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Julia Lauria
St. John Fisher College

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Abstract

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Online Marketing and New Media Usage in the National Football League

Julia A. Lauria

St. John Fisher College

Abstract

As innovations in technology continue to occur at a rapid rate, marketing as once known continues to drastically change as well. This has provided organizations several new and improved marketing tools, while simultaneously presenting numerous challenges. The sport industry has adopted these innovations and uses internet marketing and new media frequently. The National Football League, the most profitable sports league in the United States, has been identified as a leading force in the use of new marketing initiatives. This research critically analyzes each of the 32 NFL organizations official websites to determine the different aspects of new media and internet marketing each team is utilizing, and to what extent. Houston, Kansas City, Denver, and Green Bay had websites that made the most extensive use of these new tools. Although there was no correlation between demographic information and the usage levels, the yielded information is integral to each organization in understanding how they compare to one another as well as the effectiveness of their current online marketing schemes.

Online Marketing and New Media Usage in the National Football League

Beginning in the late 1990's and spanning through the present, technological advances have changed the face of marketing as we once knew it. The creation of social networking websites, handheld computer devices, and live, high-definition video streaming has truly revolutionized the business-consumer relationship (Ioakimidis, 2010). No other industry seems to reap the rewards while simultaneously being challenged by the ever-changing marketing landscape as professional sport. Many have continually questioned the effectiveness or perceived benefits of online marketing, but one thing continues to appear blatant: professional sport organizations rely upon engaging their fans through new media (Ioakimidis, 2010; Lavrakas, Mane, & Laszlo, 2010).

Innovative, fresh media outlets such as social networking, live broadcasts and video streaming, audio streaming, and discussion boards have empowered fans and fostered a greater degree of interaction between the consumer and the organizations (Ioakimidis, 2010). Nearly a decade ago, the amount of people actively using the internet and its various tools had already grown so dramatically that it was quickly classified as mass media (Brown, 2003). In a recent interview with Amy Martin, a renowned marketing and social-media expert who works with professional athletes and organizations, Ballouli and Hutchinson (2010) were told that "social media, by accident more than anything else, is providing this new dialogue that is counterintuitive to the basic tenets of marketing. Fans are beginning to expect their favorite teams and athletes to communicate via these channels" (p. 397). With these various thoughts in mind, it seems apparent that sport organizations could benefit the most by building their online initiatives as much as possible.

The National Football League has been a key player in the professional sport landscape in the United States for many years. The NFL boasts a long legacy of engaged and passionate fans. Oates (2009) discusses the many changes that football fans have been exposed to over the

past few years, and notes that many forces have played a role in the change, but provides that it has ultimately resulted in a fandom that is marked by excessive, selective consumption of athletes and teams. Therefore, the NFL and its various affiliated teams can be described as important indicators of the expected levels of online marketing and new media initiatives required to satisfy the desire of fans who are constantly seeking to consume more and more. Various pieces of literature have examined the extent to which teams and professional sport organizations exercise online marketing, how fans consume this type of information, as well as the perceived benefits of such initiatives.

Theoretical Framework

The Business-Society-Relationship Theory, often discussed in sport marketing, stresses the importance of continually fostering relationships with consumers (Walker, Kent, & Vincent, 2010). This theory recognizes consumers as stakeholders who are important to the success of the organization. It focuses on the importance of making the organization accessible to consumers, who should be aware of the decisions and activities that the organization is making or taking part in. Complimentary to this theory is the Social Identity Theory (Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994). This theoretical construct holds that increasing organizational communication can increase identification levels on behalf of the fan, and can foster and retain fan loyalty (Walker, Kent, & Vincent, 2010).

Sport organizations have undoubtedly begun to understand how vitally important it is to build a relationship with their consumers. These theories provide further implications regarding the importance of communicating an identity to the consumer. Due to the changing landscape of communication, such theories clearly show the importance of organizations effectively using online marketing and new media. These theories draw the vital correlation between the effective use of new marketing and media with fan loyalty and consumer retention. Both the Business-Society-Relationship Theory and the Social Identity Theory lay the

appropriate groundwork for this research, which looks at the extent to which NFL teams are utilizing and developing their relationships with fans through online marketing and new media.

