twitter as a linking device has been identified in popular press, but has not been identified before in academic literature. The team-by-team analysis of Tweets in this study revealed different patterns of Twitter use by teams. For example, 38% of the Tweets sent by the Toronto Argonauts were interactive and directed at a specific fan, whereas the overall team averages for interactive Tweets to fans was only 6% (see Table 12). Also, some teams used Twitter much more frequently during the time period than other teams (see Table 12). The variability in how teams within the same league use Twitter suggests that normalized usage of the platform amongst teams in the same league does not occur. This variability could also suggest that Twitter is still in the introductory stages of use by professional teams.

A comparison of the results from this dissertation's analysis of CFL content and the content analysis for athlete Tweets (Hambrick et al., 2010) reveals very different usage patterns. For example, the category with the most Tweets by athletes was *interactivity* (34%), whereas the team's *interactivity* was one of the least Tweeted categories (9%). The

athletes' second-most Tweeted category was *diversion* (28%) whereas not enough Tweets were coded as *diversion* to even be identified from the CFL tweets. This *diversion* use by athletes and the non-*diversion* use by teams may suggest that teams are more purposeful in their usage of social media, using Twitter as a tool to distribute information to followers, whereas players use Twitter to be interactive and share non-sports related content; teams foster relationship-building through distribution of information, and players foster relationship-building through personal connection.

The second research objective sought to understand the demographic, usage, and technology use characteristics of Twitter followers. The results support the need for sports entities to conduct research on their Twitter followers. The average age of the respondents was 35 with higher than normal levels of education (49% with some university or more education). Interestingly, 33% of the followers were female; when you compare the percentage of CFL female followers with other sports studies, the percentage of females varies from 12% with college sports message boards (Clavio, 2008b) to 33% for female professional athlete Twitter followers (Clavio & Kian, 2010). This variability in results from similar Uses and Gratifications research suggests that the followers of sports SM will vary by type of sport or the audience that is attracted to the Twitter account. This finding is significant because it reinforces the need for teams to conduct research on their Twitter followers because the profile of users can vary from one organization to others within the same league.

As part of the second research objective, the study attempted to understand CFL Twitter followers' use of the Internet and Twitter. The most interesting finding related to use was the devices used to check Twitter. The most reported device for checking Twitter was the personal cell/phone/PDA (40%) and the next most was the personal home computer (38%). This was particularly interesting because it supports the recent findings of the Pew Research Group's Internet and American Life Project (A. Smith & Brenner, 2012) analysis that the smartphone (PDA) is driving the increased usage of Twitter. It could be argued that the

popularity of smartphones will be a driver for increased usage of Twitter for sports content. Recognizing the link between Twitter and smartphones, team communication directors should be using smartphones strategies to increase Twitter followers.

The other interesting finding related to the second objective was the result of sports fan activity. The study attempted to understand whether the users of Twitter were hardcore CFL fans or casual observers. To measure this, the study used live games attended and games watched on television as a measure. Based on the results, 34% watched six or more CFL games live and 90% watched six or more games on television. Interestingly, a full 48% watched 20 or more games on television. The eight-team league only has 19 regular season home games; thus, almost half of the CFL's Twitter followers are watching more games than just their home team. While no previous studies can be used to compare or to validate the measure of a hardcore sports fan, these results suggest that the Twitter followers could be classified as the CFL's hardcore fans. This finding may support the statement that Twitter is where hardcore fans go to follow their teams.

The third research objective aimed to understand the gratifications sought and gratifications obtained for CFL Twitter followers, identifying four dimensions of use: *interaction, live game updates, news and promotion*. Previous sport Twitter-related Uses and Gratification research focused on a retired female athlete, identifying three dimensions of use: *organic fandom, functional fandom, and interaction* (Hambrick, 2010). While not a formal Uses and Gratification study, a different study used a content analysis of athlete tweets to identify six categories of use for gratification: *interactivity, diversion, information sharing, content, fanship, and promotional* (Hambrick, 2010). While the previous studies were comprehensive, neither identified *live game updates* as a use for Twitter. The identification of *live game updates* would be a unique dimension of gratification identified through this study. This finding is a contribution to the sports communication literature because it identifies a new dimension for Twitter and also reinforces the need for doing audience-specific Twitter research.

For the fourth objective, the difference between gratifications sought and gratifications obtained was calculated to measure the extent of CFL Twitter followers' satisfaction. This approach to measure satisfaction has been previously conducted by Uses and Gratification studies (Palmgreen, Wenner, & Rayburn, 1980; Palmgreen & Rayburn, 1985). This approach was also used by Johnson and Yang (2009) to elicit Twitter users' levels of satisfaction. From the 15 gratifications tested, 12 of them were deemed to be satisfied, two unsatisfied, and only one was deemed to not be statistically significant. Three of the top four most-satisfied gratifications were interactive factors: "interact with other followers", "give my input and opinions", and "respond to what the team has to say". The only gratification in the top four that was not interactive was a live game update factor: "read tweets while I watch a game on television". This suggests that the use of Twitter by teams for *live game updates* has satisfied their followers. Interestingly, the two gratifications that did not satisfy CFL Twitter followers — "hear about player roster moves as they happen" and "find information faster than other people do" — had the highest mean score for gratifications sought. This finding is important to sports communication professionals because it says that teams can improve upon their strategy of exclusively sharing information on Twitter to drive satisfaction and increased usage.

