THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FAN IDENTIFICATION AND STUDENT UTILIZATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN A NCAA DIVISION I UNIVERSITY

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FAN IDENTIFICATION AND STUDENT UTILIZATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN A NCAA DIVISION I UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

The present study examined the relationship between fan identification and the use of social media of students at a large NCAA Division I university.

198 students completed the Sport Spectator Identification Scale and a modified version of Clavio’s Uses of Social Media in Sport Survey.

The results demonstrated a relationship between fan identification and the more likely students were to utilize social media to follow a particular team. These results have shown that social media is being used within the athletics world and understanding of fan identification could improve marketing efforts.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Recently, social media has become a preferred way to communicate messages to target audiences (Bingham & Conner, 2010). For example, social media is beginning to be utilized as a communication tool, which aids organizations in marketing specific products. Currently, social media has become a popular way for businesses to keep consumers up to date with what is occurring within an organization (Safko, 2010).

In order to provide consumers with up-to-date information, many social media networks are utilized by organizations for marketing and promotional purposes. These networks include outlets such as Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Blogs, and company websites. Specifically, Twitter has become a tool that has modified how organizations can communicate quickly (Safko, 2010). For instance, within athletic departments Twitter is employed as a tool to reach a target audience desiring the latest news of the organization (Clavio, 2011). Consequently, Twitter has helped modify the way athletic departments release information.

Athletic departments also can capture the attention of a large population with the aid of Facebook by sending out event information or creating events through Facebook that provide another way for fans to interact with the department. Additionally, YouTube
can help athletic departments reach out to their fan base by posting video highlights of games, events, and interviews with players and coaches. Thus, YouTube helps an athletic department provide behind the scenes look at teams, events, and other fun activities.

In addition to Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube, blogs have been used by sports fans who utilize information from these sites on a daily, weekly, monthly, or yearly basis (Milloch, & Laucella, 2007). Blogs allow a behind the scenes look or special edition report that can be provided from an athletic department or organizational viewpoint. Blogs tend to also develop into a host of sites that may provide feedback or negative input towards universities and other organizations. For example, discussions on these sites can try to influence those that make decisions.

The influence of social media is still growing (Safko, 2010). Thus, many individuals are just beginning to use these new technological innovations to stay connected to their favorite sport teams. As a result athletic departments are reaching out to their fan base to provide information about their organization, and thus better market their product.

Recently, many companies have turned to the internet to help expand their organizations (Clavio, 2011). Studies indicate that social media has been helpful in the marketing of various companies (Ozsoy, 2011).

In addition to the use of social media in general business, NCAA Division I Athletic Departments are using social media to market their athletic teams to their fan base (Clavio, 2011). Unfortunately few studies, have analyzed how collegiate sports teams are using social media. Therefore, research is just beginning to understand how
fans of collegiate sports teams are utilizing social media. Thus, to better understand how social media is being utilized in the collegiate setting, recent investigations have begun to be conducted (Clavio, 2011). Researchers have begun to try and comprehend how social media impacts athletic organizations. For instance, does advertising a contest through Twitter or Facebook help to reach a larger target audience?

Clavio (2011) has suggested that there have been two types of research that have analyzed social media in sport: content-based inquiry and audience based inquiry. These two types of inquiries help to show different scenarios that social media brings to the world of sports. It is important to understand how the content-based inquiries will provide assistance in the athletic department marketing efforts. The Hambrick, Simmons, Greenhalgh, and Greenwell (2010) is an example of content based inquiry investigation in addition to studies completed by Clavio and Kian (2010), Kassing and Sanderson (2010), and Pegararo (2010).

For example, this study conducted on the use of Twitter by professional athletes provided an understanding of content analysis to place 1,962 tweets by professional athletes into different categories (Hambrick, Simmons, Greenhalgh, & Greenwell, 2010). This study provided information that many of the tweets reviewed fell into the interactivity category. Most of the athletes utilize Twitter to socialize with their fans directly (Hambrick, Simmons, Greenhalgh, & Greenwell, 2010). This study provided an excellent way to understand what current athletes are tweeting about and thus help organization better understand how their fans can interact with the teams and players.

Although, content based inquiry studies have been conducted, the present study is focused on an audience based inquiry of how fans of NCAA Division I athletic
departments utilized social media. A need exists to conduct more audience based inquiry studies since only a few recent studies have begun to analyze how social media has been utilized by fans of a collegiate sports (Broughton, 2011; Clavio, 2011; Phua, 2010; Phua, 2012) or professional sports (Blaszka, 2011; Broughton, 2010; Broughton, 2011; Hindman, 2010; Oszoy, 2011).

Clavio (2011) investigated the use of social media and the FBS fan base. He also analyzed the use of traditional media in comparison to new and social media. The study was able to take a look at the statistics with a perspective using the gratification theory. The gratification theory is view that tries to understand the reason people utilize various media outlets such as social media for this case (Clavio, 2011). The research can then provide the statistics to prove if it is to gain knowledge, interact socially, or for any another reason.

In a study performed by Wallace, Wilson, and Miloch (2011), Facebook was looked at and through in depth research analyzed at how universities are using fan pages to attract fans. This study focused on how Facebook could be used to create different marketing approaches and reach the fans of the different schools and fan base at those specific schools.

Facebook was found to be used more for linking articles and tying in the conference for communication in the study (Wallace, Wilson, & Miloch, 2011). Being able to communicate information about the schools was one way for fans to utilize Facebook most effectively. Facebook provides a new channel of communication for athletic departments to post items and news about their programs and create better brand awareness (Wallace, Wilson, & Miloch, 2011).
There have been six major studies in the past that have focused on audience-based inquiries. Many of the studies have found Facebook to be a popular choice among fans in the sport setting of utilizing social media when it comes to following the team or organization. For instance, the Broughton (2010) study provided evidence that shows how fans rely on Facebook and other blogs as sites to gather information. The Blaszka (2011) study explained how important it is for sports teams to distribute information to fans and the best way is the internet nowadays. The Clavio (2011) study focused on how social media impacted the fan base of a collegiate sports setting.

All of these previous studies have done the research and provided ways that social media has begun to expand into the sports world. However, there hasn’t been a lot of research that provides the benefits of how a fan identifies themselves with the particular team and the way they utilize social media. Therefore, this study will be able to bridge the two concepts while focusing on the collegiate setting of sports and the way the fans utilize social media.

Several other studies that researched social media utilization showed that fans would rather follow teams, players, and organizations on Facebook. Broughton (2010) pointed out how fans found Facebook and other fan blogs as credible sites for retrieving their information. This idea brings the concept of this present study into play by showing how fans can interact with social media utilization.