Literature Review

Why do organizations use online marketing?

Although it seems easy to understand why online marketing could be beneficial to sport teams, some researchers have set out to develop more succinct, defined answers to this question. Web sites are, most obviously, a cost and time efficient way to interact with customers (Seo & Green, 2008). Brown (2003) was one of the first researchers to assess the benefits of this new marketing form in its infancy. Even from an early age, online marketing of sport proved beneficial. Brown (2003) saw the need to understand the effects of this marketing, as opposed to just telling marketers about it. By surveying 750 sport-related website owners, as identified by the *Sports Market Place*, Brown (2003) found that the most important objective of websites, according to their owners, was to provide information to fans and visitors. This is arguably still a vital component to website content today. Seo and Green (2008) have also supported this justification of online use by stating that "Unlike traditional media, the internet lends itself to more interactive features; thus, the internet might satisfy a wider range of needs" (p. 82).

Another vital use of online marketing and new media for sport organizations revolves around the element of competition. Choi (2008) researched the use and effectiveness of Coco-Cola China's virtual Olympic Torch Relay Program at the 2008 Beijing Olympics. From the research, the author was able to uncover the importance of being at the forefront of technological innovations. Just as with any other industry, if a business fails to provide up-to-date services that the customer desires, the customer will undoubtedly go elsewhere to find what they want. Chadwick (2006) identified the biggest challenge facing sport managers as the adaptation to new and changing technologies. The author provides that how these challenges are met by different organizations could help or hinder the organizations dramatically (Chadwick, 2006).

The aforementioned interview with Amy Martin, conducted by Ballouli and Hutchinson (2010), also provided a more up-to-date analysis of why online marketing and new media is vitally important to sport organizations. Martin stresses the change from companies marketing and communicating *at* consumers to marketing and communicating *with* consumers and fans. Fans and sport consumers are now able to visit the internet to discuss their favorite team or player with other fans, as well as with the organization itself (Seo & Green, 2008). With that change being noted, it also becomes important for marketers to change the tone of their messages from hard-selling to a conversational style. This new form of marketing emphasizes the relationship between the buyer and consumer more than any past marketing forms have (Ballouli & Hutchinson, 2010).

Online Content and Messages

The majority of research done on sport organizations employing online marketing and new media revolve around the content used; as will the intended investigation. Research done by Walker, Kent, and Vincent (2010) discusses the importance of sport organizations using these newfound online mediums to communicate their corporate social responsibility efforts with fans and consumers. The authors use examples of professional teams such as the Philadelphia Eagles and Toronto Maple Leafs youth initiatives which predominantly foster positive responses by fans and consumers. The NFL's community programs such as 'Play 60' and the pink gear worn by players throughout the month of October for Breast Cancer awareness would be comparable programs that would require a great deal of promotion and communication with fans to make these programs successful. Walker et al. (2010) directly apply the Business-Society-Relationship Theory to their idea that organizations *must* use new media to convey information regarding their corporate social responsibility programs. Community outreach and corporate social responsibility information is just one small piece of the content puzzle that must be made available to consumers.

The research of Williams and Chinn (2010) compliments the previous research by further discussing the necessary content of online marketing initiatives, as well as providing a conceptual model for sport marketers to use when developing online marketing initiatives. The authors coined the concept the Relationship-Marketing model. Williams and Chinn (2010) apply their model to the sport industry, and conclude that it creates several opportunities for businesses to use Web 2.0 technologies to further their relationship-marketing. The authors have found that goals present in relationship marketing seamlessly apply to the sport industry as well. Williams and Chinn (2010) break down five Web 2.0 functions (blogs, social networks, content communities (YouTube), forums and bulletin boards, and content aggregators (RSS feeds) and describe how they can satisfy various goals of sport marketers. For example, the authors state that if a potential goal of marketers is to "enhance loyalty", then social networks provide "increase fan connections through opportunities to contribute content such as videos, photos" (p. 432). In the author's conclusions and directions for future research, they provide a piece of advice that this research aims to answer- the largest challenge and obstacle for sport marketers of the future will be to continually assess and change the technologies that continue to foster relationship-marketing in the best ways.