Chapter 8 The Changing Role. While previous studies have looked at the impact of Twitter on sports journalism (Schultz & Sheffer, 2010; Sheffer & Schultz, 2010) and Twitter use by athletes (Browning & Sanderson, 2012; Clavio & Kian, 2010; Frederick et al., 2012; Hambrick et al., 2010; Lebel & Danylchuk, 2012), this study was the first to attempt to understand how Twitter has changed sports media relations. This study used semi-structured long interview questions and a phenomenological research design to understand how Twitter has impacted sports media relations. Eighteen interviews were conducted with people who had diverse roles within sports media relations (team media relations, sports journalists, sport media consultant and team new media personnel) and at least five years working experience.

Prior studies related to Twitter and sports were focused on athletes, not management. In order to interpret the results from the 18 long interviews, a phenomenological approach was used to understand the lived experiences of the sports media professionals. The five steps for data explication described by Groenewald (2004) and developed from Hycner's (1999) guidelines were used to interpret the interviews. The analysis of the interviews identified three themes that relate to how Twitter has changed sports media relations: *general media relations*, *mechanical job functions* and *sports media relations*. These three themes are relevant to previous new media and media sports literature.

With regard to previous research about new media, the findings of Chapter 8 confirm predictions that were made by Berman et al. (2007): that user-generated content would create conflict between traditional content owners and content distributors. On the basis of 75 interviews that were conducted in 2005, they predicted that partners working in the traditional model of production and distribution of content would become pitted in a battle against each other in order to remain competitive in the industry. The interviews with sports media professionals identified many lived experiences whereby the sports teams (content owners) are competing against the traditional sports journalists (content distributors) to attract audience. This finding also changes the dynamic of the relationships between traditional content producers and content distributors; the traditional media is no longer the only way for sports teams to reach sports fans.

These findings also confirm elements of the Schultz et al. (2012) model of sports-media-audience communication that has been prevalent from the 1990s to present. In this model, they examine the direct access that sports media has to the fans and the new two-way relationships between the fan and the professional sports teams and athletes. It could be argued that these new forms of interaction are a form of disintermediation with traditional media: many interviews identified situations whereby the fan interacts directly with athletes, teams, and even the traditional media, who must adapt to successfully address new consumer needs.

While previous literature has examined issues related to media competition and direct access in a media sport context, no research to date has explored the changing speed, mechanical job functions, and overall management of sports media relations that Twitter and other SM have created within the sports media profession. This lack of research related to Twitter and sports media relations presents an opportunity for this dissertation to break new ground in the media sport field.

Impact on Sports Media Relations

Hutchins and Rowe (2012) argue that we are at the beginning of a change in sports media that has not been seen since the introduction of the television in the 1950s and 1960s, when television began its ascent to become the dominant medium for sports. The ascent of television did not fully replace radio and newspaper, but altered the role of radio and newspaper in mainstream media; even though radio and newspaper companies continued to cover sport, their economic and administrative structure was forced to change to remain profitable (Rowe, 2004).

However, the change in the established roles of media caused by SM is different than the previous eras of sport media change identified by scholars like Whannel (1992) and McChesney (1989). Where the previous eras of media change took place over periods of decades and for the most part were not convergent forms of media, this new era of SM-based change has surged alongside the Internet and has continued to converge with every new form of Internet-based form of communication.

Previous scholars within sports media have discussed the impact of digital sports, internet, and SM (Haynes & Boyle, 2012; Hutchins & Rowe, 2010, 2012), demonstrating that the process of change related to media sports and technology introduction will continue to expand as new applications and hardware devices continue to shift the consumption patterns for the sports fan consumer. For example, since the start of this dissertation in 2009, there has been an explosion in the adoption of smartphone devices and mobile applications, and the tablet was also introduced as a new portable computer. In fact, leading information

technology research firm Gartner states that smartphone sales surpassed personal computer sales in 2010, and that by 2015 tablet sales will surpass personal computer sales (Maier, 2011). This explosion of media platforms available to fans will continue to impact media sports. Researchers who specialize in media sports will need to continuously re-think these new devices and understand how they are effecting change within a sports and media context. While change caused by technology will be a constant within sports and media, the world of sports and media will continue to become a series of fragmented niche communities. Unlike the niche communities identified by Schultz in the *Modern Model of Sports-Media-Audience Communications* (Schultz et al., 2012), these niche communities could be targeted by sports organizations, creating privileged content that becomes the communication channel of choice for sports fans.

A growing group of new media researchers have focused specifically on SM and sports, as evidenced by special issues within the *International Journal of Sports Communications* (2010, 2012). While there are scholars examining the general effects of Twitter on sports, the discussion about Twitter and sports has yet to discuss the management of sports communication as it relates to Twitter. Twitter and SM are changing media sport, but what does that mean to the sports communications department charged with managing the professional team or an athlete's reputation? This discussion about sports management, Twitter, and technology has been introduced in this dissertation, and needs to be further explored in future media sports literature.

To demonstrate how this dissertation can initiate a new conversation within the media sport academic community, the discussion will be broken into three themes of observations: Twitter Dominance, Paradigm Shifting, and Flattening the Sports Media Hierarchy. The discussion for the three themes all relate to the impact that Twitter has had on sports media relations. The empirical evidence presented will support the statement that Twitter is the dominant SM platform in sports, which has caused paradigm shifts in the management of sports media relations and flattened the sports media hierarchy.

