AN EXAMINATION OF CONTENT PREFERENCES OF FOLLOWERS OF COLLEGE
WRESTLING PROGRAMS ON FACEBOOK AND TWITTER

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ABSTRACT

JOSEPH E. SMALDONE: An Examination of Content Preferences of Followers of College
Wrestling Programs on Facebook and Twitter
(Under the direction of Coyte G. Cooper, Ph. D.)

As collegiate athletic departments continue to put an increased focus on revenue-generating sports such as football and basketball, it is essential for non-revenue sports to self-market in order to grow their fan base and increase attendance. Social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter provide collegiate athletic programs with a little-to-no-cost medium to communicate and interact with audiences and fans. However, it is crucial for teams to provide social media followers with content that coincides with their interests and positively influences their view of the team. Previous research on social media marketing analyzed the specific categorical content that collegiate athletic teams and individual athletes posted on social media, and examined the relationship between number of followers and team social media account practices. I have found no previous studies that have examined the content preferences of fans that follow teams on social media.

This study surveyed Facebook (n=318) and Twitter (n=250) followers of collegiate wrestling programs to examine their content category and content type preferences. While results showed that participants generally rated content categories and content types high, significant differences were found when examining the demographics of the participants. These differences can give teams and coaching staffs an idea of how to target specific demographics in order to market their program more effectively and efficiently.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To my dog Frank…I did this for you.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Non-revenue sports within intercollegiate athletics have historically faced many

challenges when trying to market their programs. In recent years, however, it has become even

more challenging for non-revenue programs, as athletic departments and administrators have

prioritized their financial decision making based on maximizing revenues by funneling the

majority of their budgets into men's basketball and football (Clarke, 2012). As a result, non-

revenue Olympic sports have been left with scarce resources and manpower to run their

programs. In some cases, the emphasis on revenue maximization has led to athletic departments

eliminating sport programs in order to further fund their football and basketball teams (Prisbell,

2011). With so little resources, non-revenue sports have worked to find unique ways to market

their programs at a low cost.

One area that Olympic sport programs have begun to emphasize is in the development

and marketing efforts of their brand (Cooper, 2014). More specifically, non-revenue sport

programs have started to invest in social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter because of

the low cost and potential upside. Social media allows these sport programs to spread content

to fans and connect and interact with current and potential stakeholders, all at a little-to-no-cost

expense. This interconnectivity with fans provides non-revenue programs the ability to develop

a brand equity and loyalty with fans that can have a major impact on the success of programs

and sports as a whole.

As collegiate athletic departments continue to focus on the bottom line and pay less

attention to non-revenue sport programs, it is imperative that these non-revenue sports findcost-

efficient ways to market themselves and their brand. Social media provides them with the

platform to not only market to their current fan bases but also provides them with the possibility

to reach an infinite number of potential fans.

Significance of Study

For athletic programs to be able to fully utilize social media in the most effective and

efficient ways, they should first figure out what their followers want to see online. If teams

know what types of content their followers desire, they can cater to those needs in order to

satisfy them (Cottrell & Wikman, 2013). While previous studies have focused on determining

the types of content that college athletic programs provide to their followers (Doran, 2013), there

have been no studies that have focused specifically on the content preferences of followers of

NCAA sports programs.

This study will examine the types of content that NCAA wrestling fans want to see on

Twitter and Facebook. With this information, programs can use these two social media sites in

the most effective ways when working to develop their brand, increase their fan base, and

increase fan engagement. It could provide them with a roadmap for promoting their team and

brand to specific market segments that they are trying to target. For a non-revenue sport such as

wrestling, this can be essential in using the little-to-no-cost marketing potential and outreach that

Twitter and Facebook are capable of providing in the most effective and efficient ways, and if

implemented correctly could have a positive impact on brand equity and awareness, fan base, fan

engagement, recruitment, team success, and attendance.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the content category and content type preferences

of fans that follow NCAA wrestling programs on Facebook and Twitter. The secondary purpose

of this study is to provide data to NCAA wrestling programs that will allow them to better understand the preferences of their fans and market themselves more effectively and efficiently on Twitter and Facebook.

Research Questions

Based on the review of literature related, the following research questions provided the guidance for this study.

1. What content categories are consumers most interested in when following NCAA wrestling programs on Facebook and Twitter?

   a. Photos

   b. Videos

   c. News Stories

   d. Interactions

2. Are there differences in the preferences for the content categories when focusing on the background of consumers (2a, 2b, 2c) that follow NCAA wrestling programs on Facebook and Twitter?

   a. Gender (male vs. female)

   b. Age

      i. 18-25

      ii. 26-35

      iii. 36-45

      iv. 46-55

      v. 55+

   c. Affiliation

      i. Fan

      ii. Alumni of team

      iii. Parent of a current/former wrestler

      iv. Student

      v. Faculty/staff

      vi. Donor

      vii. Other

3. What content types are consumers most interested in when following NCAA wrestling programs on Facebook and Twitter

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    a. Gender (male vs. female)

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Definition of Terms

1. **Brand –** what your customers or fans think of when they see or hear your company's name or logo

2. **Brand equity –** additional value placed on a product because of its brand name

3. **Content Categories –** different types of content that college wrestling programs post to Facebook and Twitter

4. **Content Types –** specific types of each individual content categories

5. **Facebook –** A social networking site that allows users to share updates, photos and messages with other users

6. **Facebook Like –** another users clicks the "like" button on your post, affirming that they approve of it

7. **Facebook Page –** profile on Facebook that a business or celebrity creates that allows fans to "like" the page in order to follow their posts

8. **Facebook Share –** another user can share your post, which is then seen by all of that user's friends

9. **Favorite a Tweet –** Marking a tweet as a favorite by clicking the yellow start symbol

10. **Follow –** Subscribing to another user's tweets or updates

11. **Handle –** A user's Twitter account username

12. **Hashtag –** Keywords or topics in a tweet marked with the # symbol

13. **Mention –** Mentioning another user in your tweet by including the @ sign followed

   directly by their username. Also refers to tweets   in which your username was

   included.

14. **Olympic Sports –** collegiate sports outside of Football and Men's Basketball

15. **Reply –** A tweet posted in reply to another user's message

16. **Retweet –** Forwarding another user's tweet to all of your followers

17. **Social Media –** consumer driven web-based services that allow users to create profiles

   and share content and messages to followers instantaneously

18. **Timeline –** A real time list of tweets from people you follow on Twitter.

19. **Tweet –** A message posted to Twitter containing 140 characters or less.

20. **Twitter –** Social media network that allows users to post messages containing 140

   characters or less

Assumptions

1. The research methods used in this study are valid and reliable.

2. The survey respondents were honest in submitting their survey answers.

3. The college wrestling programs that were the focus of this study have been proactive and

    effective in their social media marketing efforts.

Limitations

1. Survey results may not represent all college wrestling programs' social media followers,

    and caution should be used when applying the results of this study to all college wrestling

    programs.

2. The results of this study may not be applicable to other college or professional sports

    other than wrestling, as the preferences of college wrestling fans may differ from those

    that are fans of other sports.

Delimitations

1. The top twenty-five ranked college wrestling teams in the "Best of Brand" Power Rankings are dynamic and change from month to month.

2. The survey respondents may be a direct reflection of which of the twenty-five "Best of Brand" teams chose to share the surveys on their respective Facebook and Twitter accounts.

3. Facebook and Twitter are only two of a vast number of social media platforms, and by exclusively studying these two platforms may exclude teams that put more focus and emphasis on other social media sites.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Brand Equity

Brand equity is the additional value placed on a product because of its brand name (Keller & Kotler, 2012), or simply, the benefits that a product achieves through the power of its brand name (Heitmann, Lehmann, Neslin & Stahl, 2012). These added benefits are the reason why organizations spend the time and resources to build up and promote their brand to audiences and consumers. Branding is the most promising way to successfully differentiate against competitors because to consumers, brands have an amplified social and emotional value (Chen, Chen, & Huang, 2012). "Although competitors may duplicate manufacturing processes and product designs, they cannot easily match lasting impressions left in the minds of individuals and organizations by years of product experience and marketing activity" (Keller & Kotler, 2012, p. 242). Successful marketing of an organization's brand can be an extremely effective way to develop a competitive advantage. Marketing activities such as advertising, promotions and price are what drives brand equity (Heitmann, Lehmann, Neslin & Stahl, 2012).

In addition to developing a competitive advantage, the study by Heitmann, Lehmann, Neslin and Stahl (2012) found that brand equity has a predictable and meaningful role in retaining and acquiring new customers. In essence they found that if a brand can win the hearts and minds of consumers, the organization will have an easier time with the retention and acquisition of consumers, ultimately leading to greater loyalty and increased sales.