There have been a few studies have analyzed how age and gender are related to social media usage. Phua (2012) showed that age had a significant showing and was positively associated with social media. Broughton (2010) suggested that gender also has made significant showings. The fans that participated in the study reported that they
became greater fans of both the MLB and the NFL because of their social media usage (Broughton, 2010). However, to the authors knowledge their does not appear to be a study that shows a direct correlation of age and gender with the utilization of social media and sports. There can be considered a different target audience for sports than rather just social media usage so it is important to focus on that specific audience for this study.

One concept that has begun to be studied in relation to the use of social media is fan identification (Blaszka, 2011; Phua, 2010; Phua, 2012). Phua (2012) examined the relationship of fan identification with a team would associate with social capital. Furthermore, the study provided a way to research how the self-esteem impacts the way social capital was looked at (Phua 2012). The study found that bridging social capital was positively correlated with each of the various variables including social networking site usage. Phua (2012) demonstrated that fans who were not as highly-identified with the teams gained in bridging social capital.

The present study will analyze the relationship between fan identification and the utilization of social media. Fan identification is important because it signifies how strong a fan a person is. When filling out any survey regarding their favorite sports team or organization they may have a different feeling if they are more of a fan than someone else.

Fan identification provides a way to understand the thoughts and feelings of fans. Wann and Branscombe (1993) created a scale to reach out to measure how a fan feels towards the team or organization. Various studies have been conducted on fan identification, which have provided information on violence and fan tempers during bad
times or good times with a team or organizations. Studies that have been completed on fan identification have provided a way for companies to start to team up with their fans and reach out better (Wann & Branscombe, 1993).

Based on a review of the audience inquiry sport based research few studies have analyzed the relationship between the utilization of social media and one’s level of fan identification at the NCAA Division I level. Much can be gained from conducting studies about social media. Understanding how social media is used may benefit NCAA Division I College Athletic Departments. Since few studies have analyzed the relationship between fan identification to the utilization of social media, this study will provide important information on how social networks can be effectively utilized for fans of a university athletic department. Specifically, studying how students utilize social media in a NCAA Division I athletic department is important because this information can provide athletic departments with information on how to target students more and provide social media more efficiently.

The present research study will analyze how social media is used at a large NCAA Division I university. Specifically what social media is being used for and how it can be used within a collegiate athletic setting will be evaluated. Additionally, the relationship between social media usage and fan identification will be determined. This study will also analyze how different age groups utilize various social media tools.

Thus, the main purpose of the present study is to identify the usage of social media by university students at a large NCAA Division I university and to determine the relationship of fan identification to utilization of social media. The researcher hypothesized that there will be a relationship between levels of fan identification and the
utilization of social media. Additionally, based on previous literature it is hypothesized that age will be related to social media utilization.
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of the relationship between fan identification and the utilization of social media is still a new concept, thus much research is necessary to be conducted regarding the topic. Research exists that has been conducted to analyze the use of social media and fan identification at all various levels of sport. This specific study will focus on the relationship between fan identification and the use of social media in the collegiate sport setting. A brief history of how social media has grown will be provided as well as an overview of the various content and audience based inquiry research that has been conducted on social media utilization in sport

Brief History of the Growth of Social Media in Sport

Over the past several years there has been a rise in social media awareness (Safko, 2010). It is important to remember that even though this field is still growing, there is a lot of information that can be pulled from the new media world. For the purpose of the present study, the need to understand how people use social media to follow their sports team will provide a better understanding of how the concept of social media is growing. When researching the utilization of social media it is important to understand the difference between some of the social media tools. The main two social media tools are Twitter and Facebook. The major difference between the two is the way communication
works (Ozsoy, 2011). Facebook is more of a passive message being transmitted whereas Twitter is more of an active way of communicating with others (Ozsoy, 2011).

Understanding the difference between the two major social media tools assists in knowing how people utilize the two. Then tying the concept into the sports world it provides an example of how fans begin to interact within the social media realm and understand why the utilization of social media is such an important concept.

At one point in time, personal websites were a very common thing among a lot of people. In today’s day and age, people can quickly spread their idea and a message through social networks and through new media or social media tools (Ozsoy, 2011). Social media is a concept that has grown quickly and has changed the way for news to be shared.

The idea behind social media is still expanding but currently being used on mobile phones, computers, and other technological devices that can aid a person in communicating with the world (Ozsoy, 2011). Since social media is still growing with Facebook being introduced in 2004 and Twitter being introduced in 2007, it is still being worked into a lot of programs (Clavio, 2011). More specifically it is something that athletic departments are trying to incorporate with their coaching staff and other administrative positions. It is a way for them to share their thoughts and other insightful information about the programs.

A reporter in the era of traditional media had to go out and write-up a story that had a deadline. With an addition to that, now the reporter can leak clues or even updates on their story by social media (Ozsoy, 2011). Even through personal blogs, writers are able to reach a new audience rather than just through traditional media. The change in
times brings a new way for people who need to get news out get it out faster. Also, it
gives the average person a way to share information with the world and provide their
input on a story instantly unlike with traditional media forms (Ozsoy, 2011).

In sports, this idea provides a way that those in attendance can cover the smaller
sports and the gap will be filled with information for those seeking it. It is crucial to be
able to understand the need to have the social media world out there for the sports
journalists’ role in covering sports (Clavio, 2011).

Social media being so new is something that needs to be worked into a program.
Many schools are slowly creating a new media department or a new media position that
can assist in the social media realm. The area of social networking will assist an athletics
department or any organization to be able to communicate effectively with its audience
(Clavio, 2011).

Clavio (2011) has described two different types of research that has analyzed
social media in sport usage. One type is audience-based inquiry. This concept is when
the demographics, uses, gratifications, and other variables examined in relation to the use
of social media.

Another type of research, which has begun to be conducted, is content-based
research on social media. This type of research involves the way fans consume media.

**Audience Based Social Media in Sport Studies**

Studies have researched the way the audiences interact with social media and
sports. Numerous studies in this method of research have taken a look at the
demographics, uses, and other factors that would be affected by the different social media
outlets.
Clavio and Kian (2010) observed the followers of a retired athlete's Twitter feed from a gratifications side. Another purpose of their study was to analyze the way gender of the respondents affected the reason they follow a female athlete on Twitter. The results showed that the largest group of respondents listed themselves as being 40-49 years old (Clavio & Kian, 2010). The study provided a way to examine a Twitter feed’s users and allowed the researched to be able to analyze the audience members that chose to follow the Twitter account chosen for the research.