Twitter Dominance. When compared with other popular SM platforms like Facebook, which has over 1.06 billion users, and YouTube with over 1 billion users and 4 billion views per day (C. Smith, 2013), Twitter may look like a small player in the field of SM platforms. However, Twitter has evolved into a SM platform that has essentially become part of the daily and hourly activities performed by sports media professionals. This often hourly use of Twitter is not only something that has become necessary for team media relations staff, but for sports journalists and athletes as well.

This dissertation has provided empirical evidence that supports the assertion that Twitter is the most dominant SM platform used within sports media relations, which can be demonstrated through the three investigations that were done as part of this study.

First, seventeen different information accidents were identified between January 2009 and June 2010. The initial source of the information accident for eleven of the seventeen recorded cases was Twitter. Within Chapter 7, the content analysis of CFL tweets identified a 161% growth in Twitter followers for the CFL and its teams from 2011 to 2012. While this growth was not compared with the growth from other SM platforms, the amount of new followers cannot be ignored and suggests an increased importance of Twitter to sports fans in the CFL. Both Chapters 6 and 7 have presented quantitative evidence to support the statement that Twitter is the dominant SM platform within sports media relations.

The qualitative evidence is further supported by the 18 sports media professional interviews that unequivocally support the statement that Twitter is the dominant SM platform in professional sports. As the interviews progressed, further evidence of Twitter's dominance was demonstrated through the lived experiences of the informants, such as Twitter displacing the use of 'traditional' technology like facsimile machines and even press releases in some situations. Most alarmingly, Twitter has accelerated the speed of sports media relations: once a predictable flow of information based on the results of games and the timing of an editorial deadline, sports media relations is now a seven-day-a-week twenty-four-hour event whereby

the informants must constantly check their smartphones to see what was happening on Twitter. Thus, Twitter has fundamentally changed the role of sports media relations.

Paradigm Shifting. In his 1962 book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Thomas Kuhn introduced the term paradigm shift. At the time, the expression was used to identify revolutionary processes in science that reconstructed theory; however, these ‘paradigm shifts’ were rarely completed by a single man or completed overnight. The term ‘paradigm shift’ has now become part of our language and is used to explain significant shifts in any discipline; not exclusively within the sciences. Although applying the term ‘paradigm shift’ to Twitter may seem exaggerated, the empirical evidence presented in this dissertation would suggest that it is appropriate in the circumstances.

Previous user-generated processes such as blogging and sports message boards also had an impact on sports media relations, however, their impact was somewhat short-lived and did not significantly change the day-to-day duties of media relations staff for a sports team. Previous academic contributors helped explain the use of blogging or sports message boards in sports (Clavio, 2008b), but did not suggest how SM has changed the management function of sports media relations or revolutionized processes. The empirical evidence from this dissertation shows how Twitter has changed the functions and revolutionized processes within sports media relations.

The interviews with the informants from Chapter 8 identified two themes that have revolutionized sports media relations: 1) new responsibilities or job functions that Twitter has created. Sports media relations staff are no longer just the facilitators between the team and traditional media; media relations staff are now content producers themselves. Through their Twitter accounts, they have regular access to fans and media, and with thousands of followers to connect with, these Twitter accounts distribute information on an hourly and daily basis to maintain a relationship with fans. In many cases, teams are using Twitter as the platform to make announcements to the fans instead of taking the time to organize a formal press announcement or release.

The dual role of tweeting and Twitter-following is new to sports media relations. The act of tweeting has been identified as an additional formal responsibility for media relations staff. Media relations staff also monitor the Twitter feeds of their athletes, coaches, and media to ensure they are aware of and prepared for the consequences of any breaking news or privacy issues. Through the lived experiences of sports media informants, it is clear that these new responsibilities are unlike previous roles for blogging or monitoring sports message boards. Twitter has created a new twenty-four-hour seven-day-a-week task for media relations staff, whereas previous activities like blogging or sports message boards were much more compartmentalized.

The acceleration of speed in media relations was the most frequently mentioned impact of Twitter from the lived experiences of informants. In comparison to traditional media, which have existed for decades and in some cases centuries, Twitter provides immediate access to breaking news. A story can no longer germinate for a day, allowing media relations staff to potentially influence a story by leisurely communicating with the sports journalist; Twitter has created a culture similar to a road race, whereby the actors are attempting to be the first across the line or the first in print through an instantly reported tweet. This instant publishing standard is why Twitter is the platform of choice for sports media. The industry informants provided many examples of how Twitter has increased the speed for sports news distribution.

This dissertation asserts that both the new responsibilities of sports media personnel and the increased speed of Twitter warrant the use of the term 'paradigm shifting' within sports media relations. This paradigm shifting statement is based on several studies that have taken place over several years, which have progressively followed the intensification of Twitter and sports media relations. The paradigm shifting argument can be supported with several examples of empirical evidence. The discussion of the paradigm shifting nature of Twitter to the role of sports media relations has been alluded to by previous scholars; however, the evidence presented within this dissertation provides empirical support for the

statement. Twitter has revolutionized sports media relations in a way that is analogous to the manner in which television changed the economics of sport.