An important component in the retention and acquisition of consumers is the necessity of relevance. Esteem alone does not drive a customer to make a purchase or to act. Only if the product is relevant to the consumer's needs will they translate the esteem they feel toward the brand into a purchase (Heitmann, Lehmann, Neslin & Stahl, 2012). Thus, identifying consumer needs and delivering products in order to satisfy those needs is essential to developing brand equity, retaining and acquiring consumers, and driving sales.

Social Media

Boyd and Ellison define social networking 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 users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system" (Boyd & Ellison, 2007, p. 211). The term "social media" has become the all-encompassing phrase used to describe the more recent phenomenon that social networking sites have become media outlets for organizations and consumers.

Social media has emerged as the latest branch of integrated marketing communications, which allows organizations to communicate directly with their target markets (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Unlike integrated marketing communications, however, in which the organization attempts to use the elements of a promotional mix (advertising, public relations, direct marketing, etc.) to produce a unified consumer-based message (Boone & Kurtz, 2013), social media is consumer driven. Social media, which Blackshaw and Nazzaro (2004) refer to as consumer generated media, "describes a variety of new sources of online information that are created, initiated, circulated and used by consumers [with the] intent on educating each other about products, brands, services, personalities, and issues" (2004, p. 2).

If organizations and brands want to engage with consumers and increase their brand equity (Coyle, 2010), social media should be an integral part of their marketing mix. Not only does social media help build brand equity (Coyle, 2010), but it provides organizations with a little-to-no-cost platform to create and deliver memorable marketing campaigns (Cottrell & Wikman, 2013).

College Athletic Departments and Social Media

The increased popularity of social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook has greatly impacted the sport industry (Bayne & Cianfrone, 2013). Social media allows sport organizations to reach fans in an efficient manner, and with the two-way communication nature of social media, sport organizations can be in constant contact with fans (Harris, Newman, Peck, & Wilhide, 2013). More specifically, social media provides two benefits to sport organizations; 1) allows the organization to communicate with their stakeholders and those interested in the organization; and 2) individuals and groups can easily share content that is delivered through social media sites with potential consumers (Cooper, 2012; Doran, 2013).

The relatively inexpensiveness of social media is why it has been an ideal marketing tool for collegiate athletic departments across the country (Tomko, 2011). No matter the size or budget of the school, athletic departments have begun to utilize social media on a daily basis and have made it an integral part of their marketing plans (Tomko, 2011). One of the main reasons for this is so athletic departments can build relationships with fans and provide them with behind the scenes content that they wouldn't be able to get elsewhere (Talty, 2011). Some athletic departments have even launched social media "hubs" to put all of their social media content into one convenient place for fans ("BC Athletics Launches," 2012).

More specifically within athletic departments, individual collegiate teams have begun to create their own social media sites and hubs (Laird, 2012). While athletic departments tend to have more broad social media strategies implemented in order to market every one of the university's sports, individual teams have capitalized on using their own social media sites in order to create a more intimate experience for their fans and increase exposure (Laird, 2012). Coaches have also begun to utilize social media as a way to recruit players, in addition to promoting their program (Talty, 2011).

Not only is social media the most inexpensive marketing tool for athletic departments and teams, but it can be the most effective if implemented correctly (Cottrell & Wikman, 2013). The interactive nature of social media has given teams an unprecedented way to reach out to and engage with fans in order to build personal relationships and enhance a team's brand equity (Tomko, 2011). As teams continue to engage with fans on a daily basis with personal interaction, fans become more aware of a team's product and brand. It is that increased awareness that allows fans to become comfortable with the team and their brand, which in turn creates more loyalty on their end (Cottrell & Wikman, 2013). When interaction and engagement with fans is made a priority, the likelihood that your followers have trust and loyalty in your organization and brand is far greater (Cooper, 2012).

Just as easily as social media allows teams to connect with their fans, it also allows for fans of a team to connect with one another. Because "word-of-mouth is the most powerful sales tool," teams can now harness it and use it to their advantage through social media in a way that was once not possible (Coyle, 2010). Once teams share content on social media to their fans and followers and those followers become aware of it and engaged, they can now express their thoughts to other fans and consumers (Fodor & Hoffman, 2010). It allows the fans to "create

personalized spaces where they can express support for their favorite [teams] and discuss sports" (Hambrick, et al., 2010, p. 455). Fans that already have positive feelings and attitudes toward a team can now communicate their positivity to new and potential consumers both online and offline (Fodor & Hoffman, 2010). This helps to spread the content that a team shares to those that may not be fans of the team, and creates the brand awareness that can lead to the acquisition of new fans.

Two of the most popular social media outlets are Facebook and Twitter. These two social media sites have led the way in revolutionizing the way that businesses and teams can reach their target markets, and have "introduced a new twist to the classic relationship between companies and their endorsers" (Masteralexis & McKelvey, 2013, p.60). The following sections will add background on these mediums to help guide the current research.

Facebook

Facebook is a social media website that was founded in 2004. Their mission is "to give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected" (Facebook About, 2014, para. 2). It's users utilize the site to "stay connected with friends and family, to discover what's going on in the world, and to share and express what's important to them" (Facebook About, 2014, para. 2).

Users can connect with thousands of friends around the world through Facebook. The site allows users to share photos and videos, update their personal status or share news. Companies and sports organizations have also begun to make their own Facebook pages that consumers and fans can follow to receive updates and news.

 Facebook pages, unlike individual profiles, "are designed for businesses, brands, public figures, organizations and administrators to typically oversee their day-to-day operations"

("Facebook Launches Redesigned Pages," 2011, para. 4). These pages allow the administrators to get notifications when fans interact with their page by liking or commenting on posts or photos. Pages also give administrators the capability of commenting on their fans' photos and posts, which creates a platform for fan engagement ("Facebook Launches Redesigned Pages," 2011). One of the most effective tools that Facebook pages have is the targeting of posts. Organizations can target their Facebook posts to segments of fans based on categories such as age, gender, education, location and many more (Constine, 2012). The page post targeting allows organizations to publish content differently to their different fans, and word posts differently in order to maximize relevancy (Constine, 2012).

Athletic departments have created pages not only for the department as a whole, but for each of its individual athletic teams, with some schools even creating pages for their mascots (Tomko, 2011).

Facebook has the most users of any social media site with over 1.2 billion users (Albergotti, 2014). Studies done by the Pew Research Center also show that 57% of all adult Americans and 73% of all those ages 12-17 use Facebook, making it the most popular social media website (Smith, 2014). Some of the major reasons why adults use Facebook include seeing photos and videos, sharing content with many people at once, receiving updates and comments and seeing entertaining posts (Smith, 2014).

Twitter

Twitter is a social media website that allows users to compose and post messages, often referred to as "tweets," consisting of 140 characters or less ("Getting Started with Twitter," 2013). The site was created and launched in 2006 with the original intention of being a service that allows you to share with other people what you are doing at the moment (Sogolla, 2009).

According to co-founder Jack Dorsey, Twitter was "inspired by the concepts of immediacy, transparency, and approachability" (Dorsey, 2010, paragraph 2). Twitter's current mission is "to give everyone the power to create and share ideas and information instantly, without barriers" (About Twitter, Inc., 2014).

Tweets can include photos, videos and links to other webpages in addition to a message. Users on the site can choose to follow friends, celebrities, businesses and sports teams, among many more accounts and easily share content of their own with those that follow them. Athletic departments and teams have utilized Twitter to report breaking news, offer unique insights and provide team updates (Talty, 2011). Coaches and athletes have also created their own individual Twitter accounts to show their personality and to interact with fans (Talty, 2011).

Twitter had an average of 241 million monthly active users in 2013 ("Twitter Reports Fourth Quarter," 2014), including 18% of online U.S. adults (Brenner & Smith, 2013). Of the 18% of online U.S. adults that are active on Twitter, those aged 18-29 are the most popular user (Brenner & Smith, 2013).