Kassing and Sanderson (2010) investigated the use of Twitter by members of the sports industry. The study wanted to take a look into what athletes are exactly saying and talking about through Twitter. This study provides an explanation of how Twitter is a way for fan-athlete interaction to exist (Kassing & Sanderson, 2010).

Pegararo examined the way can follow a major sporting event through Twitter. Twitter has become a new communication technology platform and a powerful tool that allows fans to interact with athletes (Pegararo, 2010). The results from Pegararo (2010) show data from the top five Twitter-using athletes from each of the leagues. The study showed that the most common use of Twitter were direct messages which were messages sent towards another member.

Hambrick, Simmons, Greenhalgh, and Greenwell (2010) studied the Twitter use of professional athletes. Like previous studies, this study looked into how the athletes communicated with their fan base and interacted with their followers. The research displayed that many of the tweets sent were under the interactivity category, which defines them as interacting with their followers (Hambrick, Simmons, Greenhalgh, & Greenwell, 2010).
Content Based Social Media in Sport Studies

Studies have also begun to look into why fans of sports utilize social media and what purposes they tend to use the different outlets for. It is important to understand not only the reason why fans choose to use social media, but what the initial reasoning behind their use is.

In the study that Broughton (2010) reported, the results showed that fans reported becoming greater fans of the MLB and the NFL because of their use of social media. This study examined the way fans of certain leagues would identify themselves with a specific team or organization through their use of social media (Broughton, 2010). Other key points of this study illustrated that half of the MLB and NFL fans would like to follow a player on Facebook than wait till the traditional interview on TV (Broughton, 2010).

A study conducted by Blaszka (2011) set out to understand different purposes of why Twitter was used by sports fans. Also, the study examined the relationship between team identification and Twitter usage of a specific team (Blaszka, 2011). Blaszka (2011) reported that many of the highly identified fans consumed as much of their favorite team as possible on twitter.

Broughton (2011) reported about how social media was used during game-day situations. Certain results from the study showed that NFL fans to utilize social media while at the game, whereas MLB fans are less likely than fans of the NBA and NFL to utilize social media on their mobile devices (Broughton, 2011). This study provides results that help explain why fans of certain leagues and sporting teams choose to use social media and also what they choose to use it for.
Dr. Galen Clavio conducted another study that looked at social media and the role it played on an FBS school. Clavio wanted to jump into the small field of research that exists on social media. The Clavio study took a look at how college athletics need to first understand the audience they are trying to reach with social media. The way the audience is utilizing social media and the way they may be able to use it better with the assistance of the college athletic programs. This thought can be reviewed through the Clavio study but to better understand the utilization of social media with the proper fan identification. Understanding what type of fans are reaching out to the programs and how they specifically are utilizing social media to follow their favorite sports team.

Dr. Clavio examined what type of demographic characteristics made up his sample of college football fans. He also wanted to look at how the different demographic characteristics impacted the consumption of traditional media such as newspapers, radio, and team websites (Clavio, 2011). The final item that Clavio looked at in his study was the impact that the different demographic variables play on the consumption of social and new media such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube.

Different to this study, Clavio (2011) sampled a general sample of football fans where this study will be evaluating currently enrolled students at the university. The sample that was found was made up of older people and showed that a larger portion of the younger fans had been seen in a similar study (Clavio, 2011). This study also looked at message boards that exist and provide a medium for fans to vent or share information with other fans about the same topic and other topics regarding the programs.

The younger populations were found to utilize Facebook and Twitter more than the older population samples (Clavio, 2011). Since the study looked at a sample of the
alumnus that provided a chance to see a larger age range and see different usage of both traditional media and social media. It is a way that can provide examples of how to market to the different age groups or ways to hope for the older age group to understand the purpose of social media.

The survey that was provided with the Clavio (2011) study looked at the age of each respondent and showed that a similar age group uses traditional media just like in the Ozsoy study. Being able to understand how different age groups utilize traditional media and social media will benefit those who wish to utilize social media for their own sake to market a department or an organization.

Clearly being able to identify with various age groups and the way they utilize social media will benefit this study and the main concept of this study. Looking at the study performed by Clavio (2011) will help to show information that will assist in the understanding of how social media can be used efficiently. Based on the different research questions that Clavio was looking to answer the results from the survey to the first question were based on what different demographic characteristics made up college football fan sample set that he was using.

Ozsoy explained how new media was used by Turkish fans in sport communication (Ozsoy, 2011). This study looked at how Facebook and Twitter was used for sporting purposes in Turkey. Utilizing social media for sport purposes is what Ozsoy wanted to test. His study showed that a majority of them used Facebook over any other social media site. Using various social media sites for numerous reasons shows what kind of person is using the sites. Whether a person is just checking for news or information on their sports team/organization or actually posting their own stories and
take on the event that took place will show a lot about the purpose of social media utilization. This study provides evidence that shows the use of social media (Ozsoy, 2011). Another major hypothesis that was tested by Ozsoy (2011) in his study was the utilization of social media and sports compared by age groups. Since the study was done at a university, it gives a window that would be your traditional college student and then your non-traditional college student.

The Ozsoy (2011) study looked at various statistical differences that compared the use of social media and sports by fans. For age groups, the study showed that the younger the age group, the higher use of the Internet to get their source of news (Ozsoy, 2011). However, the study also found that blogs were big in the age group range of twenty-three and twenty-five. It was shown that students at the university in Turkey follow sports frequently on the Internet (Ozsoy, 2011).

The major outcome from the Ozsoy (2011) study provided information on how fans at a university followed sporting events on social networks differently compared to the typical demographical breakdowns.

**Fan Identification**

Several articles that have been written on fan identification have shown how fans can be associated with a specific team or organization. Some fans will associate higher than others and to be able to understand how a fan would interact differently than those fans that associate lower is an advantage. Broughton (2010) examined how a fan that associated with a specific league through social media outlets such as Facebook and twitter. Blaszka (2011) examined the way Twitter was utilized and how the way a fan identified themselves with the specific team.
Fan identification and the utilization of social media are important to understand how to properly market with the social media tools. The recent studies will provide ways for departments to better their use of social media and be able to identify with their audience efficiently. The literature that has been looked at thus far has provided some information that shows that there is a need for more in depth research to be done. It is not all the time that social media will be so fresh in the time and need to be looked at to be able to be understood by the users and others who wish to work with it.