For many the word paradigm shifting has a positive tone to change. However, it is important to note that the paradigm shift caused by the speed to Twitter will not always be positive. When responding to issues, teams will have less time than ever before. If they choose to take time to think about an issue, it can be released through Twitter and the mass media will have to cover the story. Prior to Twitter media relations professionals has time on their hand and a symbiotic relationship with the media that allowed them freedom to negotiate or manage an issue before it became public.

Flatter Sports Media Hierarchy. Within the sports media nexus, many scholars have been writing about the impact of Twitter on sports journalism (Schultz & Sheffer, 2010; Sears, 2011; Sheffer & Schultz, 2010; Wigley & Meirick, 2008). Throughout this literature exploring sports journalism, none of the papers have adequately addressed the hierarchical nature of sports.

In this dissertation, many of the empirical findings throughout this research support the statement that Twitter is making the sports media hierarchy flatter. The choice of the word 'flat' is a throwback to the 1994 book by Thomas L. Friedman *The World is Flat*, where he uses a convergence of forces to support his arguments about globalization. The title of the book is used as a metaphor to explain the levelling of the playing field in terms of global commerce, whereby every stakeholder has an equal opportunity. In his argument, one force by itself cannot make the world a flatter place; however, it is the convergence of several forces over time that make it flatter.

This dissertation uses the 'world flattening' metaphor to better understand the existing hierarchy in sports media, referring to the notion that all of the media organizations that are stakeholders in professional sports now have an equal opportunity to share a message; the content of professional sports is no longer solely controlled and distributed by traditional media organizations. This flattening of sports media can be seen when you compare the

Historic Model of Sports-Media-Audience Communications (1850s-1980s) with the Modern Model of Sports-Media-Audience Communications (1990's-present) (Schultz, 2012). What was once a one-way method of communication has become a two-way mode of communication that represents a form of disintermediation from traditional media.

Prior to Twitter, if a sports reporter wanted to reach a player, he or she worked almost exclusively through the media relations staff. Now, Twitter has dismantled the hierarchy by allowing the reporter to go directly to the player through Twitter. Another example of the reduced hierarchy in sports media relations was the announcement of Shaquille O'Neill's retirement: rather than follow the traditional hierarchy of working with the media relations staff from his team to host a press conference, for which accredited media are invited to hear a controlled message by Shaq, he avoided the tradition and hierarchy and went directly to his millions of Twitter followers.

Information accidents also represent examples of a less hierarchical structure within sports. Prior to Twitter, incidents like those categorized as a *Rookie Reporter* or *Team Insider* would have never occurred. The player did not previously have a mobile channel whereby they could transmit messages to thousands of fans while away from home or out on the town. Any message from a player would have been tightly controlled by the media relations staff and the story may never have made its way to the sport audience.

Empirical evidence to support the argument that media relations in sport is less hierarchical was discovered through the lived experiences of informants. The interviews with informants for Chapter 8 identified two themes related to how Twitter has changed sports media relations: hierarchy and (un)controllable.

The first theme 'hierarchy' relates to how Twitter has broken down the traditional procedures for accessing players that existed with traditional media. It also relates to how the teams now have more direct access to fans — e.g., athletes used to communicate through traditional media to distribute information to fans. If media wanted access to a player or news about the team, they would follow traditional channels; with Twitter, traditional

channels still exist, but a tweet or message represents a new channel that can circumvent the traditional channels for reaching fans.

The second theme related to how Twitter is making the sports media world flatter is related to management. The term (un)controllable has been chosen to represent the juxtaposition that Twitter has simultaneously made sports media relations less controllable and more manageable. The term (un)controllable describes a new sports media landscape whereby players tweet information directly to sports fans. Most of the time, the player simply provides the fan with an insider look into their life away from sport; however, in some cases, a tweet is the start of a scandal and becomes an information accident. Such Tweets have caused the media relations staff to provide training for their players, and created the need for media relations staff to follow their players tweets twenty-four hours a day and seven days a week. Prior to Twitter, the role of media relations in sports followed the pattern of reporting games and practices, and generally servicing the media to help them meet daily story deadlines. After a practice, media relations staff would be available until the story deadlines later in the day, but after the story deadline was passed they rarely had to respond to media needs. Today with Twitter, team media relations staff need to constantly monitor Twitter feeds for breaking news or a player's tweets. Twitter has increased the speed of breaking news in sports and has also made the job of media relations staff more uncontrollable.

The irony of the term (un)controllable is that Twitter has concurrently made the job of media relations more controllable. From a management perspective, team media relations staff also tweet to reach, in some cases, hundreds of thousands if not millions of followers. Media relations staff use their Twitter accounts to distribute messages directly to fans, knowing that they also reach the media. Prior to Twitter, if a team needed to distribute a message, they could post it on their website, but they also relied on their local media, the only conduit of information between the team and fans at the time. Teams relied on local media to transmit messages about the team and local media relied on the team to provide content to fill the pages of newspapers or fill time on radio broadcasts. With Twitter, the role of the

traditional media has been somewhat disintermediated; teams now have direct access to fans through Twitter, but traditional media continue to play a very important role in media sports.

The direct access to both fans and media through Twitter has made sports media relations more manageable. Prior to Twitter, teams relied on the traditional media to disseminate information, but now that Twitter has become so prevalent, teams can go directly to fans and their message is no longer filtered by the media. An analysis of the interviews in this study provided many different cases whereby the team media relations staff would use Twitter to control a rumour or share facts. For example, when a player would get injured during a game, media broadcasting such as print media would have to speculate on the injury. Rather than wait for the traditional media to convey the message about the injury, the team Twitter account can now be used to update fans and media about the status of the injury. When sent through Twitter, this injury status update is instant and provides team media relations staff with a management tool to control the message. No longer is the power of communicating with fans solely in the hands of traditional media; sports teams now have a management tool to immediately access fans, thus making the process of media relations in sports flatter.