Consumption Preferences for Attendance

With so many collegiate sports programs struggling to increase their fan base and attendance (Ingram & Snipes, 2007), people are continually trying to determine what factors motivate fans to come out to games. Previous studies have been completed in hopes of determining these factors, which are crucial in creating an effective and cost-efficient marketing strategy for sports programs and athletic departments (Ingram & Snipes, 2007). By understanding what factors lead to fans' consumption of sport and event attendance, marketing communications between athletic programs and their fans will not only be more effective, but may ultimately influence the entire marketing plan of the athletic program (Cunningham &

Kwon, 2003). Some of the motivational factors that have been determined to lead to fan attendance include satisfaction with the core product and event venue services (Trail, Anderson, & Fink, 2002) and loyalty and stadium design (Wakefield & Sloan, 1995). Other factors that have been discussed in the consumption of sport include social interaction, drama, escape and vicarious achievement (Kim, Trail, & Magnuson, 2013). In regards to consumption preferences, Cottrell and Wikman (2013) believe that the only way to stay competitive within a marketplace is to fulfill the "palate" of customers by listening to their needs. In addition, Heitman, Lehmann, Neslin & Stahl (2012) found that in order for a customer to translate the esteem that they feel toward a company into a purchase, the product that the company is promoting must be relevant to their needs.

By looking at these studies and others, athletic administrators and sports programs have looked to satisfy the needs and wants of their fans in order to sell their product and increase attendance. Mumford, Kane, and Maina (2004) provided six strategies that athletic programs could use to increase fan attendance at sporting events: (1) increase the value of your sporting event; (2) increase student engagement; (3) increase the fun factor (4) incorporate creative promotions and increased marketing; (5) increase publicity and exposure through a variety of media outlets; and (6) increase community focus. While these ideas may work for some athletic programs, in order to most effectively and successfully promote and market a sporting event to fans, teams must first find out what their fans want and what will get them to the event, and then provide that. For example, if a team knows that their fans want more creative promotions, they then can focus on developing more creative promotions in hopes of increasing attendance and engagement. Similarly, how looking at consumption preferences of fans in regards to attending a sporting event can provide athletic programs with the knowledge to more effectively promote

their events by trying to satisfy the wants of their fans, the same can be said for athletic programs and social media.

Previous Social Media Research

Previous research has focused on identifying the type of content that is being featured on social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook. Doran (2013) focused her study on NCAA Division I track programs and their use of Twitter. She determined that there were three categories of content that they provided: (1) meet related; (2) non-meet related; and (3) multimedia links. Similarly, Wallace-McRee (2012) did a content analysis of NFL teams' Facebook accounts and found that status updates, links, and pictures were the most frequently used types of content uploaded. Wallace-McRee (2012) also analyzed the amount and type of content provided by teams at different times throughout the year (during the season, pre-season and post-season). Wallace, Wilson and Miloch (2011) found similar results when doing a content analysis of Facebook use in the NCAA and Big 12 Conference. They too found a statistically significant difference in the types of content posted by season, in addition to the type of communication tools used and fan interaction.

Other studies that have been completed have focused on individual athletes and their use of sites such as Twitter and Facebook. Hambrick, Simmons, & Greenhalgh (2010) looked at nearly 2,000 tweets of professional athletes and placed them into six different categories: interactivity, diversion, information gathering, content, promotional, and fanship. Their findings showed that the athletes used Twitter mainly to engage and converse with their followers, as the researchers placed 34% of their sample of tweets into the interactivity category. The next highest category was diversion, or non-sport related content, which made up 28% of the athletes' tweets. Pegoraro (2010) found similar results when analyzing the most followed professional

athletes on Twitter over a seven day period. With a sample of 1,193 tweets, Pegoraro found that almost 50% (591) of the tweets fell into the fan interaction category, as athletes tweeted back and forth with followers. The athletes' tweets also included content about their personal lives (26.15%), business lives (19.87%), other sports (10.81%), pop culture (7.12%), their sport (5.2%), and other athletes (3.02%). While it is important to know what types of content teams and athletes are posting to their followers online, for marketing purposes it is essential that they know what their followers want to see.

CHAPTER III: METHODS

This research is an exploratory study to gain an understanding of the types of content that NCAA wrestling fans want to see on Twitter and Facebook. Responses to questions regarding NCAA wrestling fans preferences were collected via online survey.

Subjects

The population for this study was collegiate wrestling fans that follow NCAA wrestling teams on Twitter or Facebook. An online survey was distributed to the top 25 ranked teams in the Best of Brand Power Rankings (as determined by the National Wrestling Coaches Association), but was open to fans that follow any team outside of the top 25 ranking. Only participants that answered yes to following their favorite NCAA wrestling team on Twitter or Facebook were considered when analyzing data.

Instrumentation

Two online, anonymous surveys were utilized to approach this research. Both surveys were looked over by a panel of experts during the instrument development process to ensure that questions were appropriate and did not cause confusion among the reader. One survey was Facebook-based, and all questions related to following an NCAA wrestling team on Facebook. The second survey was Twitter-based, and all questions related to following an NCAA wrestling team on Twitter.

Questions that were included in the two surveys were designed to capture the content preferences of NCAA wrestling fans in regards to following their favorite teams on Facebook and Twitter. Simple demographic questions such as gender, age and affiliation were included in

order to explore and determine any differences in content preferences based on these demographic characteristics.

Following the demographic portion of the surveys, there were four sections; photos, videos, news stories, interaction. These questions included a 5-point Likert Scale (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree). In addition, a final section included questions (5-point Likert Scale) regarding the impact of social media on the respondents' feelings toward their favorite teams. This section was used to determine a connection, if any, between content and behavior.

An open-ended question was used at the end of the surveys to give the respondents an opportunity to include any additional information. No personal identifying information questions were included in these surveys in order to protect the identity of all participating subjects.

Procedures

Email addresses of the coaching staffs of the top 25 NCAA wrestling teams in the Best of Brand Power Rankings (as of February 1st, 2015) were obtained using staff directories from the teams' respective websites. Following the approval of the two online surveys, anonymous links to both were sent to each coaching staff through surveymonkey.com, along with an introductory letter requesting that they post the Facebook survey to their teams' Facebook profile, and the Twitter survey to their teams' Twitter profile. The surveys were open for twenty-eight days upon sending the initial email to coaching staffs. A single reminder email was sent to the coaches seven days prior to the surveys closing.

Date Analysis

In order to gain a better understanding of the demographic backgrounds of all participants, frequencies were run on the following information: favorite team, gender, age, and

affiliation. Also, descriptive statistics were utilized in order to determine overall mean scores. All analyses were run using SPSSv19 (IBM....). Alpha level was set to 0.05 a *priori.*

For research question 1, a within-subjects ANOVA was used to analyze any differences in the four content categories (photos, videos, news stories, interaction). When necessary, post-hoc Tukey analyses were utilized in order to determine what factors had a statistically significant difference between them.

For research question 2, t-tests and a one-way between measures ANOVA were utilized. The t-tests were used in determining any differences in content categories based on gender and affiliation. The one-way between measures ANOVA was used to determine any differences between content categories based on age. A post-hoc Tukey was run when necessary to find what age groups had a statistically significant difference among them.

For research question 3, a within-subjects ANOVA was used in a similar way to research question 1 to determine any differences between the content types (within each content category). Post-hoc Tukey analyses were run when necessary to determine statistically significant differences between the content types.

For research question 4, t-tests were used to analyze any differences between content types based on gender and affiliation. A one-way between measures ANOVA was used to analyze differences in content types based on age. A post-hoc Tukey was run when necessary to determine if the differences in age were statistically significant.

CHAPTER IV: MANUSCRIPT

Overview

As collegiate athletic departments continue to put an increased focus on revenue-generating sports such as football and basketball, it is essential for non-revenue sports to self-market in order to grow their fan base and increase attendance. Social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter provide collegiate athletic programs with a little-to-no-cost medium to communicate and interact with audiences and fans. However, it is crucial for teams to provide social media followers with content that coincides with their interests and positively influences their view of the team. Previous research on social media marketing analyzed the specific categorical content that collegiate athletic teams and individual athletes posted on social media, and examined the relationship between number of followers and team social media account practices. I have found no previous studies that have examined the content preferences of fans that follow teams on social media.

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Introduction

Non-revenue sports within intercollegiate athletics have historically faced many

challenges when trying to market their programs. In recent years, however, it has become even

more challenging for non-revenue programs, as athletic departments and administrators have

prioritized their financial decision making based on maximizing revenues by funneling the

majority of their budgets into men's basketball and football (Clarke, 2012). As a result, non-

revenue Olympic sports have been left with scarce resources and manpower to run their

programs. In some cases, the emphasis on revenue maximization has led to athletic departments

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their programs at a low cost. One area that Olympic sport programs have begun to emphasize is

in the development and marketing efforts of their brand (Cooper, 2014). More specifically, non-

revenue sport programs have started to invest in social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter

because of the low cost and potential upside. Social media allows these sport programs to spread

content to fans and connect and interact with current and potential stakeholders, all at a little-to-

no-cost expense. This interconnectivity with fans provides non-revenue programs the ability to

develop a brand equity and loyalty that can have a major impact on the success of programs and

sports as a whole.