Another major problem that comes from looking over the most recent studies over social media utilization is that there has been little connection made between fan identification and social media usage. Knowing what type of fans you are working with will benefit the outcome of the study and also make it clear on who is truly utilizing social media for the purpose of following the sports team and organization. To be able to make the connection between fan identification and social media utilization is how this study will add to the previous research that has been done up to this point.

In a study done by Wann and Branscombe (1993) they took a look at what degree of identification a person had with their sports team. Knowing what degree a fan identifies with their sports team will be able to show how they truly feel towards that specific team and then will possibly assist in further questions that deal with that specific team.

The study made it clear that there has been little research done regarding individual difference among sports spectators dealing with their level of identification or commitment (Wann & Branscombe, 1993). The responses that are given may change depending on how they feel on the topic the survey or research is about. It is also
important that this study makes sure to see the connection that plays a role within the
growing new media field.

Fan identification has shown that being loyal to a certain team it can cause
different effects on a person’s behavior (Wann & Branscombe, 1993). The survey that
was administered assisted the study in a particular way to get responses from the
participants. When researching the topic of fan identification it is clear that a certain
measure needed to be found and that is what Wann and Branscombe (1993) set out to do
for their particular study.

One of the areas that was looked at was whether spectator involvement played a
role in the way the person identifies with the sports team or organization (Wann &
Branscombe, 1993). A lot has been shown up to this point but this particular questions
serves as a way to understand if there is any prejudice given the fact working for the team
or organization may give a certain thought for the fan from the start.

Fan identification is a touchy topic at times. When a fan becomes to involve with
a sports team or organization there is a problem with how they relate to the team.
Sometimes you need to evaluate the way fans can be associated with the specific
organization in order to benefit the way a marketing effort goes or the way news gets out
to the specific fans. Being able to evaluate the specific ways a fan correlates an
organization shows that there can be a connection made during future studies on similar
topics.

Analyzing the information from fan identification provides a way to improve fan
attendance and possibly improve their attitude or find ways that could be helpful in
improving the way they view the organization. The level at which a spectator identifies
themselves with a team will counteract any response when answering questions regarding
the specific team or organization (McDonald, Sutton, Milne, & Cimperman, 1997). In
order to understand how to hit the correct target audience this will assist in a lot of ways.
That is why a study similar to this idea will allow for more research to be done pertaining
to similar theory.

McDonald, Sutton, Milne, and Cimperman (1997) felt that there was something to
the teams that had the followers who were over loyal at times. When there is a strike or
any other sort of protest then the fans that voice their opinions come out and then it
clearly shows the increase in fan identification of the team or organization (McDonald,
Sutton, Milne, & Cimperman, 1997).

Summary of the Review of the Literature

The main concept of fan identification and social media utilization has been
reviewed but the two ideas have not been reviewed together to a deeper look at how they
can be joined. To be able to think about how the fans reaction to a team or how a person
feels towards a particular organization and the way they use social media or any social
networking tool out there to connect with the team will benefit the way the organization
uses the tools. Just to understand the brains behind every little social media tool out there
is one thing, but to be able to put it to good use and be able to properly market an
organization will better both the fan base and the organization as a whole.

The reason that this study is so pertinent now is because the new media idea is
growing and not everyone has jumped on the bandwagon yet. There are ways to improve
and by properly understanding a sample fan base and getting to justify different ways to
utilize social media outlets with an organization will help in the long run. Once these two
forces are combined then there can be a large force to be able to get the brand image out more efficiently than before.

The focus that is on the growth of new media is fresh and so there are the general questions and whether or not it is helpful. By breaking down the different surveys within studies to look at the age range of users, this will show whether or not it is the younger age group that is solely using social media or if there is a more diverse age range that is benefiting from social media such as Twitter and Facebook, just to name a few. Once the age range is reviewed, just like in the previous studies that looked at social media usage or fan identification, it can be turned around and analyzed at how the different age groups use social media towards their specific team or organization.

Following important updates from a team or organization will create a buzz about them and getting the brand image out there through social media will send it a lot faster than any other traditional method of media (Safko, 2010). These two concepts together will work hand in hand as long as the organization allows for them to work together. The biggest thing that many studies and articles out there has shown is how social media is growing and how fan identification impacts the usage of social media. That is why there is a need to do more in depth review on these two concepts together and be able to describe the benefits the two have for each other.
CHAPTER III

METHODS

Participants

Participants were students attending a large NCAA Division I university. Students were from one university and enrolled in classes within a university department. 198 students participated in the study. Specifically, 139 males and 59 females participated in the study. Thus, a variety of students were polled for this particular study. All participants were informed of the purpose of the study and volunteered to participate in the specific study.

Instruments

Demographic Questionnaire

A short demographic questionnaire was used to obtain background information about the participants. Every participant was to report their gender, age, race, and rank in school.

This short questionnaire provided information that helped to categorize other questions and answers that are part of the other surveys within this research study. This survey asked simple questions that asked for the information stated above.
Modified Clavio Utilization of Social Media in Sport Survey

This survey used in the present study was modified from Clavio's (2012) *Utilization of Social Media in Sport Survey* (USMSS). The survey for the present study contained twenty-four questions that inquired about the use of different social media outlets. The survey asked participants their thoughts on the use of Facebook by the athletic department and the way the department utilizes Twitter and YouTube and other social media channels.

This survey was modified from the original USMSS created by Clavio (2012) to get more directed responses to the university. It was made clear that each participant would be responding towards the specific school, which helps the results upon completion of the survey. The survey consisted of a brief introduction section that asked background questions related to the use of social media. Next, the survey asks questions on the participant’s use of Facebook.

This section of the survey allows the participant to provide responses to the way they use Facebook especially in connection with the athletic department. After the Facebook section of the survey, the participant is shifted to questions regarding Twitter.

This portion allows the participant to explain their use of Twitter and the way they utilize the social media tool in order to follow the athletic department. This section has various questions that allow the participant to answer freely and give their opinion towards how they utilize Twitter to follow the athletic department. Questions in this section also ask the participant about how Twitter is being utilized and also allows them a chance to provide feedback towards the use of Twitter.
Following the Twitter section of this survey is a short section that focuses on how the participant utilized other athletic department social media tools. These social media tools include the athletic department web site, traditional media websites, blogs, fan websites, YouTube, sports talk radio, and podcasts. After these sections, the survey then asks additional questions on Twitter and Facebook to inquire more in-depth questions that get the participant to provide more detailed answers towards the how they use Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and other social media channels to follow the athletic department. A copy of the full survey can be found in Appendix A.