Neither of these observations of management control or hierarchical change has been discussed in the sports media literature. In this study, empirical evidence has shown that Twitter is making the sports media hierarchy flatter. Similar to Thomas Friedman's argument about how the world became flatter and more global because of a series of converging forces, so too has Twitter been a convergence of forces. First, Twitter and other SM platforms would have not existed had it not been for the invention of the Internet by Tim Burners Lee, or for the evolutionary development of things like http linking and the speed of data transfer. Second, Twitter would not have been as widely used without the growth in adoption of smartphone technology by the public. At the core of Twitter's design, the 140 character format is the direct result of the character limit of texting with a mobile phone. The everyday

and almost every hour use of Twitter by those working in sports media relations is a result of the convergence of forces between mobile communications and the Internet.

The mobile nature of Twitter contributes to a flatter sports media hierarchy because the traditional media is no longer the primary medium for broadcasting messages. Team media relations staff, players, coaches, and even fans now have an instant platform to broadcast information. Prior to the mobile-enabled platform of Twitter, access to athletes by traditional media representatives was tightly controlled by team media relations staff. In fact, leagues and teams have required protocols whereby the media can access players only before and after games or practices. This schedule of access to the player was predictable and manageable, however, with Internet-enabled mobile devices, people can now access the player outside of the traditional game- or practice-related activities. The convergence of Internet-enabled mobile devices using Twitter has been a key driver making sports media hierarchy flatter and more accessible for media and fans.

After completing three different but related investigations related to Twitter and sport communications, it is important that the role Twitter plays in the broader media matrix of sport communication be clarified. Similar to the previous introduction of other sport media such as radio and television, Twitter will not eradicate the use of previous media; it will just make it different. While this research uses evidence to support the statement that Twitter is paradigm shifting to the role of media relations, Twitter is a relatively new technology within the overall matrix of sport media. Even though fans have increased their usage of Twitter, they continue to consume sports on television, radio, and newspapers. Based on the content analysis of Tweets, audience research, and the lived experiences of people working in sports, Twitter could be considered a complementary media platform that is used to link, engage, and interact with fans. As an example, fans are using Twitter to follow tweets during a game and read comments from their media personalities who Tweet about their team.

Whether Twitter will continue to play this complementary role within the matrix of sports communication is yet to be determined. For the time being Twitter will continue to

play a convergent role whereby fans will use it to connect, share, and engage with teams, athletes, and media. While this research has identified how Twitter has changed media relations according to the present time, the development of media technologies is an ongoing process that will require ongoing research. What is clear from the interviews and the survey of CFL followers is that Twitter at this time is the home of hardcore fans and the broader sports media community. While the everyday fan may never read a Tweet, they may read about Tweets indirectly through the media that follow Twitter for stories. For this reason alone, I predict that Twitter will continue to play an important role in sports media relations.

Contribution

This investigation into the impact of social media on sports started in May 2009 after reading an article by Sysmos Research about the explosive growth of Twitter. At the time, Sysmos looked at the information disclosed in 11.5 million Twitter accounts to understand how people use Twitter (Cheng & Evans, 2009). In 2013, it was reported that Twitter had over 500 million accounts. Twitter is now used by virtually all professional sports teams in North America; from 2009 to 2013, Twitter has evolved into the most influential social media platform in sports. While most empirical investigations have been about understanding Twitter content or Twitter use by athletes, this research holds a unique position because it addresses the changes in sports management that resulted from the impact of Twitter on sports media relations.

Prior to the Internet and SM platforms like Twitter, the role of media relations in sports was based around matching the needs of the traditional media with the availability of the team. Media relations staffs were constantly working to facilitate access to content for the traditional media to get favourable stories published about their team in the local and national media. While challenging, the media relations role was somewhat predictable from market to market. However, in a sports world becoming increasingly involved with Twitter, the role of media relations in sports is changing. With more platforms and ways to

communicate and connect with fans, the management of sports media relations has become more complex.

This research is the first investigation purposefully designed to tackle the management of sports media relations in the digital age. Each investigation has contributed something unique to the management of sports media relations. First, the classification of sources for ‘information accidents’ is an important tool that sports media professionals can use to train athletes and staff. With the ubiquitous use of mobile phones that can produce and distribute text, sound, photo, and video, information accidents will continue to occur. It will be the responsibility of the sports media professional to teach athletes, respond to issues, and manage information accidents in the future. Second, the Uses and Gratification survey instrument can act as a template for teams who are interested in learning more about their Twitter followers. With teams’ media relations staff now being responsible for attracting and retaining their own audience, the use of scientific methods to gain insight about their followers will become more. Lastly, the Model of Sports Communications and Twitter represents a relevant platform for explaining how Twitter has changed the role of sports media relations. Understanding the impact of Twitter through this model will help train and develop future media relations staff.