Ioakimidis (2010) developed an exploratory research design to understand the differing extent to which professional sport teams were utilizing online marketing and new media. The researcher hypothesized that finding new and innovative ways to connect with fans on their favorite teams website has the ability of not only strengthening the bond between the organization and the consumer, but also has the ability to substantially increase the amount that fans and visitors stay on a particular teams website (Ioakimidis, 2010). The researcher checked for various website content including but not limited to: blogs, live scores, feedback forum, podcasts, RSS feeds, photo albums, e-mail, desktop alerts, search function, social media, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Results yielded the information that the three NFL teams the researcher explored had the greatest amount of content compared to the other professional

team websites she looked at which included NHL teams, and European Rugby and Soccer teams (Ioakimidis, 2010). These results lay a great foundation for further developing research in the area of NFL website content.

The Future of Online Marketing in Sport

Another segment of literature pertaining to this topic examined the future of online marketing and social networking. Sheffer and Schultz (2010) looked to determine if Twitter is providing real change, or if it is just another fad that will soon pass. Although they applied their study more specifically to sports journalism, much of the information can be applied to other aspects of the sport industry as well. The authors explain that Twitter is so important to the sports landscape because it allows athletes and teams to provide a candid, unfiltered message directly to the hands or keyboards of their fans (Sheffer & Schultz, 2010). Similar to Twitter, the use and future of Facebook is constantly brought into question (Steinbach, 2010). Sheffer and Schultz's (2010) study would have little reliability if the authors hadn't incorporated information on the harms of Twitter as well. Leagues are forced to create rules and designate fines for players who tweet inappropriate or confidential information. Although this regulation is necessary, it also seems to take away from the unfiltered information that fans crave. The authors sought to discover what the main use of Twitter by sports journalists is. Results yielded the information that Twitter use by sport journalists depended much on the age of the journalist (Sheffer and Schultz, 2010). Their results show that Twitter does exemplify potential changes in news delivery in the sports world, and may be much more than a fad. The authors do provide, however, that if Twitter is indeed a fad, a new technology would undoubtedly replace in the blink of an eye (Sheffer and Schultz, 2010).

Rein, Kotler, and Shields (2007) and Lin (2006) also examined the future of online marketing and social media in the sport arena. Both articles provide little new information, but the authors again reiterate that sports teams are beginning to interact with fans in a completely new and innovative way. Rein et al. (2007) state "Sport properties are becoming their own

media companies, interacting directly with their consumers without the filter of traditional media" (para. 5). The authors predict that the current media model employed in professional sport will soon be the paradigm for college and high school sport as well. Lin (2006) discusses the importance of weighing the perceived utilities when employing new online content. This may imply that the content of today may be gone tomorrow if they lack innovativeness or utility (Lin, 2006). Rein et al. (2007) find it reasonable to believe that sport media will only continue to change over the coming years, and stress the importance of organizations employing personnel dedicated to constant change and innovation in their marketing initiatives.

This research looks at the degree to which NFL teams utilize online marketing and new media in order to establish which teams have made use of this new medium in the most extensive way. This research also provides the opportunity to make conclusive suggestions based on findings, as well as the aforementioned information regarding the uses, content, and future of online marketing and new media. This research allows for the following questions to be answered:

1. Which NFL teams are utilizing online marketing and new media to the greatest extent?
2. Do usage amounts vary with team demographics?
    a. AFC/NFC teams
    b. Small market v. Large market teams

Method

Sample Selection

The sample in this study consisted of all 32 official team websites in the National Football League (NFL). The league teams are divided into two categories- the AFC and the NFC. Within those categories, teams are again subdivided into the following categories: AFC-North, AFC-South, AFC-East, AFC-West, NFC-North, NFC-South, NFC-East, and NFC-West. Each team was selected for analysis because they are representative of the highest level of

professional football worldwide. All teams were analyzed in order to provide the league a holistic, fair representation. Further, the NFL is one of the key components of the professional sport landscape in the United States. It can be assumed that football teams and organizations in the United States have developed a stronger organizational presence online than football teams in countries where the sport is not as prominent.