Brand Equity. Brand equity is the additional value placed on a product because of its

brand name (Keller & Kotler, 2012), or simply, the benefits that a product achieves through the

power of its brand name (Heitmann, Lehmann, Neslin & Stahl, 2012). These added benefits are

the reason why organizations spend the time and resources to build up and promote their brand to

audiences and consumers. Branding is the most promising way to successfully differentiate

against competitors because to consumers, brands have an amplified social and emotional value (Chen, Chen, & Huang, 2012). "Although competitors may duplicate manufacturing processes and product designs, they cannot easily match lasting impressions left in the minds of individuals and organizations by years of product experience and marketing activity" (Keller & Kotler, 2012, p. 242). Successfully marketing an organization's brand can be an extremely effective way to develop a competitive advantage.

In addition to developing a competitive advantage, the study by Heitmann, Lehmann, Neslin and Stahl (2012) found that brand equity has a predictable and meaningful role in retaining and acquiring new customers. In essence they found that if a brand can win the hearts and minds of consumers, the organization will have an easier time with the retention and acquisition of consumers, ultimately leading to greater loyalty and increased sales.

An important component in the retention and acquisition of consumers is the necessity of relevance. Esteem alone does not drive a customer to make a purchase or to act. Only if the product is relevant to the consumer's needs will they translate the esteem they feel toward the brand into a purchase (Heitmann, Lehmann, Neslin & Stahl, 2012). Thus, identifying consumer needs and delivering products in order to satisfy those needs is essential to developing brand equity, retaining and acquiring consumers, and driving sales.

Social Media. Boyd and Ellison define social networking 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 users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system" (Boyd & Ellison, 2007, p. 211).

Social media has emerged as the latest branch of integrated marketing communications, which is the idea that organizations have followed that have allowed them to communicate

directly with their target markets (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Unlike integrated marketing communications, however, in which the organization attempts to use the elements of a promotional mix (advertising, public relations, direct marketing, etc.) to produce a unified consumer-based message (Boone & Kurtz, 2013), social media is consumer driven. Social media, which Blackshaw and Nazzaro (2004) refer to as consumer generated media, "describes a variety of new sources of online information that are created, initiated, circulated and used by consumers [with the] intent on educating each other about products, brands, services, personalities, and issues" (2004, p. 2).

If organizations and brands want to engage with consumers and increase their brand equity (Coyle, 2010), social media should be an integral part of their marketing mix. Not only does social media help build brand equity (Coyle, 2010), but also it provides organizations with a little-to-no-cost platform to create and deliver memorable marketing campaigns (Cottrell & Wikman, 2013).

College Athletic Departments and Social Media. The increased popularity of social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook has greatly impacted the sport industry (Bayne & Cianfrone, 2013). Social media allows sport organizations to reach fans in an efficient manner, and with the two-way communication nature of social media, sport organizations can be in constant contact with fans (Harris, Newman, Peck, & Wilhide, 2013). More specifically, social media provides two benefits to sport organizations; 1) allows the organization to communicate with their stakeholders and those interested in the organization; and 2) individuals and groups can easily share content that is delivered through social media sites with potential consumers (Cooper, 2012; Doran, 2013).

The relatively inexpensiveness of social media is why it has been an ideal marketing tool for collegiate athletic departments across the country (Tomko, 2011). No matter the size or budget of the school, athletic departments have begun to utilize social media on a daily basis and have made it an integral part of their marketing plans (Tomko, 2011). One of the main reasons for this is so athletic departments can build relationships with fans and provide them with behind the scenes content that they wouldn't be able to get elsewhere (Talty, 2011).

More specifically within athletic departments, individual collegiate teams have begun to create their own social media sites and hubs (Laird, 2012). Individual teams have capitalized on using their own social media sites in order to create a more intimate experience for their fans and increase exposure (Laird, 2012). Coaches have also begun to utilize social media as a way to recruit players, in addition to promoting their program (Talty, 2011).

Not only is social media the most inexpensive marketing tool for athletic departments and teams, but also it can be the most effective if implemented correctly (Cottrell & Wikman, 2013). The interactive nature of social media has given teams an unprecedented way to reach out to and engage with fans in order to build personal relationships and enhance a team's brand equity (Tomko, 2011). As teams continue to engage with fans on a daily basis with personal interaction, fans become more aware of a team's product and brand. It is that increased awareness that allows fans to become comfortable with the team and their brand, which in turn creates more loyalty on their end (Cottrell & Wikman, 2013). When interaction and engagement with fans is made a priority, the likelihood that your followers have trust and loyalty in your organization and brand is far greater (Cooper, 2012).

Just as easily as social media allows teams to connect with their fans, it also allows for fans of a team to connect with one another. Teams can now harness this and use it to their

advantage in a way that was once never possible (Coyle, 2010). Once teams share content on

social media to their fans and followers and those followers become aware of it and engaged,

they can now express their thoughts to other fans and consumers (Fodor & Hoffman, 2010). It

allows the fans to "create personalized spaces where they can express support for their favorite

[teams] and discuss sports" (Hambrick, et al., 2010, p. 455). Fans that already have positive

feelings and attitudes toward a team can now communicate their positivity to new and potential

consumers both online and offline (Fodor & Hoffman, 2010). This helps to spread the content

that a team shares to those that may not be fans of the team, and creates the brand awareness that

can lead to the acquisition of new fans.

Two of the most popular social media outlets, Facebook and Twitter have led the way in

revolutionizing the way that businesses and teams can reach their target markets, and have

"introduced a new twist to the classic relationship between companies and their endorsers"

(Masteralexis & McKelvey, 2013)**.**

Facebook. Facebook is a social media website that was founded in 2004. Their mission

is "to give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected" (Facebook

About, 2014, para. 2). It's users utilize the site to "stay connected with friends and family, to

discover what's going on in the world, and to share and express what's important to them"

(Facebook About, 2014, para. 2).

Facebook pages, unlike individual profiles, "are designed for businesses, brands, public

figures, organizations and administrators to typically oversee their day-to-day operations"

("Facebook Launches Redesigned Pages," 2011, para. 4). These pages allow the administrators

to get notifications when fans interact with their page by liking or commenting on posts or

photos. Pages also give administrators the capability of commenting on their fans' photos and

posts, which creates a platform for fan engagement ("Facebook Launches Redesigned Pages," 2011). One of the most effective tools that Facebook pages have is the targeting of posts. Organizations can target their Facebook posts to segments of fans based on categories such as age, gender, education, location and many more (Constine, 2012). The page post targeting allows organizations to publish content differently to their different fans, and word posts differently in order to maximize relevancy (Constine, 2012).

Athletic departments have created pages not only for the department as a whole, but for each of its individual athletic teams, with some schools even creating pages for their mascots (Tomko, 2011).

Twitter. Twitter is a social media website that allows users to compose and post messages, referred to as "tweets," consisting of 140 characters or less ("Getting Started with Twitter," 2013). According to co-founder Jack Dorsey, Twitter was "inspired by the concepts of immediacy, transparency, and approachability" (Dorsey, 2010, paragraph 2). Twitter's current mission is "to give everyone the power to create and share ideas and information instantly, without barriers" (About Twitter, Inc., 2014).

Tweets can include photos, videos and links to other webpages in addition to the words posted. Users on the site can choose to follow friends, celebrities, businesses and sports teams, among many more accounts and easily share content of their own with those that follow them. Athletic departments and teams have utilized Twitter to report breaking news, offer unique insights and provide team updates (Talty, 2011). Coaches and athletes have also created their own individual Twitter accounts to show their personality and to interact with fans (Talty, 2011).

Consumption Preferences for Attendance. With so many collegiate sports programs struggling to increase their fan base and attendance (Ingram & Snipes, 2007), people are

continually trying to determine what factors motivate fans to come out to games. Previous studies have been completed in hopes of determining these factors, which are crucial in creating an effective and cost-efficient marketing strategy for sports programs and athletic departments (Ingram & Snipes, 2007). By understanding what factors lead to fans' consumption of sport and event attendance, marketing communications between athletic programs and their fans will not only be more effective, but may ultimately influence the entire marketing plan of the athletic program (Cunningham & Kwon, 2003). In regards to consumption preferences, Cottrell and Wikman (2013) believe that the only way to stay competitive within a marketplace is to fulfill the "palate" of customers by listening to their needs. In addition, Heitman, Lehmann, Neslin & Stahl (2012) found that in order for a customer to translate the esteem that they feel toward a company into a purchase, the product that the company is promoting must be relevant to their needs.