This research is not only relevant to those responsible for managing media relations in sports, it is also relevant to sports journalists. While Twitter has been changing the role of media relations in sports, it is also changing the role of sport journalism. In the smartphone-equipped mobile-enabled sports environment, where anyone with a smartphone can distribute sports content, how will the journalists use their special access to tell stories that drive audience? As fans will have often the same instant access to the information as other journalists through a smartphone, the Model of Sports Communications and Twitter can help journalists understand how the role of their primary intermediary has changed. By understanding the impact of Twitter on their primary intermediary, they can be better equipped to develop strategies to stay ahead of their competition. Similar to how radio

changed the reporting of sports newspaper writing, Twitter will also change the role of the sports journalist. Without the ability to rely on scores and insider information anymore, the sports journalist will need to provide their own lens or perspective on their team that will be compelling to a mass audience.

With regards to the academic field of media sports studies, this research fills a void within the emerging field of sports new media by focusing on strategic management issues relevant to the team rather than focusing on the athlete or the journalist. While each investigation has contributed something to the field of media sports studies, the Model of Sports Communications and Twitter represents the most significant new knowledge. This model helps explain how Twitter has transformed the role of sports media relations. This research is also the beginning of a dialogue that explains how teams are using Twitter to manage their image and their athletes' reputations. While it has similarities to other models such as the Modern Model of Sports-Media-Audience Communication, it is specific to Twitter and the role of media relations. Through Twitter, the nature of a job in sports media relations has changed. No longer are media relations staff simply the facilitator in the middle; they are also an active participant in the creation and distribution of sports media content. This research can be seen as the start of a new strand of media sports studies related to online reputation management.

Prior to Twitter, media owners and managers had limited ability to determine the popularity of a sport reporter. But with Twitter, they can directly measure a journalist's popularity through Twitter followers. A sports journalist with a large digital footprint has an opportunity to demonstrate added value to their employer, and therefore have increased negotiating power during financial contract negotiations. Interestingly, athletes and their agents have used these statistics as a measure of value to a team for years; can journalists now use their Twitter following as a measure of value to their employer? While this research does not attempt to answer this question, it frames the impact of Twitter from a management perspective.

By far, the most important contribution for this research is the evolution of sports media relations. While Twitter is a relatively new form of media, it will not be the last form of media to impact sports media relations. Teams and media relations professionals will need to use these new platforms because fans will expect it. When they do start to use new platforms, they will need to have an understanding of how the new medium will impact their ability to manage the reputation of their team. Even as I type these final additions to this research in 2013, new SM platforms like Instagram⁹ have come along and are being widely used by professional teams.

The final contribution for this research is the identification of team media relations staff as active participants in the creation and distribution of content. No longer do they simply facilitate discussion with traditional media; media relations staff are also active producers and distributors of content to both traditional media and sports fans. This shift will need to be addressed in the educational programs and textbooks for sports media relations. People interested in a sports media relations career will need to be prepared for the complexities of a hyperlinked multi-platform mobile-internet-enabled world.

Limitations

While this research can claim new contributions to sports media relations literature, it also has limitations. Upon review of the different limitations for each chapter, the overall limitations for this study can be categorized into timing, generalizability, and exploratory research methods.

With regards to timing, the different studies took place over a period of three years. During that time, the use of Twitter within sports exploded to become a paradigm shifting platform. Many of the studies, if replicated today, may not produce the same or even similar results. For example, the categories for sources of threats used in Chapter 6 may identify different sources today than it did three years ago. With Twitter being mainstream since 2009, athletes and teams have learned from previous information accidents.

⁹ Instagram is an online photo-sharing service that empowers users to take pictures, apply digital filters to them, and share the pictures directly with followers or through other SM platforms.

Due to the exploratory nature and convenience sampling methods chosen for this research, many of the results cannot be generalized to other samples. For example, if the survey instrument for the CFL Uses and Gratifications survey from Chapter 7 was used for another sports league, it may produce different findings. Each Twitter audience and sport would attract a different set of users who would have different motivations for using Twitter. Also, given what Twitter is used for today, these findings could change in a very short period of time. Within one season of the CFL, the Twitter audience for the league doubled in size and, if the Uses and Gratifications survey instrument was used again, it may produce different results because the early adopters for Twitter may represent very different motivations than later adopters.

Lastly, the final category of limitation is related to the exploratory nature of the research methods used. The multi-method approach used many different types of questions and methods of investigation, and is more difficult, time consuming, and expensive to conduct. Recognizing these weaknesses, it is unlikely other researchers would choose a similar path, making it more difficult to validate the findings. It would be difficult for future researchers to validate key findings about Twitter being a dominant SM platform in sports that has caused paradigm shifts in the management of sports media relations.

While the overall tone and finding of this research points to Twitter being a positive force within the broader matrix of sports communications, I feel it is important to remind readers of the motivation of this research. Initially why I was attracted to Twitter was the increased reporting of athletes indiscretions on Twitter that were reported in the mainstream media. Without Twitter and the convergence of forces like mobile phones, such athlete indiscretions may have never reached the mass media. The hyper connected and mobile nature of sport media today has created a world whereby the personal lives of athletes will be reduced to the time they spend at home alone behind closed doors. Even that time alone will become circumspect, because the increased expectations for athletes to have a large social following, will demand athletes share their personal lives behind closed doors with fans. The

management of athlete reputations will continue to become more complex and demanding and require media relations professionals to understand the issues related to a hyper-connected social environment. Similar to how the development of media technologies is an ongoing process, so too is the management of media relations using media technologies. Media relation professionals will need to be continuously experiment and learn new media technologies in order to manage the reputations of their team and players.