Measures

Each official team website has been critically and systematically examined to uncover the different services present and information made available to fans and consumers. Several different pieces of content were of interest: social networking usage and direct linkage from official team website to official team Facebook or Twitter, the use of webcast, podcasts, online streaming and live videos, the presence of interactive services for consumers to use or sign up for, as well as the availability and accessibility of dialogue from consumer to the organization through use of tools such as online chats, question forms, contact inquiries, or comment boxes.

Operational definitions.

Content, for the use of this research, has been designated as any creative, interactive, or unique materials, offerings of services, or information provided on the official team website. Any content that was found on the websites of third parties, linked from the official team site, was not considered or regarded. As all websites and organizations are present within the United States, all information/content will be available in English, which increased the ease and consistency of data collection.

Many pieces of content used in this analysis were also used in Ioakimidis' (2010) similar study of the content present on the websites of professional sport organizations. The specified content pieces that will be under investigation can be found on the content analysis charts (See Appendices A-H). There were two methods of capturing content found on official team websites. All content *except* for social media (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube) were quantified as either "present" or "not present" within the content analysis. Therefore, if the team website

offered an 800-number for users to call with any questions or issues, that team received a check in the column for 800-numbers. The piece of content must have either been on the team's homepage, or accessible by categorical tabs and headings found within the site.

Past research and literature has provided a solid justification for the use of the listed pieces of content as tools of analysis. As previously discussed, much of the content criteria was previously used in Ioakimidis' (2010) study and has already proven to be beneficial units of measurement when looking at professional sport organizations websites. In justifying the importance of streaming or webcasting mechanisms, authors have pointed to the success of ESPN. ESPN is an organization which provides video clips, audio clips, and insider information. The MLB has caught on to the success, and translated the fundamental ideas of ESPN to their individual team websites. According to some research, the MLB has set the benchmark in the area of streaming audio and video to their team websites (Rein, Kotler, & Shields, 2007).

Theysohn (2006) and Lin (2006) have also stressed the importance of making use of webcasts and broadband media. Lin (2006) stated that this form of online media provides an ideal and necessary sense of localism to the team's website. By providing timely, local information relevant to the organizations, teams can brand themselves, and fans may find that organizational webcasts on official team websites are the best source for all team relevant information (Lin, 2006). This information makes it vitally important to include pieces of content pertaining to video streaming, audio streaming, or webcasting within this analysis.

The second method of analysis consisted of numerically quantifying the amount of social media directives that an organizations website displayed. Therefore, if a website had three links and one button directing the fan towards their Facebook page, they received a total count of '4' under the Facebook category on the analysis. Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube were considered 'social media' for the purposes of this study. A quantified analysis in this area has provided a clearer indication of the extent to which organizations wish to connect with their fans via social networking.

Social networking is, for many reasons, an obvious measure of an organizations use of online marketing and new media. Again, a great deal of past research has indicated the importance of social media from a business perspective. According to Steinbach (2010) "social media combines the ultimate in direct marketing, with a soft-sell approach" (p. 59). By this statement, the author implies that Facebook and Twitter (as well as other social media outlets) allow for a less invasive sales push while simultaneously building relationships with existing customers, as well as obtaining new customers. Using social media outlets for press releases or promotions provides a more exciting avenue for young people, who have deeply engrained social networking into their lives (Steinbach, 2010).

In a study by Foster, Francescucci, and West (2010), the authors were able to show that people are extremely motivated to use social media for many different reasons. Although this study was not specific to the sport industry, many ideas can be seamlessly applied across various industries. The research showed that consumers (or fans) are enticed to participate in social networking for reasons such as community membership, friendship connections, the value of information, and participative confidence (Foster, Francescucci, & West, 2010). This information justifies the inclusion of social networking as content measures, and further validates the notion that the number of social media directives present on a website should have been, and were quantified in order to determine the extent to which a team or organization values the use of social mediums.

The last variable is the distinction between large market teams and small market teams. For the purposes of this research, teams were identified as large or small marketing in accordance with the population information, gathered from the U.S. Census Bureau, for the metropolitan area in which the team is located or services. For example, although the New York Jets and Giants are located in East Rutherford, NJ, they service the metropolitan area of New York City, and that population number was taken into account. Also, although the Vikings are located in Eden Prairie, MN, they service both Minneapolis and St. Paul, therefore the

metropolitan population data of the Twin Cities were considered in determining the market size of that franchise. Any team with total metropolitan population numbers of 3.5 million or greater was considered large market teams. The remaining teams with lesser populations were classified as small market teams. The figure 3.5 million was determined by calculating the median and mean of all 32 metropolitan population sizes, which yields two figures near 3,556,885 (see Appendix I).