By looking at these studies and others, athletic administrators and sports programs have looked to figure out and satisfy the needs and wants of their fans in order to sell their product and increase attendance. In order to most effectively and successfully promote and market a sporting event to fans, athletic departments and teams must first find out what their fans want and then provide that. Similarly, how looking at consumption preferences of fans in regards to attending a sporting event can provide athletic programs with the knowledge to more effectively promote their events by trying to satisfy the wants of their fans, the same can be said for athletic programs and social media.

Previous Social Media Research. Previous research on social media has focused on identifying the type of content that is being featured on social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook. Doran (2013) focused her study on NCAA Division I track programs and their use of

Twitter. She determined that there were three categories of content that they provided: (1) meet related; (2) non-meet related; and (3) multimedia links. Similarly, Wallace-McRee (2012) did a content analysis of NFL teams' Facebook accounts and found that status updates, links, and pictures were the most frequently used types of content uploaded. Wallace-McRee (2012) also analyzed the amount and type of content provided by teams at different times throughout the year (during the season, pre-season and post-season).   Wallace, Wilson and Miloch (2011) found similar results when doing a content analysis of Facebook use in the NCAA and Big 12 Conference. They too found a statistically significant difference in the types of content posted by season, in addition to the type of communication tools used and fan interaction.

Other studies that have been completed have focused on individual athletes and their use of sites such as Twitter and Facebook. Hambrick, Simmons, & Greenhalgh (2010) looked at nearly 2,000 tweets of professional athletes and placed them into six different categories: interactivity, diversion, information gathering, content, promotional, and fanship. Pegoraro (2010) conducted similar research when analyzing the most followed professional athletes on Twitter over a seven-day period. Pegoraro placed the athletes' tweets into several categories including fan interaction, personal, business, other sports, pop culture, his/her sport, and other athletes.

Method

Subjects. The population for this study was collegiate wrestling fans that follow NCAA wrestling teams on Twitter or Facebook. An online survey was distributed to the top 25 ranked teams in the Best of Brand Power Rankings (as determined by the National Wrestling Coaches Association), but was open to fans that follow any team outside of the top 25 ranking. Only

participants that answered yes to following their favorite NCAA wrestling team on Twitter or Facebook were considered when analyzing data.

Instrumentation. Two online, anonymous surveys were utilized to approach this research. Both surveys were looked over by a panel of experts during the instrument development process to ensure that questions were appropriate and did not cause confusion among the reader. One survey was Facebook-based, and all questions related to following an NCAA wrestling team on Facebook. The second survey was Twitter-based, and all questions related to following an NCAA wrestling team on Twitter.

Questions that were included in the two surveys were designed to capture the content preferences of NCAA wrestling fans in regards to following their favorite teams on Facebook and Twitter. Simple demographic questions such as gender, age and affiliation were included in order to explore and determine any differences in content preferences based on these demographic characteristics.

Following the demographic portion of the surveys, there were four sections; photos, videos, news stories, interaction. These questions included a 5-point Likert Scale (1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree). In addition, a final section included questions (5-point Likert Scale) regarding the impact of social media on the respondents' feelings toward their favorite teams. This section was used to determine a connection, if any, between content and behavior.

An open-ended question was used at the end of the surveys to give the respondents an opportunity to include any additional information. No personal identifying information questions were included in these surveys in order to protect the identity of all participating subjects.

Procedures. Email addresses of the coaching staffs of the top 25 NCAA wrestling teams in the Best of Brand Power Rankings (as of February 1st, 2015) were obtained using staff directories from the teams' respective websites. Following the approval of the two online surveys, anonymous links to both were sent to each coaching staff through surveymonkey.com, along with an introductory letter requesting that they post the Facebook survey to their teams' Facebook profile, and the Twitter survey to their teams' Twitter profile. The surveys were open for twenty-eight days upon sending the initial email to coaches. A single reminder email was sent to the coaches seven days prior to the surveys closing.

Date Analysis. In order to gain a better understanding of the demographic backgrounds of all participants, frequencies were run on the following information: favorite team, gender, age, and affiliation. Also, descriptive statistics were utilized in order to determine overall mean scores. All analyses were run using SPSSv19 (IBM….). Alpha level was set to 0.05 a *priori.*

For research question 1, a within-subjects ANOVAs were used to analyze any differences in the four content categories (photos, videos, news stories, interaction). When necessary, post-hoc Tukey analyses were utilized in order to determine what factors had a statistically significant difference between them.

For research question 2, t-tests and a one-way between measures ANOVA were utilized. The t-tests were used in determining any differences in content categories based on gender and affiliation. The one-way between measures ANOVA was used to determine any differences between content categories based on age. A post-hoc Tukey was run when necessary to find what age groups had a statistically significant difference among them.

For research question 3, 4 separate within-subjects ANOVAs were used in a similar way to research question 1 to determine any differences between the content types (within each

content category). Post-hoc Tukey analyses were run when necessary to determine statistically significant differences between the content types.

For research question 4, t-tests were used to analyze any differences between content types based on gender and affiliation. A one-way between measures ANOVA was used to analyze differences in content types based on age. A post-hoc Tukey was run when necessary to determine if the differences in age were statistically significant.

Results

The focus of this study was to examine the differences in content preferences of fans that follow wrestling programs on Facebook and Twitter, and then analyze those differences based on the demographics of the fans.

Facebook. There were a total of 318 subjects who completed the online Facebook survey. Of these 318 respondents, 303 (95.3%) answered "yes" to following their favorite team on Facebook, and were therefor used in the data analysis. The 15 (4.7%) who responded "no" to following their favorite teams were excluded. See Table 1 for demographic data.

Facebook RQ1. To determine if there were differences in the content categories fans preferred, participants were asked to indicate their feelings on 15 statements on a 5-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree; 5=strongly agree). We observed a significant difference in preferences for content categories ($p<.000$) among the four content types. Therefore, a post-hoc Tukey ($D_{crit}=0.321$) analysis was utilized. Statistically significant differences between the following content categories were observed:

- Photos preferred over interactions (differences of means=5.402)

- Videos preferred over interactions (difference of means=5.445)

- News stories preferred over interactions (difference of means=5.667)

See Table 1.1 for descriptive statistics.

Facebook RQ2. To determine any differences in content category preferences based on demographics, t-tests were run for gender and affiliation. No statistically significant differences were found for gender (p>.05). For affiliation type, statistically significant differences were found in fans and parents. Non-fans rated photos (t=2.601. p<.05), videos (t=3.879, p<.05), news stories (t=3.295, p<.05) and interaction (t=2.398, p<.05) significantly higher than fans. Parents rated photos (t=-0.257, p<.05), videos (t=-3.99, p<.05) and news stories (t=-3.17, p<.05) significantly higher than non-parents (see Table 2.1).

When focusing on differences in age groups, photos (F=3.437, p<.05), videos (F=3.575, p<.05), and news stories (F=5.917, p<.05) were all found to be significantly different. Utilizing a post-hoc Tukey, it was determined that those aged 26-35 rated photos and videos significantly lower than those aged 36-45 and 46-55. The respondents in age group 26-35 also rated news stories significantly lower than those in age groups 36-45, 46-55, and 55 and up (See Table 2.2 and Table 2.3).

Facebook RQ3. To determine differences between content types (within each of the four content categories), four separate within-subjects ANOVAs were performed. Photos, videos and news stories (all p<.05) prompted post-hoc Tukey calculations (see Table 3.1). For photos, in-match, behind the scenes and graphics were all rated significantly higher when compared to social. In-match and behind the scenes were also rated significantly higher than graphics. For videos, highlights rated significantly higher than funny, behind the scenes and interviews. Interviews and behind the scenes were also rated significantly higher than funny videos. When looking at news stories, recaps were rated significantly higher than news stories (see Table 3.2). There were no significant differences when comparing the interaction content types.

Facebook RQ4. To determine any differences in content types based on demographics, t- tests were used for gender and affiliation, as well as a one-way between measures ANOVA for age groups. For gender, females rated the following significantly higher than males; social photos (t=-2.608, p<.05), graphics (t=-2.174, p<.05), funny videos (t=-3.726, p<.05), and profile pieces (t=-2.665, p<.05) (see Table 4.1).