Future Research

This study represents one of the few investigations into how Twitter is changing the role of sports media relations. Future studies could look at Twitter's impact on other industries or the impact of other potentially game-changing platforms of communications. While the empirical results demonstrate that Twitter is a paradigm-shifting platform for sports media relations, would it also be paradigm shifting for more traditional media relations roles like corporate communications? Since starting to investigate Twitter from a sports media relations perspective, Twitter has also started to play a significant role within celebrity and entertainment culture. Has Twitter changed celebrity and entertainment culture in a similar or different way? It could also be important to investigate the use of Twitter as a form of revenue generation by sports teams. Professional sports has found a way to monetize most forms of traditional media, can teams also monetize Twitter?

Probably the most challenging and interesting question to ask about sports and Twitter relates to the increased usage of mobile as a platform of sports consumption. During the three different studies, the adoption of smartphone devices changed dramatically and the use of those devices to consume sports has also changed. Similar to the needs for understanding how Twitter is changing sports media relations, how has the smartphone or other mobile applications like the tablet computer changed media sport? People no longer just watch a game on television; they also watch the game using other devices.

Can you picture yourself sitting on the couch, using a mobile application on your tablet computer, listening to the voice of your favourite player during a game that you are

watching on television while sharing a Skype conversation through your tablet computer with your best friends? I can picture it!

Oh, did I forget to mention that the sport is cricket and you are sitting in Toronto Canada, watching a game that is broadcast in Punjab and you are conversing in English with your friends in France, South Africa, and Australia.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Definition of Terms

The terms and definitions below were used to interpret the data and discuss the results.

Blogs: A self-published website that an individual posts their thoughts or stories in reverse chronological orders.

Content: The use of text, pictures, video and any other meaningful material that is can be distributed through newsprint, radio, television, or the Internet.

Follower: A person who uses Twitter and has signed up to receive the tweets sent by a specific individual.

Links: Internet users can click on highlighted text or images to jump from one web page to another web page to view content that is of interest to them. Content producers such as bloggers, websites, and athletes use links to share content that they think would be of interest to their audience.

Listening: Organizations and individuals will skim the feeds from blogs, newspapers, SM posts or other sources of information to see what topics are bubbling up.

Lin-sanity: A term coined by the media to define phenomena related to a popular Asian American NBA player Jeremy Lin.

Traditional Media: in the context of this research, it will represent all media related to newspaper, film, radio and television.

Tweet: A message that is no longer than 140 characters and is posted through the SM platform Twitter.

SM Crisis: a non-routine situation that has ability to damage the reputation of the athlete, which spreads to the public due to content posted in a SM platform.

SM Platform: With hundreds of different SM platforms, the most common referenced for the purposes of this research are Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and LinkedIn.

Social Networking: Refers to sites where user-generated content is hosted and shared with others. The sites allow people to express their individual ideas plus socialize with other using tools such as blogs, videos, images, text, or a mix of multiple forms of media at the same time.

Web 2.0: A term associated with the Internet as a platform for communications. The term was created by O'Reilly Media in 2004 to describe blogs, wikis, and social networking sites. It describes Internet-based services that emphasize user generated content and sharing.

APPENDIX B

Tweet Coding Instructions

Tweet Coding Sheet

Tweet Coding	Function Categorization	Explanation	Examples
Game Updates	In-Game	Tweets done during games that report results or other happenings. Starts with pre-game information like injuries, special hosts, etc. , tonight's attendance.	"#Bombers add a single to make it a 10-point game - #BCLions lead 32-22 #CFL" "FINAL: HAM35 EDM37. #Ticats #CFL"
Sharing Photos In game	In-Game	Tweets done just before or during a game that provide the fan with an inside look at the game.	Bomber dressing room... 20 mins to kickoff http://plixi.com/p/48447405
Team Roster Updates	News	Anything related to the team - injury announcements, trades, etc.	Stamps add Rashod Henry to practice roster http://www.stampeders.com/news_blogs/news/?id=3911 #calstampeders #CFL #YYC
Video Sharing	News	The tweeting of a video. Look for the word Video or TV in the text or URL. Also many teams use tinyurl's to send out video.	BCLions.comTV caught up with LB Solomon Elimimian to talk about his first season on the #BCLions defence: http://tinyurl.com/27z4zw8 #CFL
Upcoming Game Update	News	All pre-game information up until the game starts, roster changers, game notes, etc.	#BCLions GM/head coach @Coach_Brillo's thoughts on today's game versus the #Esks: http://tinyurl.com/278df17 #CFL
Player or Coach Blog	News	Weekly player awards, individual player blogs, lifestyle or feature stories about a player.	Great feature on Romby Bryant by the Herald's Al Cameron http://www.stampeders.com/news_blogs/features/?id=3895 #calstampeders #CFL #YYC
Photo Sharing	News	The tweeting of a picture or photograph link. Look for URL addresses like twitpic & plixi.	http://twitpic.com/2u8q1o - Football never sleeps - #bclions equipment arrives back at facility after win at Empire. #CFL
Post-Game Analysis	News		Postgame reaction from Marcel Bellefeuille, Kevin Glenn and Stevie Baggs now on www.Ticats.ca #CFL #Ticats
Audio Sharing	News	The tweeting of an audio clip.	Audio: Coach Huff speaks after Sunday's walkthrough in Montreal http://www.stampeders.com/multimedia/audio/?id=1348 #calstampeders #CFL #YYC