**Sport Spectator Identification Scale**

The Sport Spectator Identification Scale (SSIS) (Wann & Branscombe, 1993) provides participants an opportunity to list their favorite sports team and asks the participant questions related to how they view that specific team. The survey includes seven questions that range from how true of a fan one is, to how often one uses the team’s name or brand image.

The SSIS uses an eight point scale that uses various ranges and depending on the question act as different meanings. Participants are asked to answer to their best of their ability questions about the listed team. The first question asked the participant how important it was to them that the team listed wins. The participant answers that question on a scale from not important to very important. The next question asks how strongly the participant sees themselves as a fan of the team listed. Again, the scale ranges from not at all a fan to very much a fan.

The third question asks the participant how strongly their friends see them as a fan of the team listed. The scale range is the same as the previous question. The fourth
question asks how closely the participant follows any different media or news outlets regarding their specific favorite team that they chose. The scale for this questions ranges from never to almost everyday. This is an important question since this provides a link to the two ideas of this study and brings together the importance of social networks with fan identification.

The fifth question asked how important is being a fan of the team listed. The scale ranges from not important to very important. The sixth question asks how much the participant dislikes the rival of the team listed. The scale ranges from do not dislike to dislike very much. The final question asks how often the participant displays the team’s name or insignia at their place of work, living, or on their clothing. The scale ranges from never to always.

Each of these questions assisted in understanding how much of a fan each participant is regarding the listed team. This specific measure of fan identification was found to be reliable and valid (Wann & Branscombe, 1993; Wann, 2007). Wann and Branscombe (1993) found a chronbach’s alpha for reliability of .91. See Appendix B for a copy of the SSIS survey.

**Procedure**

The researcher went to various department classes on the university campus and asked students to participate in a study related to the utilization of social media. University students that were willing to participate were provided with a survey packet, which included a cover letter which explained the specific purposes of the study, a demographic survey, the *Utilization of Social Media Survey*, and the *Sport Spectator*
Identification Scale. Once the packet was administered, students were given time to read
the cover letter and then answer the three surveys.

Data Analysis

The present study used a descriptive correlational survey research design, which allowed for the collection of descriptive information from each participant. The information collected is meant to help observe and describe all of the questions asked of the participants. From the various different surveys utilized within this study a vast amount of information was collected in order to identify levels of fan identification and social media use at and NCAA Division I university.

The data that was compiled was analyzed by providing means, standard deviations and frequencies for the various variables assessed in the present study. This allows the purpose of the study to be observed. The various demographic variables and the fan identification variable assessed in the present study in addition to the main survey allowed for Spearman’s Rho correlations to be computed in order to analyze the relationship of age, gender, and fan identification to utilization of social media. Additionally, chi-square analyses was performed to analyze differences of gender and age in relation to the use of social media to follow the athletic team.
CHAPTER IV
RESULTS

Means, standard deviations, and frequencies for the main variables assessed in the study were computed for the whole sample. The data was tested for a normally distributed population using the Wilks-Shapiro test. The information below displays the results from this testing. Spearman’s Rho correlations were calculated to determine the relationships between the major variables analyzed in the present study in order to test the main research hypotheses. The social media survey surveyed the utilization of multiple social media outlets (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, GoZips.com, Blogs etc.) by the participants. Relationships between level of fan identification as measured by the scores on the SSIS and the utilization of Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, GoZips.com, traditional media websites, recruiting websites, newspapers, sports talk radio, podcasts, YouTube, and blogs for each of these values were correlated.

The frequencies for the use of the various media outlets to follow the athletic organization were as follows: Out of the 198 participants, 87 answered yes when asked, “Do you follow the main Akron Athletics Twitter Feed?”, while 111 answered no to the question. Out of the 198 participants, 93 answered yes when asked, “Do you follow the official The University of Akron Athletics Facebook Page?”, while 105 answered no to the question. When asked, “Which of the following do you use to access information on
Akron Athletics?” the following responses were reported from the 198 participants. 168 answered yes to using GoZips.com, while 30 answered no. 90 participants answered yes to using traditional media websites, while 108 answered no. 40 participants answered yes to using recruiting websites, while 158 answered no. 89 participants answered yes to using newspapers, while 109 answered no. 56 participants answered yes to using sports talk radio, while 142 answered no. 14 participants answered yes to using podcasts, while 184 answered no. 78 participants answered yes to using YouTube, while 120 answered no. 34 answered yes to using blogs, while 164 answered no. Refer to Figure one for a graphical presentation of the data mentioned above.

Figure 1. Social Media Usage

In addition to the data analyzed from the Utilization of Social Media in Sport Survey, data was also examined from the Sport Spectator Identification Scale (SSIS). 198 participants completed the SSIS The minimum result was 7 and the maximum was 56. There were 7 questions with a range of 1 to 8 for each answer for each participant.
This allowed for a total maximum result for each to be up to 56. The mean of the sample for the score on the SSIS was 40.96 with a standard deviation of 13.083. Analyzing the frequency data for the SSIS demonstrated a wide range of results throughout the sample. There were more scores that were closer to the higher range of the scale. Thus, many of the participants viewed themselves as having a relatively high identification with the team or athletic department.

To test the main research hypotheses of the study the scores on the Sport Spectator Identification Scale (SSIS) were correlated with the scores on the Utilization of Social Media in Sport Survey. Because the Wilks-Shapiro test indicated that the distribution for fan identification was not normal, a Spearman’s Rho correlations was calculated for each of the social media outlets polled in the survey. The first Spearman’s Rho correlation conducted to analyze whether a relationship existed between levels of fan identification and use of social media was the relationship between the scores on the SSIS and whether participants followed the athletic department on twitter. A significant relationship was found for this correlation, $r = .482, p < .01$. The next statistical analysis analyzed the relationship between fan identification and whether the participants followed the athletic department on Facebook. This statistical analysis showed a significant relationship, $r = .378, p < .01$. A significant correlation was also found between scores on the SSIS and whether participants utilize YouTube for coverage of the teams or organization $r = .457, p < .01$. The next Spearman’s Rho correlation analyzed the relationship between scores on SSIS and whether participants go to the main athletic department website for information and coverage of the teams and organization. A significant correlation was found for this analysis, $r = .465, p < .01$. 
Another outlet analyzed was traditional media. The Spearman’s Rho correlation analyzed showed a significant relationship between scores on the SSIS and the utilization of traditional media, \( r = .161, p < .05 \). However, a significant relationship was not found between scores on the SSIS and the use of Newspapers, \( r = .080 \). Additional significant relationships were found between scores on the SSIS and Podcasts \( r = .251, p < .01 \), sports talk radio \( r = .145, p < .05 \), blogs \( r = .290, p < .01 \) and recruiting websites, \( r = .367, p < .01 \).