Research Procedures

Each official team website was systematically assessed in order to capture the content present as relevant to the various categories selected for exploration in this research. Content was assessed on whether it is "present" or "not present", with the exception of social media elements which were counted and quantified. In order to consistently obtain this various information, the researcher begun at each team's home page, and recorded the content readily available. To ensure authenticity and that an active link was present, the researcher clicked each link/piece of content being recorded. The researcher methodically assessed each tab or header provided to help the site visitor navigate through the pages in order to determine which content was present and active within each official website.

The assessments took place immediately following all pre-season NFL contests, but before the official beginning of regular season play on September 4th, 2011. This specific date was chosen due to the nature of roster finalization and organizational stability. By this date, most roster cuts and additions were completed. As the majority of player movement takes place throughout the duration of training camp, it was important to wait until training camp was complete to provide a sense of consistency. Further, all organizations were operating under similar conditions at that point. Aside from roster stability, all organizations had a record of 0-0, and were very comparable to one another. Since pre-season games do not bear extreme significance in the mind of fans or organizations, it can be assumed that the organizations were all gearing their websites towards the kick-off of regular season play.

Winfree and Fort (2008) suggest that during a lockout, fans often substitute consumption of other sports in order to fill the void created by the lockout of the given sport. With such information in mind, it can be assumed that organizations will have to drastically change the content of their websites in order to work towards retention of fan loyalty, despite the stoppage of play. Fortunately, the labor dispute was resolved prior to the start of training camp and pre-season, and there was no need to select an alternate date or collection method.

For the purpose of this study, only one assessor was used. Although this doesn't allow for accommodation of researcher bias, there are several benefits to the use of only one researcher. For example, if there were multiple people collecting data, the issue if inter-observer reliability arises. This idea questions whether or not researchers measuring the same information would have all measured in the same exact way. Further, there could be reliability threats through means of researcher error. There is a chance that two researchers would take different approaches to collecting the same data which would yield much different results and skew the information (Gratton & Jones, 2010). Since there have been cases in which researcher differentials cannot be overcome, it seems that the use of one researcher has provided the most reliable and valid collection of data.

As the data was collected, a few of the content pieces were slightly changed in how they were assessed. A constant comparison method was employed for this research; certain categories were added during the data collection process, and results were compared, contrasted, and modified to best reflect the true data. Since data was not collected on a day in which games were being played, it was difficult to determine if there was a Live Scores element present on each website. Although there were no current games, some websites still had a clear indication of where they display live scores during contests. Since there were no live games occurring during the data collection, it's not fair to hold organizations accountable for that content being present on their website. The criterion of whether or not the website was available in Spanish was an added variable early on as many teams provided that option on their

websites. It is especially important for those teams that are located in areas with a large Spanish speaking population, but even more impressive for those teams that were not located in such areas but still provided the option.

The coding of the Live Audio content also changed. The only way that fans can hear live streaming of their favorite teams games requires that they purchase the NFL Audio Pass. Therefore, the Live Audio criterion was altered and now describes the presence of live interviews or other live audio, excluding live game feeds.

Results

Prior to making any comparisons between the demographics of interest, the data was analyzed to explore basic patterns of usage. Appendices A-H provide the content usage data for each team. To explore overall league frequencies, data from all teams was combined into total usage (see Table 1).

Figures 1 and 2 indicate the number of teams that utilized each piece of content, and then provides a specific breakdown according to both market size and general conference (AFC vs. NFC). Figure 2 shows which teams used the most pieces of content, excluding social media directives and quantities.

The first analytic measure that was used was chi-square analysis. This form of analysis is ideal for categorical data, and yielded useful information. Chi-square can determine if differences are present in a set of content based data; in our example, a chi-square test has the ability to indicate whether or not teams are utilizing online content differently from one another (Gratton & Jones, 2010). A chi-square analysis was vital in answering the presented research questions, and discovering how the actual results are different from what was predicted.