Tweet Coding Sheet Continued

Tweet Coding	Function Categorization	Explanation	Examples
Direct Communication	Interactive	Typically this starts with an @twitter username at the start of the e-mail. Be careful with BC - the @ at the start sometimes refers to a player; watch for twitter names with #s in them.	<i>@RussellMarrjott you can listen live at www.cjob.com. All of our games can be heard live there as well.</i>
ReTweets or Discussion	Interactive	RT(Retweet) Any statement that encourages discussion, asks questions or re-tweets other discussion. If RT is a team account, it is likely a Promotion Other	<i>Not bad...RT @AndrewBucholtz: The Diving Bell and the Butterflies? - worst headline involving the word Bell? Let's hear 'em. #CFL</i>
Int - Other	Interactive		
Prom - other	Promotion	Asking fans to vote other person not related to team.	
Links to External Media	Promotion	Tweets that push the reader to another external source of media like a radio show or television station.	<i>Catch QB Alex Brink on QX104 FM tomorrow morning at 7:10am.</i>
Links to Contest or Enter to Win	Promotion	Similar to a Poll/vote type of tweet, however this Tweets offers prizing, external sponsor programs or other types of promotional tweets.	<i>News: Kick, Punt and Pass for \$100,000 with the Edmonton Eskimos http://bit.ly/caBswT</i>
Links to a Poll/Vote	Promotion	Tweets that encourage the reader to vote or complete a poll question	<i>Vote for your 2010 #Argos All-Stars online now http://bit.ly/cB2smy. #CFL</i>
Links to discounts	Promotion	Promotes a discount for tickets or merchandise through a tweet.	<i>Special deal for tickets to Friday's game and the Western Final http://www.stampeder.com/tickets/tickets/playoffs/ #calstampeder #CFL #YYC</i>
Links for Ticket sales	Promotion	Promotes tickets sales to upcoming games	<i>Eastern Semi-Final (#Ticats vs. #Argos at Ivor Wynne Stadium) tickets on sale Saturday at 9am... http://bit.ly/cVclmT</i>
Other	Other	Congrats to other home team, random thoughts like "...aaaand we're back on the field."	<i>Huge, huge fan of the 4:30am wake-up.</i>

CFL Twitter Survey

Now, we would like to know to what extent your team(s)'s Twitter feeds meet the reasons you follow it. Using a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree, please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.

- 1 - Strongly disagree**
- 2 - Disagree**
- 3 - Disagree somewhat**
- 4 - Neither agree nor disagree**
- 5 - Agree somewhat**
- 6 - Agree**
- 7 - Strongly agree**

My team(s)'s Twitter feeds help me to...	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
...receive discounts on merchandise or tickets.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...interact with other followers.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...receive highlights after the game.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...participate in discussions about my team(s).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...enter contests related to the team(s).	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...read tweets if I cannot watch the game on television.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...access special promotions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...respond to what the team(s) has to say.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...follow the games as they happen.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...give my inputs and opinions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...find out information about the team(s) faster than other people do.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...read tweets while I watch the game on television.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...hear about player or roster moves as they happen.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...receive photographs or videos.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...learn about upcoming games.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



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CFL Twitter Survey

Overall, how satisfied are you with the job your CFL team(s) does in providing you with the things you are seeking through Twitter?

- Completely dissatisfied
- Mostly dissatisfied
- Somewhat dissatisfied
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Mostly satisfied
- Completely satisfied

■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■ 20%

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CFL Twitter Survey

How often do you check Twitter?

- Several times or constantly per day
- At least once per day
- At least once per week
- Almost never

What devices do you use to check Twitter? (Please check as applicable)

- Personal computer at home
- Business or work computer
- Personal cell phone or Personal Digital Assistant (e.g. iPhone, BlackBerry)
- Business cell phone or Personal Digital Assistant (e.g. iPhone, BlackBerry)

What other social media services do you use on a regular basis? (Please check as applicable)

- Facebook
- YouTube
- LinkedIn
- Myspace
- Foursquare
- Other(s) (Please specify)

APPENDIX D

Suggested Wording for CFL Tweets

For Weeks 11-13, we would like each of the CFL teams to tweet out a link to the CFL Twitter Survey. The survey has been created in consultation with Chris Gibbs from Ryerson University. The purpose of the survey is to examine the usage and feelings that fans have towards our Twitter feeds. The final results of the study will be made available to everyone upon completion. To make this easier for you, we have prepared a series of three tweets to be sent out to your followers during the month of September.

If you have any questions or issues, please feel free to contact me or Chris Gibbs at cgibbs@ryerson.ca.

Week 11 – Sep 6 or 7

120 characters +CFL Team Name or @username

[enter team or Twitter username] wants your input, tell us why you follow our Tweets for a chance to win a \$250 Future Shop gift card. bit.ly/CFL_Tweets

Week 12 – Sep 13 or 14

115 characters & no customization

We need you! Tell us why you follow our Tweets for a chance to win a \$250 Future Shop gift card. bit.ly/CFL_Tweets

Week 13 – Sep 20 or 21

104 characters & no customization

Last chance to complete the CFL Twitter survey and win a \$250 Future Shop gift card. bit.ly/CFL_Tweets

Survey Closes Friday, September 30, 2011