For affiliation, there were significant differences when looking at fans/non-fans and parents/non-parents. Non-fans rated the following content types significantly higher than fans: in-match photos (t=2.17, p<.05), social photos (t=3.03, p<.05), highlights (t=2.35, p<.05), behind the scenes videos (t=2.75, p<.05), video interviews (t=2.71, p<.05), funny videos (t=4.84, p<.05), recaps (t=2.48, p<.05), news stories (t=3.43, p<.05), team updates (t=3.18, p<.05), profile pieces (t=3.02, p<.05), liking comments (t=2.73, p<.05), and giveaways (t=2.81, p<.05) (see Table 4.2).

Parents rated the following content types significantly higher than non-parents: in-match photos (t=-3.48, p<.05), social photos (t=-3.32, p<.05), highlight videos (t=-2.33, p<.05), behind the scenes videos (t=-3.35, p<.05), video interviews (t=-3.52, p<.05), funny videos (t=-3.26, p<.05), recaps (t=-3.09, p<.05), news stories (t=-3.2, p<.05), team updates (t=-3.06, p<.05), profile pieces (t=-2.51, p<.05), and liking comments (t=-2.47) (see Table 4.2).

When looking at content types by age groups, in-match photos (F=3.16, p<.05), social photos (F=4.11, p<.05), highlight videos (F=3.31, p<.05), behind the scenes videos (F=2.78, p<.05), interviews (F=4.62, p<.05), recaps (F=4.63, p<.05), news stories (F=5.18, p<.05), team updates (F=5.88, p<.05), profile pieces (F=4.97, p<.05), and giveaways (F=3.07, p<.05) all were found to have significant differences. A post-hoc Tukey was conducted and revealed differences when comparing the 26-35 year old age group to the other age groups (see Table 4.3 and Table 4.4)

Twitter. There were a total of 250 subjects who completed the online Facebook survey.

Of these 250 respondents, 243 (97.2%) answered "yes" to following their favorite team on Facebook, and were therefor used in the data analysis. The 7 (2.8%) who responded "no" to following their favorite teams were excluded. See Table 5 for demographic data.

Twitter RQ1. To determine if there were differences in the content categories fans preferred, participants were asked to indicate their feelings on 16 statements on a 5-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree; 5=strongly agree). The resulting p-value (p<.000) of the within-subjects ANOVA prompted a post-hoc Tukey (D_{crit}=0.434), which found statistically significant differences between the following content categories:

- Photos and interaction (differences of means=.467)

- Videos and interaction (difference of means=.669)

- News stories and interaction (difference of means=1.072)

- News stories and photos (difference of means=.605

See Table 5.1 for descriptive statistics.

Twitter RQ2. To determine any differences in content category preferences based on demographics, t-tests were run for gender and affiliation. Females rated photos significantly higher than males (*t*=-2.093, *p*<.05) (See Table 6.1). No significant differences were found when looking at age. For affiliation, statistically significant differences were found in students and non-students. Students rated photos (*t*=-2.683, *p*<.05) and interaction (*t*=-2.078, *p*<.05) significantly higher than non-students (see Table 6.2).

Twitter RQ3. To determine differences between content types (within each of the four content categories), four separate within-subjects ANOVAs were performed. Photos, videos, news stories, and interaction (all p<.05) prompted post-hoc Tukey calculations (see Table 7.1). When looking at photos, in-match and behind the scenes were rated significantly higher when compared to social. For videos, highlight was rated significantly higher when compared to the

other three content types (funny, behind the scenes, interviews). Behind the scenes videos and interviews were also rated significantly higher when compared to funny videos (see Table 7.2). There were no significant differences when comparing interaction content types.

Twitter RQ4. To determine any differences in content types based on demographics, t-tests were used for gender and affiliation, as well as a one-way between measures ANOVA for age groups. When looking at gender, it was found that females rated the following significantly higher than males: in-match photos ($t=-2.381$, $p<.05$), behind the scenes photos ($t=-2.613$, $p<.05$), social photos ($t=-3.783$, $p<.05$), graphics ($t=-2.008$, $p<.05$), funny videos ($t=-2.623$, $p<.05$), retweet/favoriting ($t=-2.159$, $p<.05$), and giveaways ($t=-2.341$, $p<.05$) (see Table 8.1).

For affiliation, there were significant differences when looking at students vs. non-students and faculty/staff vs non-faculty/staff. Students rated in-match photos ($t=-2.78$, $p<.05$), behind the scenes photos ($t=-2.7$, $p<.05$), social photos ($t=-2.17$, $p<.05$), RT/favorite ($t=-3.67$, $p<.05$), and giveaways ($t=-3.37$, $p<.05$) significantly higher than non-students. Faculty/staff rated graphics significantly higher than non-faculty/staff ($t=-3.69$, $p<.05$), but rated video interviews significantly lower than non-faculty/staff ($t=2.097$, $p<.05$) (see Table 8.2).

Intentions. To complete the survey, questions were included to get an idea of how content posted on Facebook and Twitter directly affects the participants' feelings and actions towards their favorite team. A 5-point Likert scaled was used (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree), to determine these feelings. When combining both Facebook and Twitter results, we found the following (see Table 9):

a. 79% of fans agree that seeing content they enjoy on Facebook and Twitter increases the likelihood that they will attend a future event.

b. 81% of fans agree that seeing content they enjoy on Facebook and Twitter will increase

their fandom for their favorite teams.

c. 79% of fans agree that seeing content they enjoy on Facebook and Twitter will increase their support for their favorite teams.

d. 71% of fans agree that seeing content they enjoy on Facebook and Twitter will increase their loyalty to their favorite teams.

Discussion

The results of this study provide tangible data that NCAA wrestling coaching staffs could use to better market themselves through their Facebook and Twitter profiles. Specifically, it gives coaching staffs and teams an idea of how to better target specific fan groups and demographics.

Differences in Content Categories

From the results regarding differences in overall content categories (photos, videos, news stories and interactions), we see a similar theme between Facebook and Twitter. In both surveys, interactions were rated significantly lower when compared to the other three content categories. This means that overall, fans are more interested in the actual content posted by teams, rather than interacting with the team accounts. Although it was rated significantly lower, interactions was still overall rated high on the 5-point scale (above 4), so teams should still interact with their fan base, but just know that they are seeking those photos, videos and news stories about the team and their wrestlers more than anything.

Digging a little deeper into content categories, we begin to see where certain demographics of fans tend to differ in regards to what they like seeing posted by teams. For Facebook, the differences came when comparing students to non-students, and parents to non-parents. Those who didn't classify themselves as fans overall rated each of the content categories significantly higher than those that called themselves fans. This is particularly interesting when

you think about acquiring new fans. One can assume that fans of the team are regularly keeping up with the team outside of the online community, whether it's through attending matches or following them through other mediums. This isn't to say that fans don't like seeing these categories, as they overall rated them high (above 4). For non-fans however, who may not keep up with the team as much as fan, seeing photos, videos, news stories and interactions may be their only insight into the team, and therefor more interesting and entertaining to them. This directly relates back to Heitmann, Lehmann, Neslin and Stahl (2012), who attribute a successful brand equity to the acquisition and retention of fans. If teams and coaches can provide, or continue to provide, photos, videos, news stories and interactions to their followers (fans and non-fans), it will continue to grow their brand with them, and likely lead to not only retaining those who are already fans, but also help in acquiring new fans.

When we look at parents of current or former wrestlers on the team, we can see that they rated photos, videos and news stories significantly higher than participants who did not classify themselves as parents. This should not seem surprising. Parents who currently have wrestlers on a team love seeing what the team (and their child) is up to. Especially if the parents are not local to the team, it provides them easily accessible insights of the team and their child. Where this could have a huge impact for teams and coaching staffs is the recruiting world. If parents of recruits can look online at a potential team for their child and see that they constantly upload photos of the team working out, videos of the team doing community service and news stories on the academic successes of the team, it will have a positive impact for how that parent sees the potential team's brand, and starts to build a brand equity with that parent. Having a successful social media presences should be an integral part of any organization's marketing mix (Coyle, 2010) because it allows the organization to create and deliver marketing materials that followers can embrace. If teams and coaching staffs can establish this positive brand equity with a

recruit's parents, it can ultimately have a positive impact when the recruit and his parents choose what team he/she wants to wrestle for.

When looking at Twitter, we can see differences between students and non-students. Students ultimately rated photos and interaction significantly higher than non-students. This could provide a bridge for teams and coaching staffs across the country to start to engage the student community, which could potentially be a big part of a team's fan base. For coaches, try to start a conversation with students and interact with students who tweet at your team. Reply back to them, engage with them and encourage them to come to your matches to support the team.