In comparing the market size (small vs. large) and the total usage of each team, there was no significant association between the variables $x^2(10) = 10.483$, $p = .399$. This lack of significance indicates that large and small market teams do not have significant variation in the extent to which they were using online marketing and new media content.

In comparing the conference broadly in terms of NFC or AFC and the total usage, there was no significant association between the two variables x^2 (10)= 15.771, $p > .05$. This lack of significance indicates that the broad conference affiliations of the 32 teams do not have significant variation in the extent to which they were making use of online marketing and new media components. However, in this analysis $p = .106$, and is therefore approaching significance.

A second test applied to the data was ANOVA, which allows each individual variable to be compared to either the conference or market size to determine significance. When looking at individual variables and the brad conference classification AFC/NFC, there were a few variables that indicated a significant relationship: Mobile services $F(1,30) = .781$, $p < .05$. Feedback option $F(1,30) = 1.531$, $p < .05$. Chat $F(1,30) = .781$, $p < .05$. Lastly, Spanish option $F(1,30) = 1.125$, $p < .05$.

When using ANOVA to compare individual variables to market size, there was no variable that indicated any significance. Twitter was the closest variable to approach significance $F(1,30) = 2.790$, $p = .088$.

The last analysis to be applied to the data provides information regarding the individual team's usage of social networking variables such as Facebook and Twitter. By using a Mann Whitney Non-parametric test, it was discovered that both market size and conference had no effect on the usage of social media. In specifically discussing total social media directives and conference, $p = .838$, $p > .05$, and there is no significance. In looking at total social media directives and market size, $p = .156$, $p > .05$, and although this value is approaching significance, there is still no true difference between the use of social media and market size.

Discussion

The research aimed to explore the online presence of NFL teams. By doing a content analysis, we were able to ascertain any possible differences in new media usage and our specific variables of interest, market size and conference alignment. The original questions of whether or

not any team is utilizing more new media techniques, and whether demographics or conference affiliation play any role in the usage of new media techniques have all been answered through this research.

Figure 2 shows the top five teams utilizing the greatest number of online marketing and new media methods. The Houston Texans take the lead, as nearly every piece of content being researched could easily be found on their site. Kansas City was a close second, and they had 21 of the variables present on their website which could again be found with ease. There is no real trend amongst the top five teams depicted in the chart. There are several teams that had 17 variables, and missed the top five (New York Jets, Dallas Cowboys, Washington Redskins, Chicago Bears, Carolina Panthers, and San Francisco 49ers). This implies that there were several teams within the upper echelon making great use of the new technologies available today.

The chi-square analysis provided the information that there was no significance between total use and market size or conference. This was certainly different than what was expected. Although there is no data available to confirm this notion, it can be estimated that large market teams have more fans visiting their site each day, and therefore it would be expected that their websites would be consistently more expansive with greater offerings. It is interesting that Green Bay, the team with the smallest market by far, ranks 3rd overall in total pieces of content with 20. This disproves the notion that larger market teams would have more content due to the sheer size of their immediate fan base. Although this research did not uncover why certain teams outperformed others, Green Bay presents an interesting case that may be worth further research and investigation. Possible explanations could draw from their on-field successes as the franchise has boasted seven winning seasons over the past decade, and possesses an adamant fan base that is highly supportive of the NFL franchise with the smallest total market ("Green Bay Packers," 2011).

Since little previous research exists on this topic, it is interesting to find that there is no significance between social media usage and conference or market size. With all of the information available about how productive Facebook and Twitter can be to businesses of all types, it appears that all 32 teams of the NFL are aware of these tools and their importance, and are making comparable usage of this medium to interact with fans on a personal level.

Since there was no significance when looking at conference and total usage or social media usage, there was really no need to further delve into statistical analysis. For this research, it seems as if the descriptive statistics and charts will be most informational and interesting since the inferential statistics found little to no significance between variables.