Several demographic variables were assessed to determine if they influenced the way students utilized social media. Chi-square analyses were conducted to determine whether there were differences between age and gender in the utilization of social media. The information below provides the results from the entire surveys participants. Table 1 below displays the correlations of the multiple variables.

The survey divided the age demographic into four different ranges. The first one was 17 or below, which had 0 participants. The second range was 18 – 20, which had 36 participants. The next range was 21 – 23, which had 100 participants. The next range was 24 – 29, which had 45 participants. The final range was 30 or older, which had 17 participants.

Data on participant’s year in school was also collected. Out of 198 total participants, 7 were freshmen, 34 were sophomores, 33 were juniors, 58 were seniors, 29 were fifth-plus year undergrads, 36 were graduate students, and 1 was listed as other.

A few questions in the survey asked if the participants had a Facebook and/or twitter account. Out of 198 participants, 177 had a Facebook account. With twitter being newer than Facebook, the results were a little different. Out of 198 participants, 137 had
a twitter account. Refer to Figure 5 for the results of participants with or without each of the two social media accounts along with other responses related towards Facebook and Twitter.


No differences were found by gender to follow the Akron Athletics through the use of Twitter, $\chi^2(1, N = 198) = .422, p = .516$, Facebook, $\chi^2(1, N = 198) = .284, p = .594$, GoZips.com, $\chi^2(1, N = 198) = 4.582, p = .032$, Traditional Media Websites, $\chi^2(1, N = 198) = .065, p = .798$, Recruiting Websites, $\chi^2(1, N = 198) = .552, p = .458$, Newspapers, $\chi^2(1, N = 198) = .225, p = .635$, Sports Talk Radio, $\chi^2(1, N = 198) = .339, p = .561$, Podcasts, $\chi^2(1, N = 198) = 1.733, p = .188$, YouTube $\chi^2(1, N = 198) = .312, p = .576$, and Blogs, $\chi^2(2, N = 198) = 1.707, p = .426$.

Each question on the *Utilization of Social Media in Sport Survey* was analyzed and the standard deviation and mean was found for them. Table 2 below shows the results for some of the questions. Refer to the survey located in Appendix A for matching up the question letters to the actual question in full detail. The questions that
were not analyzed and placed in Table 2 have graphs that can be found from Figure 2 through Figure 12 at the end of the chapter.

Table 1. Correlational Matrix Between the Relationship of Demographic Variables to Fan Identification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VARIABLE</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>FAN ID</th>
<th>GENDER</th>
<th>YR SCHOOL</th>
<th>AGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FAN ID</td>
<td>40.96</td>
<td>13.083</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-0.132</td>
<td>0.058</td>
<td>-0.074</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GENDER</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.166*</td>
<td>0.168*</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.168*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YR SCHOOL</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.550**</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGE</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* - Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.
** - Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.
Table 2. Standard Deviations And Means For *Utilization Of Social Media In Sport Survey*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTION</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>1.669</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>1.405</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>1.635</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>1.689</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>1.658</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>1.649</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>1.622</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>1.479</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>1.687</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U</td>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>1.712</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>1.707</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>1.502</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LL</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>1.642</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MM</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>1.486</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NN</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>1.467</td>
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<tr>
<td>OO</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>1.686</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PP</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>1.792</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTION</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>QQ</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>1.627</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RR</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>1.642</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SS</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>1.621</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TT</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>1.369</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UU</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>1.498</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VV</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>1.411</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WW</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>1.473</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XX</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>1.543</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YY</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>1.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZZ</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>1.606</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AAA</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>1.575</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBB</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>1.526</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCC</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>1.504</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DDD</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>1.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EEE</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>1.664</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FFF</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>1.588</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GGG</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>1.655</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Question letter can be paired up with each question on *Utilization of Social Media in Sport Survey* found in Appendix A.
Figure 2. Age Range

Figure 3. School Level
Figure 4. Gender

![Bar chart showing gender distribution.]

Figure 5. Facebook and Twitter Responses

![Bar chart showing Facebook and Twitter responses.]

Yes
No
Figure 6. Rate UA Twitter Feed

![Bar chart showing rates for different categories of quality.]

DNA: 63 | Very Poor: 7 | Poor: 7 | Average: 64 | Good: 44 | Very Good: ]

Figure 7. Quality of GoZips.com

![Bar chart showing quality ratings for different categories.]

DNA: 18 | Very Poor: 10 | Poor: 5 | Average: 52 | Good: 76 | Very Good: 37]
Figure 8. Check UA Twitter

![Bar Chart](image1)

- DNA: 51
- Very Rarely: 52
- Rarely: 21
- Sometimes: 43
- Often: 22
- Very Often: 9

Figure 9. Quality of UA Facebook Page

![Bar Chart](image2)

- DNA: 66
- Very Poor: 4
- Poor: 9
- Average: 87
- Good: 27
- Very Good: 5
Figure 10. Visit UA Facebook Page

Figure 11. Smartphone Owned
Figure 12. Season Ticket Holder for UA Varsity Sports

![Bar chart showing season ticket holders for UA Varsity Sports with Yes: 6 and No: 192.]

Figure 13. Normal Q-Q Plot for Fan Identification

![Normal Q-Q plot of Fan ID showing observed values against expected normal values.]

CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION

The main purpose of the present study was to examine the utilization of social media by university students at a large NCAA Division I university. Additionally, the current study also analyzed the relationship of fan identification to the utilization of various social media outlets. Relationship between levels of fan identification and the utilization of social media were hypothesized in the present study. The results of the current study provided significant relationships between levels of fan identification and the utilization of social media.

The results of the statistical analyses revealed that variable of fan identification was related to the utilization of how students at a large NCAA Division I university use Facebook, Twitter, and other social media outlets to follow their universities athletic teams. Social media is growing and still in its early stages for many individuals, especially in the world of college athletics. Thus, it may be possible that new media may become extremely influential to the success of a collegiate athletic department. The present study allowed for an analysis how various social media outlets are utilized and how participants identified themselves with the universities athletic organization.

The first group of hypotheses analyzed whether there would be a relationship between a fans level of identification and the utilization of social media. The statistical
analysis demonstrated a relationship between ones level of fan identification and the utilization of social media outlets. Thus, the students surveyed were more likely to utilize social media outlets such as Facebook and Twitter to follow the athletic department.