Differences in Content Types

For both Facebook and Twitter regarding differences in content types, videos and photos showed significant differences. Highlight videos were rated significantly higher when compared to funny, behind the scenes and interviews on both platforms. Highlight videos are a great way for teams and coaching staffs to get followers excited about an upcoming match or tournament. Again for Facebook, non-fans and parents rated all videos and social/in-match photos significantly higher than fans and non-parents. This supports the thought that non-fans and parents are seeking the behind the scenes, up close and personal insight into the teams as they practice, do community service, compete and live outside the wrestling room. Again, this is an ideal outlet to seek new fans and new recruits. By posting this kind of content, your brand will grow, leading to greater brand equity and loyalty to the team (Hietmann, Lehmann, Neslin & Stahl, 2012).

Satisfying the Palate of your Followers

Through this study, we can see how followers of NCAA wrestling teams on Twitter and Facebook are similar, but also differ from one another when looking at content types or content

categories such as photos, videos, news stories and interactions. Overall, participants in this study overwhelmingly rated all content categories and content types above 4 on the 5-point Likert scale, stating that they agree to strongly agree that seeing these types of content satisfies them, and that they enjoy seeing it posted. For coaches and coaching staffs that already do a great job at providing content to their followers, this provides an insight that it does have a positive impact with those that follow your teams. If teams are looking to target future recruits and their parents, provide that demographic insights into the team. If a team wants to increase students at their home matches, try to interact with them via social media, and engage with them to see how to get them to matches…they want this type of interaction. Cottrell and Wikman (2013) strongly believe that in order for an organization to compete with others in the same marketplace, it must fulfill the "palate" of its customers by listening to their needs. If NCAA wrestling teams and coaching staffs want to stay relevant and competitive in the field of social media, they need to listen to their followers, and then deliver on what they want.

Impact on Attendance, Fandom, Support and Loyalty

The final portion of the survey asked participants to relate seeing content on Facebook and Twitter that they enjoy to their feelings and intentions toward the team. The overwhelming majority of respondents directly related that seeing content they like and want has a positive correlation to increasing their attendance at matches, fandom of the team, support of the team and loyalty to the team. Fandom, support and loyalty all positively influence a team's brand equity and can have a positive impact on recruiting, fundraising, brand awareness, fan engagement and team success. If all of these fall in line in addition to increased attendance, the NCAA wrestling programs across the country can be seen as a valuable asset to their athletic departments, and move wrestling from a potential sport to be cut, right to the forefront of how a NCAA athletics program should operate. The value that social media brings to programs, and its

access to team followers provide programs, small budget or large budget, to effectively and efficiently market themselves. It allows them to drive the conversation and positively impact their program moving forward.

Limitations and Future Research

This study was limited to NCAA wrestling programs and distributed only to the top 25 teams in the Best of Brand Power Rankings. The survey and study could not only be expanded to all NCAA wrestling teams, but also to different collegiate Olympic sports throughout the country. Although this study cannot be generalized for other sports, the positive impact that effective social media marketing has had on the top 25 Best of Brand wrestling teams may be able to translate to Olympic sport programs that are facing similar sustainability challenges that wrestling programs face.

I also think it would be interesting to look further into the intentions results of this study and potentially expand that into another survey or case study. A survey similar to the two involved in this study could be developed to find out any significant differences based on the demographics of participants, to see if certain groups feel stronger than another group. A case study could also be conducted if one were interested in targeting a specific group (students, parents, donors, etc.) as it relates to attendance, loyalty, fandom, and support. The targeted group could be shown different types of content, and then express any impact it would have on their attendance, loyalty, fandom or support.

Table 1

Demographic information of Facebook survey respondents.

	%	*n*
Gender		
Male	70.6%	214
Female	28.7%	87
Did not respond	.7%	2
Age Group		
18-25	16.5%	50
26-35	18.2%	55
36-45	27.7%	84
46-55	25.4%	77
55+	11.2%	34
Did not respond	1.0%	3
Team Affiliation*		
Fan	62.0%	188
Alumni	14.5%	44
Parent	19.1%	58
Student	7.9%	24
Faculty/Staff	6.6%	20
Donor	6.9%	21
Other	9.9%	30

*Respondents could choose more than one answer.

Table 1.1

Differences in Facebook content categories based on overall sums.

	Mean	SD
Category		
Photo	18.488	2.698
Videos	18.531	2.652
News Stories	18.753	2.648
Interaction	13.086	2.701

Table 2.1

Group statistics for Facebook content categories based affiliation.

	N	Mean	SD
Photos			
Fan	174	18.20	3.09
Non-fan	105	18.96	1.80
Parent	54	19.11	1.71
Non-parent	225	18.38	2.87
Videos			
Fan	174	18.12	3.04
Non-fan	105	19.21	1.64
Parent	54	19.44	1.56
Non-parent	225	18.31	2.81
News Stories			
Fan	174	18.41	3.09
Non-fan	105	19.32	1.53
Parent	54	19.43	1.34
Non-parent	225	18.59	2.85
Interaction			
Fan	174	12.79	2.84
Non-fan	105	13.58	2.38

Table 2.2

Descriptives for Facebook content categories based on age.

	N	Mean	SD
Photos			
18-25	46	18.61	2.82
26-35	50	17.26	3.81
36-45	76	18.78	2.52
46-55	73	18.92	1.82
56+	31	18.65	2.01
Videos			
18-25	46	18.52	2.54
26-35	50	17.36	3.65
36-45	76	18.86	2.58
46-55	73	19.05	1.68
55+	31	18.45	2.53
News Stories			
18-25	46	18.43	2.83
26-35	50	17.30	4.00
36-45	76	19.05	2.42
46-55	73	19.44	1.36
55+	31	19.16	1.57

Table 2.3

Multiple comparisons for Facebook content categories based on age.

			Mean Difference	P
Photos	**(I) Age**	**(J) Age**		
	26-35	18-25	-1.35	.096
		36-45	-1.52	.016
		46-55	-1.66	.007
		56+	-1.39	.153
Videos				
	26-35	18-25	-1.16	.188
		36-45	-1.50	.015
		46-55	-1.69	.004
		56+	-1.09	.355
News Stories				
	26-35	18-25	-1.13	.198
		36-45	-1.75	.002
		46-55	-2.19	.000
		56+	-1.86	.015

Table 3.1

Post-hoc Tukey results for differences in Facebook content types.

	Type	Type	Mean Difference	D_{crit}
Photos				
	Social	In-match	-.366	.110
		Behind the scenes	-.265	.110
		Graphics	-.150	.110
	Graphics	Behind the scenes	-.115	.110
		In-match	-.215	.110
Videos				
	Highlights	Funny	.376	.104
		Behind the scenes	.219	.104
		Interviews	.186	.104
	Funny	Interviews	-.190	.104
		Behind the scenes	-.157	.104
News Stories				
	Recaps	News stories	.068	.065

Table 3.2

Descriptives for content types.

	N	Mean	SD
Photos			
In-match	279	4.79	.68
Behind the scenes	279	4.69	.75
Social	279	4.43	.97
Graphics	279	4.58	.79
Videos			
Highlight	279	4.83	.64
Behind the scenes	279	4.61	.80
Interviews	279	4.64	.74
Funny	279	4.45	.92
News Stories			
Recaps	279	4.72	.69
News Stories	279	4.66	.72
Team Updates	279	4.70	.70
Profile pieces	279	4.67	.73
Interaction			
Likes comments	279	4.35	.97
Giveaways	279	4.38	.99
Replies	279	4.35	1.04

Table 4.1

Group statistics for Facebook content types based on gender.

	N	Mean	SD
Photos: Social			
Male	198	4.34	1.02
Female	79	4.65	.80
Photos: Graphics			
Male	198	4.53	.85
Female	79	4.72	.60
Videos: Funny			
Male	198	4.35	.99
Female	79	4.72	.62
News Stories: Profile Pieces			
Male	198	4.61	.78
Female	79	4.84	.57

Table 4.2

Group statistics for Facebook content types based on affiliation.