Limitations and Implications

In addressing any bias that may exist in the research, the NFL lockout that persisted through the early part of July 2011 must be addressed. Because there was eminent uncertainty of if there would be a 2011 NFL season at all, there may be a chance that teams had cut down on their full-time staff and put on hold all new marketing initiatives until the lockout was resolved. Since the lockout ended and teams had a very short amount of time to pull together training camp, it could be inferred that they were potentially busy with executing operations and didn't have the maximum amount of time needed to perfect or improve their websites. Further research would need to be done to verify that inference. The only potential researcher bias that may have existed was the fact that there was only one researcher collecting data. Additional researchers could have ensured that all pieces of content on each website were accounted for and the number of social media directives was totally accurate.

This research and its outcomes bear great significance for the 32 teams of the National Football League, as well as other sports leagues throughout the world. A study such as this one allows organizations to understand how their competitors are using new technologies, and how they compare to one another. It is an obvious advantage that access to these websites is completely unrestricted and free, and only required time to visit the site and understand how

competitors are using the web to improve marketing, branding, and communication strategies. An understanding of competitor's practices is beneficial for all parties involved and would undoubtedly continue foster competition and innovation by teams (Ioakimidis, 2010).

As previously stated, this information can span beyond the NFL, and provide information to sport leagues in different cities, states, and countries. Since the NFL was already pinpointed as being a part of the top echelon of online marketing and new media, this research and its yielded results provides organizations a rare glimpse at what the most successful, profitable sport teams in the United States are doing to stay up-to-date with the constantly changing technological landscape. This research and the results of this research have certainly confirmed the findings of Ioakamidis (2010) in that the majority of the NFL websites were quite extensive and making use of current technological capabilities. Although it failed to create a connection between team demographics and the number of content pieces, it has added information in regards to which individual teams are best utilizing new media to maximize exposure, fan interaction, and web communication.

Future Research

The exploratory nature of this research provides a great deal of room for improvement and addition. Since there was no significance between new marketing and media usage based on team market size or conference affiliation, it would be interesting to determine if the on-field product and success or historical winning or losing plays any role in the extent to which teams are improving their websites.

Another potential growth of this research could be to look at the team websites halfway through or at the very end of a season to see how they have changed or stayed the same. Comparing those changes to how the team has been performing may also yield interesting results. Using multiple researchers may eliminate any researcher bias that existed in this particular research. Further, looking at the websites a few years following the lockout may also solve the problem of any bias that was interjected due to the lockout itself.

This research will continue to stay relevant and take on new meaning as more new social networks and new media elements are developed. The technological landscape of our universe changes on a daily basis, and to understand trends amongst the NFL and its 32 franchises, constant analysis must be done to see how things are changing and who is staying at the forefront of technological advances.

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Appendix A
Content Analysis Chart

	AFC East			
	N.E. Patriots	N.Y. Jets	Miami Dolphins	Buffalo Bills
Podcast	•		•	
RSS Feeds	•	•		•
Forum/Boards	•	•		•
Games/Contests				•
Photo Albums	•	•	•	•
Live Broadcasts				
Mobile Services	•	•	•	•
Live Audio	•			
Video/Audio Clip	•	•	•	•
Desktop Alerts				
E-Mail	•	•		•
Newsletters	•	•	•	•
Feedback Option				
Live Scores				?
Merchandise	•	•	•	•
News/Headlines	•	•	•	•
FAQ's	•			
Membership	•	•		•
Blog	•	•		•
iPhone Apps	•			•
Chat		•	•	
Polls	•	•	•	•
800 Number				
Site Index/Map	•	•	•	•
Search Function	•	•	•	•
Fan's Network	•	•		
Databases				
Web Streaming				Not Live
Social Media (Qty)	5	8	4	5
Facebook	3	4	1	2
Twitter	2	4	3	3
YouTube				
Spanish Option	•	•	•	

Appendix B
Content Analysis Chart

	AFC North			
	Baltimore	Cincinnati	Cleveland	Pittsburgh
Podcast			•	
RSS Feeds	•	•	•	•
Forum/Boards	•	•		
Games/Contests	•	•	•	
Photo Albums	•	•	•	•
Live Broadcasts				
Mobile Services	•		•	•
Live Audio				
Video/Audio Clip	•	•	•	•
Desktop Alerts				
E-Mail	•	•		
Newsletters	•	•		•
Feedback Option	•			
Live Scores				
Merchandise	•	•	•	•
News/Headlines	•	•	•	•
FAQ's		•		
Membership	•		•	•
Blog	•	•	•	
iPhone Apps			•	
Chat		•		
Polls		•	•	•
800 Number		•		
Site Index/Map	•	•	•	•
Search Function	•	•	•	•
Fan's Network	•			
Databases				
Web Streaming				
Social Media (Qty)	5	3	6	2
Facebook	2	1	3	1
Twitter	3	2	3	1
YouTube				
Spanish Option				•