Another major focus of the present study was to investigate the use of Facebook to follow a specific sport organization. A significant relationship was found between the scores on the SSIS and the utilization of Facebook to follow a college athletic organization. The correlation that was found predicted a strong relationship between how a fan identifies themselves with the team or organization and the likelihood that they will utilize social media outlets to follow them.

Therefore, with the results of these two statistical analyses, the higher level of fan identification related to the likelihood that an individual will utilize social media such as Facebook, Twitter, or other social media outlets. Additionally, other results showed a relationship between the utilization of traditional media, blogs, and other websites that were correlated with the fan identification results. The newer social media outlets including Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube were among the highest values after being correlated.

One of the variables also examined was the relationship between the utilization of newspapers and the level of fan identification. Seeing how times have changed and social media has grown so quickly, traditional media is becoming depleted. There was not a significant relationship between the two, showing that traditional media outlets such as newspapers could possibly be on their way out with the sports fans. It is a source that cannot be kept up as quickly as twitter and Facebook and other social media outlets.
In contrast to the present study, Clavio (2011) sampled a general sample of football fans while this study evaluated current students at the university. Though, similar to this study, Broughton (2010) reported that fans of MLB and NFL were more likely to have higher fan identification after utilizing social media to follow their team. However, they did not use the SSIS to measure identification levels. Additionally, Broughton (2011) reported that the most popular social media website utilized in their study was Facebook. The data collected from the present research also showed that Facebook was the most used out of the social media outlet closely followed by Twitter. However, Twitter has come a long way within the past year or so, thus suggesting that this social networking site may become more popular than Facebook.

Another focus of the present study was to analyze the relationship between age and the utilization of social media. The study showed a wide array of age range and provided statistical analysis to show how age compared to social media usage. No matter what the age of participant in the study, social media is a great way to bring more interaction (Clavio, 2011).

Since the present study pertained to sports in general, it is capable of showing how social media is a growing trend within sports. The data revealed a significant positive relationship between how a fan identifies themselves with a sports team or organization and their utilization of social media to follow them or gain information about the specific team or organization. It is important to understand how social media in general is still growing and may take some time to adapt to all fields and age levels. This study provided evidence that students use Facebook and twitter along with other outlets to obtain information on their team or organization in sports.
From a marketing standpoint, social media has been a great addition because it has added a way to get the brand image out through social media and allows a message to be sent faster than traditional methods of media (Safko, 2010). The main point that this study had to offer was to analyze the relationship of the use of social media to levels of fan identification. This study surveyed the participants to obtain a fan identification level for the particular school, team or organization.

Previous studies performed for social media usage and fan identification of a sports team can be brought together by this study. While this study is just skimming the surface of this topic, so much information can be taken from the study alone. This study has given a chance to focus alone on the way a fan identifies with a team or organization at the collegiate level of sports and how that relates to how they utilize social media outlets to obtain information.

The Clavio (2011) research previously conducted gave a perspective with social media usage within athletics, however, did not analyze the fan identification of the participants. This study analyzed if the more a fan identifies themselves with the particular team or organization, the more likely they are to use social media outlets to get updates and other information on the team.

Looking at each of the minor questions brought up at the beginning of the research gives a perspective at how this study provides statistical information on how a fan identifying higher with a particular team or organization will use social media outlets more for their source of information. The study gave more in depth questions, but the major points that affected the hypothetical concepts were pulled out and analyzed for the most accurate reporting of data.
The present study had a few limitations. The surveys were only distributed to present students who were enrolled in classes at the time of the study. The concept can provide a starting ground for further research to be done relating to this topic. Future studies can be conducted to by increasing the sample size. For instance, surveying a larger sample and providing the surveys to a more general population would provide a chance for increased data. Opening up the surveys to more than just present students like a few of the previous studies would allow for a greater realization of using social media in the collegiate athletics setting. Studies conducted on this issue should look at how social media changes and take into consideration all past studies conducted. Since social media is growing, especially all of a sudden within sports and the collegiate level of sports particularly, more research can be done at a later date and with a more in depth review.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

MODIFIED CLAVIO UTILIZATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN SPORT SURVEY

Demographics

Answer each question to the best of your ability. There are no “right” or “wrong” answers, simply be honest in your responses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is your age?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17 or below</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 or older</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is your current level in school?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freshman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th year+ undergrad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is your gender?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reset
### Social Media Usage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Option 1</th>
<th>Option 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Do you have a Facebook account?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Do you have a Twitter account?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Do you follow the main Akron athletics Twitter feed (@FollowTheRoo)?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Twitter

How would you rate the content on the Akron Athletics Twitter Feed?
- Very Poor
- Poor
- Average
- Good
- Very Good

How often do you check the content of the Akron Athletics Twitter feed?
- Very Rarely
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often
- Very Often

Have you ever retweeted something from the Akron Athletics Twitter feed?
- Yes
- No
On a scale of 1-5, with one meaning “Strongly Agree” and five meaning “Strongly Disagree”, rate your feelings on the following reasons why you follow the official Akron Athletics Twitter feed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To gather personal information about Akron athletes and/or coaches</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To read stories about games</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>To find out about upcoming events</td>
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<tr>
<td>To participate in contests and giveaways</td>
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<tr>
<td>To interact with Akron athletes and/or coaches</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>To interact with Akron athletics department as a whole</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Do you have any comments or suggestions on how to improve the Akron Athletics Twitter feed?

Reset
Do you follow any other Akron Athletics-related Twitter feeds? (E.g., coaches, players, individual sports)

- Yes
- No

If yes, which one(s)?
On a scale of 1-5, with one meaning “Strongly Agree” and five meaning “Strongly Disagree”, rate your feelings on the following reasons why you follow these individual Akron Athletics Twitter feeds.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q</td>
<td>To interact with Akron athletes and/or coaches</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>To gather personal information about Akron athletes and/or coaches</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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<tr>
<td>S</td>
<td>To read stories about games</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>To participate in contests and giveaways</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U</td>
<td>To interact with fans</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>To interact with the Akron athletics department as a whole</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
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<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td>To find out about upcoming events</td>
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<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
<td>○</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Social Media Usage

Which of the following do you use to access information on Akron athletics?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GoZips.com (official website)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traditional Media websites (Beacon Journal, Plain Dealer, etc)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruiting websites (Scout, etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sports Talk Radio</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Podcasts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YouTube</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blogs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other (please specify)

How would you rate the quality of content on GoZips.com?
- Very Poor
- Poor
- Average
- Good
- Very Good
# Facebook