	N	Mean	SD
Photos: In-match			
Fan	174	4.74	.80
Non-fan	105	4.89	.35
Parent	54	4.96	.27
Non-parent	225	4.75	.73
Photos: Social			
Fan	174	4.30	1.04
Non-fan	105	4.69	.81
Parent	54	4.74	.71
Non-parent	225	4.35	1.02
Videos: Highlights			
Fan	174	4.77	.77
Non-fan	105	4.93	.3
Parent	54	4.94	.30
Non-parent	225	4.8	.69
Videos: Behind the scenes			
Fan	174	4.52	.59
Non-fan	105	4.76	.60
Parent	54	4.85	.49
Non-parent	225	4.55	.84
Videos: Interviews			
Fan	174	4.56	.84
Non-fan	105	4.78	.54
Parent	54	4.89	.50
Non-parent	225	4.58	.78
Videos: Funny			
Fan	174	4.28	1.04
Non-fan	105	4.74	.57
Parent	54	4.76	.73
Non-parent	225	4.38	.95
News stories: Recaps			
Fan	174	4.66	.81
Non-fan	105	4.84	.42
Parent	54	4.89	.32
Non-parent	225	4.65	.75
News stories: News stories			

Fan	174	4.56	.84
Non-fan	105	4.82	.44
Parent	54	4.85	.41
Non-parent	225	4.61	.77
News stories: Team updates			
Fan	174	4.62	.81
Non-fan	105	4.85	.41
Parent	54	4.87	.34
Non-parent	225	4.66	.75
News stories: Profile pieces			
Fan	174	4.58	.84
Non-fan	105	4.82	.48
Parent	54	4.82	.48
Non-parent	225	4.64	.78
Interaction: Likes comments			
Fan	174	4.24	1.04
Non-fan	105	4.54	.82
Parent	54	4.59	.74
Non-parent	225	4.29	1.02
Interaction: Giveaways			
Fan	12.79	4.26	1.04
Non-fan	105	4.58	.85

Table 4.3

Multiple comparisons for Facebook content types based on age.

	(I) Age	(J) Age	Mean Difference	P
Photos: In-Match				
	26-35	46-55	-.40	.010
		56+	-.42	.049
Photos: Social				
	26-35	18-25	-.60	.017
		36-45	-.59	.007
		46-55	-.61	.005
		56+	-.61	.042
Videos: Highlights				
	26-35	46-55	-.41	.004
Videos: Behind the scenes				
	26-35	36-45	-.40	.045
		46-55	-.44	.021
Videos: Interviews				
	26-35	36-45	-.50	.002
		46-55	-.48	.003
News Stories: Recaps				
	26-35	36-45	-.42	.006
		46-55	-.50	.001
		55+	-.43	.050
News stories: News stories				
	26-35	36-45	-.46	.003
		46-55	-.52	.001
		55+	-.44	.050
News Stories: Team updates				
	26-35	36-45	-.46	.002
		46-55	-.56	.000
		55+	-.52	.008
News stories: Profile pieces				
	26-35	36-45	-.41	.016
		46-55	-.56	.000
		55+	-.47	.033
Interaction: Giveaways				
	55+	18-25	-.63	.044
		36-45	-.58	.044

Table 4.4

Descriptives for Facebook content types based on age.

	N	Mean	SD
Photos: In Match			
26-35	50	4.52	1.07
46-55	73	4.92	.33
56+	31	4.94	.25
Photos: Social			
18-25	46	4.54	.94
26-35	50	3.94	1.24
36-45	76	4.53	.90
46-55	73	4.55	.80
55+	31	4.55	.85
Videos: Highlights			
26-35	50	4.56	1.01
46-55	73	4.97	.33
Videos: Behind the scenes			
26-35	50	4.30	1.04
36-45	76	4.70	.71
46-55	73	4.74	.58
Videos: Interviews			
26-35	50	4.30	.95
36-45	76	4.80	.65
46-55	73	4.78	.45
News stories: Recaps			
26-35	50	4.38	1.05
36-45	76	4.80	.61
46-55	73	4.88	.44
55+	31	4.81	.40
News stories: News stories			
26-35	50	4.30	1.04
36-45	76	4.76	.63
46-55	73	4.82	.42
56+	31	4.74	.51
News stories: Team updates			
26-35	50	4.32	1.02
36-45	76	4.78	.65
46-55	73	4.88	.37
55+	31	4.84	.45

News stories: Profile Pieces

26-35	50	4.30	1.06
36-45	76	4.71	.59
46-55	73	4.86	.42
55+	31	4.77	.56

Interaction: Giveaways

18-25	46	4.57	.78
36-45	76	4.51	.89
55+	31	3.94	1.18

Table 5

Demographic information of Twitter survey respondents.

	%	*n*
Gender		
Male	80.7%	196
Female	17.7%	43
Did not respond	1.6%	4
Age Group		
18-25	21%	51
26-35	23.9%	58
36-45	24.7%	60
46-55	20.6%	50
55+	6.6%	16
Did not respond	3.3%	8
Team Affiliation*		
Fan	69.1%	168
Alumni	10.3%	25
Parent	14%	34
Student	10.3%	25
Faculty/Staff	5.8%	14
Donor	9.1%	22
Other	10.3%	25

*Respondents could choose more than one answer.

Table 5.1

Differences in Twitter content categories based on overall sums.

	Mean	SD
Category		
Photo	18.183	3.030
Videos	18.384	2.927
News Stories	18.789	2.655
Interaction	17.716	3.412

Table 6.1

Group statistics for Twitter content categories based on gender.

	N	Mean	SD
Photos			
Male	164	17.91	3.09
Female	41	19.27	2.57

Table 6.2

Group statistics for Twitter content categories based affiliation.

	N	Mean	SD
Photos			
Student	22	19.05	1.29
Non-student	186	18.08	3.16
Interaction			
Student	22	18.95	1.81
Non-student	186	17.57	3.53

Table 7.1

Post-hoc Tukey results for differences in Twitter content types.

			Mean Difference	D_{crit}
Photos	**Type**	**Type**		
	Social	In-match	-.22	.19
		Behind the scenes	-.22	.19
Videos				
	Highlights	Funny	.30	.11
		Behind the scenes	.16	.11
		Interviews	.16	.11
	Funny	Interviews	-.14	.11
		Behind the scenes	-.14	.11

Table 7.2

Descriptives for Twitter content types.

	N	Mean	SD
Photos			
In-match	208	4.63	.79
Behind the scenes	208	4.63	.84
Social	208	4.41	.94
Graphics	208	4.52	.86
Videos			
Highlight	208	4.75	.72
Behind the scenes	208	4.59	.85
Interviews	208	4.59	.81
Funny	208	4.45	.91
News Stories			
Recaps	208	4.72	.70
News Stories	208	4.67	.71
Team Updates	208	4.73	.66
Profile pieces	208	4.67	.74
Interaction			
RT/favorite	208	4.52	.94
Followed by	208	4.31	1.11
Giveaways	208	4.43	.93
Replies	208	4.45	1.01

Table 8.1

Group statistics for Twitter content types based on gender.

	N	Mean	SD
Photos: In-match			
Male	164	4.57	.82
Female	41	4.85	.65
Photos: Behind the scenes			
Male	164	4.56	.88
Female	41	4.88	.64
Photos: Social			
Male	164	4.31	.98
Female	41	4.80	.68
Photos: Graphics			
Male	164	4.47	.89
Female	41	4.73	.71
Videos: Funny			
Male	164	4.38	.92
Female	41	4.78	.85
Interaction: RT/favorite			
Male	164	4.45	.96
Female	41	4.78	.85
Interaction: Giveaways			
Male	164	4.35	.95
Female	41	4.71	.84

Table 8.2

Group statistics for Twitter content types based on affiliation.

	N	Mean	SD
Photos: In-match			
Student	22	4.86	.35
Non-student	186	4.60	.82
Photos: Behind the scenes			
Student	22	4.86	.35
Non-student	186	4.60	.88
Photos: Social			
Student	22	4.68	.57
Non-student	186	4.38	.97
Interaction: RT/favorite			
Student	22	4.86	.35
Non-student	186	4.48	.98
Interaction: Giveaways			
Student	22	4.82	.50
Non-student	186	4.39	.96
Photos: Graphics			
Faculty/staff	11	4.91	.30
Non-faculty/staff	197	4.50	.87
Videos: Interviews			
Faculty/staff	11	4.09	1.22
Non-faculty/staff	197	4.61	.78

Table 9

Ancillary data regarding fan intentions (Facebook and Twitter combined).

	N	%
Attend event		
Strongly disagree	14	3%
Disagree	12	2%
Neutral	65	14%
Agree	136	28%
Strongly agree	249	51%
Not applicable	11	2%
Increase fandom		
Strongly disagree	14	3%
Disagree	11	2%
Neutral	60	13%
Agree	127	26%
Strongly agree	269	55%
Not applicable	6	1%
Increase support		
Strongly disagree	15	3%
Disagree	7	1%
Neutral	74	16%
Agree	119	24%
Strongly agree	266	55%
Not applicable	6	1%
Increase loyalty		
Strongly disagree	17	4%
Disagree	18	4%
Neutral	94	19%
Agree	102	21%
Strongly agree	244	50%
Not applicable	9	2%

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