Do you follow the official University of Akron Athletics Facebook Page?
- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

How would you rate the quality of the content on the official Akron Athletics Facebook page?
- [ ] Very Poor
- [ ] Poor
- [ ] Average
- [ ] Good
- [ ] Very Good

How often do you visit the official Akron Athletics Facebook page?
- [ ] Very Rarely
- [ ] Rarely
- [ ] Sometimes
- [ ] Often
- [ ] Very Often

Have you ever "liked" a post or a comment on the official Akron Athletics Facebook page?
- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

Have you ever written a response to a post or a comment on the official Akron Athletics Facebook page?
- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No
On a scale of 1-5, with one meaning “Strongly Agree” and five meaning “Strongly Disagree”, rate your feelings on the following reasons why you follow the official Akron Athletics Facebook page.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
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<td>To read stories about games</td>
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<td>To find out about upcoming events</td>
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<td>To participate in contests and giveaways</td>
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<tr>
<td>To interact with fans</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To interact with Akron athletes and/or coaches</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To interact with the Akron athletics department as a whole</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reset
## Social Media Usage

On a scale of 1-5, with one meaning “Very Likely” and five meaning “Very Unlikely”, rate the likelihood that you will do the following on a sport-related website or Internet application:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Very Likely</th>
<th>Likely</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Unlikely</th>
<th>Very Unlikely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interact with fellow fans via Twitter</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch a live stream video cast</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interact with a sports organization via Twitter</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Watch an embedded YouTube video on a web page</td>
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<tr>
<td>Download a podcast in iTunes or another podcatching site</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interact with an athlete or coach via Twitter</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write a comment on a published story or video</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Check into a sporting event using a program like FourSquare</td>
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<tr>
<td>Submit a picture</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBB</td>
<td>you've taken as part of an online contest</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCC</td>
<td>Interact with fellow fans via Facebook</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Listen to a podcast on a web page</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DDD</td>
<td>Interact with a sports organization via Facebook</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Submit audio/video content you've created as part of an online contest</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FFF</td>
<td>Interact with an athlete or coach via Facebook</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GGG</td>
<td>Submit your own written content as part of an online contest</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Are you a season ticket holder for an Akron Athletics varsity sport?

- Yes
- No

If so, which one(s)?

Reset
What kind of smartphone do you own?
- iPhone
- Windows Phone
- Blackberry
- Android
- Don’t own a smart phone

Other (please specify)
APPENDIX B

SPORT SPECTATOR IDENTIFICATION SCALE

Fan Identification Survey

Instructions: All answers based on The University of Akron Zips as the team, answer the best that you can.

Please answer the following questions based on your feelings for the team listed above. There are no "right" or "wrong" answers, simply be honest in your responses.

How important to YOU is it that the team listed above wins?
1 - Not Important 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 - Very Important

How strongly do YOU see YOURSELF as a fan of the team listed above?
1 - Not at all a fan 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 - Very much a fan

How strongly do your FRIENDS see YOU as a fan of the team listed above?
1 - Not at all a fan 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 - Very much a fan

During the season, how closely do you follow the team listed above via ANY of the following: a) in person or on television, b) on the radio, c) television news or a newspaper, or d) the Internet?
1 - Never 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 - Almost everyday

How important is being a fan of the team listed above to YOU?
1 - Not Important 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 - Very Important

How much do you dislike the greatest rivals of the team listed above?
1 - Do not dislike 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 - Dislike very much

How often do YOU display the team’s name or insignia at your place of work, where you live, or on your clothing?
1 - Never 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 - Always
APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT COVER LETTER

Dear Participant,

I am currently a masters degree student from the University of Akron Department of Sport Science and Wellness Education investigating the utilization of social media along with fan identification within a Division I NCAA school’s athletic program. I am attempting to determine how strong of a fan base uses social media to follow their favorite sports team or organization. This research also hopes to add to a very limited pool of information on the newer field of new media and social media used for marketing and promotional purposes.

Your decision to participate in these surveys is voluntary. Also, although I would appreciate the completion of each survey, you do not have to answer each question if you feel that you don’t have an answer to each question. Please note that the researcher, John Lukach, has been involved in the college new media, marketing, and video profession as a graduate assistant at The University of Akron and is seeking to benefit the profession as a whole by doing the research.

As the researcher, I will administer each survey. During the survey time, all questions can be asked of the researcher if any clarification is needed. Upon completion, all surveys will be collected by the researcher and kept confidential from that point forward.

Please notice that your responses will remain strictly confidential. Your name will not be used at any point in the write up of the results of the research. If you have any questions at any time throughout the survey process, please consult with John Lukach at any time for assistance.

Sincerely,

John P. Lukach
APPENDIX D

IRB APPROVAL LETTER

Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs
Akron, OH 44325-2102
(330) 972-7686 Office

NOTICE OF APPROVAL

March 28, 2012

Irvin I. Ikach
7804 Windburn Circle N.W.
North Canton, Ohio 44720

From: Sharon McWhorter, IRB Administrator

Re: IRB Number 20120324 “The Relationship between Fan Identification with the Student Utilization of Social Media in a NCAA Division I Athletic Department”

Thank you for submitting your Exemption Request for the referenced study. Your request was approved on March 27, 2012. The protocol represents minimal risk to subjects and matches the following federal category for exemptions:

☐ Exemption 1 – Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices.

☒ Exemption 2 - Research involving the use of educational tests, survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior.

☐ Exemption 3 - Research involving the use of educational tests, survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior not exempt under category 2, but subjects are elected or appointed public officials or candidates for public office.

☐ Exemption 4 – Research involving the collection or study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens.

☐ Exemption 5 – Research and demonstration projects conducted by or subject to the approval of department or agency heads, and which are designed to study, evaluate, or otherwise examine public programs or benefits.

☐ Exemption 6 – Taste and food quality evaluation and consumer acceptance studies.

Annual continuation applications are not required for exempt projects. If you make changes to the study's design or procedures that increase the risk to subjects or include activities that do not fall within the approved exemption category, please contact me to discuss whether or not a new application must be submitted. Any such changes or modifications must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to implementation.

Please retain this letter for your files. This office will hold your exemption application for a period of three years from the approval date. If you wish to continue this protocol beyond this period, you will need to submit another Exemption Request. If the research is being conducted for a master's thesis or doctoral dissertation, the student must file a copy of this letter with the thesis or dissertation.

Cc: Alan Kornspan - Advisor
   Cc: Stephanie Woods – IRB Chair

☒ Approved consent form/s enclosed