Appendix C
Content Analysis Chart

	AFC South			
	Houston	Indianapolis	Jacksonville	Tennessee
Podcast	•			
RSS Feeds	•	•	•	•
Forum/Boards	•	•	•	•
Games/Contests	•	•	•	
Photo Albums	•	•	•	•
Live Broadcasts				
Mobile Services	•	•	•	•
Live Audio				
Video/Audio Clip	•	•	•	•
Desktop Alerts	•			
E-Mail	•			
Newsletters	•			•
Feedback Option			•	
Live Scores	•	•		
Merchandise	•	•		•
News/Headlines	•	•	•	•
FAQ's	•	•	•	•
Membership	•	•	•	
Blog	•		•	•
iPhone Apps				
Chat	•			
Polls	•	•	•	•
800 Number	•	•	•	•
Site Index/Map	•	•	•	•
Search Function	•	•	•	•
Fan's Network	•			
Databases				
Web Streaming				
Social Media (Qty)	4	9	3	4
Facebook	2	6	1	2
Twitter	2	3	2	2
YouTube				
Spanish Option	•	•		

Appendix D
Content Analysis Chart

	AFC West			
	Denver	Kansas City	Oakland	San Diego
Podcast	•			
RSS Feeds	•	•	•	•
Forum/Boards	•	•		•
Games/Contests	•		•	
Photo Albums	•	•	•	•
Live Broadcasts				
Mobile Services	•	•	•	•
Live Audio				
Video/Audio Clip	•	•	•	•
Desktop Alerts	•		•	
E-Mail	•	•	•	•
Newsletters	•	•	•	•
Feedback Option		•		•
Live Scores	•			
Merchandise	•	•	•	•
News/Headlines	•	•	•	•
FAQ's	•	•		
Membership	•	•	•	•
Blog	•	•		•
iPhone Apps		•		•
Chat				•
Polls	•	•	•	
800 Number	•	•	•	•
Site Index/Map	•	•	•	•
Search Function	•	•	•	•
Fan's Network	•	•		
Databases				
Web Streaming		•		
Social Media (Qty)	6	4	7	8
Facebook	3	2	3	4
Twitter	3	2	4	4
YouTube				
Spanish Option		•	•	•

Appendix E
Content Analysis Chart

	NFC East			
	Dallas	New York Giants	Philadelphia	Washington
Podcast			•	•
RSS Feeds	•	•	•	•
Forum/Boards	•	•	•	•
Games/Contests			•	•
Photo Albums	•	•	•	•
Live Broadcasts				
Mobile Services	•	•	•	•
Live Audio				
Video/Audio Clip	•	•	•	•
Desktop Alerts	•			
E-Mail	•			
Newsletters	•			
Feedback Option	•		•	•
Live Scores				
Merchandise	•	•	•	•
News/Headlines	•	•	•	•
FAQ's			•	•
Membership	•	•		
Blog	•	•	•	•
iPhone Apps	•	Soon		•
Chat				
Polls	•	•		•
800 Number				
Site Index/Map	•	•	•	•
Search Function		•	•	•
Fan's Network	•			•
Databases				
Web Streaming				
Social Media (Qty)	6	9	8	5
Facebook	3	5	4	2
Twitter	3	4	4	3
YouTube				
Spanish Option				

Appendix F
Content Analysis Chart

	NFC North			
	Chicago	Detroit	Green Bay	Minnesota
Podcast			•	
RSS Feeds	•	•	•	•
Forum/Boards	•			•
Games/Contests	•		•	•
Photo Albums	•	•	•	•
Live Broadcasts				
Mobile Services	•		•	
Live Audio				
Video/Audio Clip	•	•	•	•
Desktop Alerts			•	
E-Mail		•	•	
Newsletters		•	•	
Feedback Option	•	•		•
Live Scores			•	
Merchandise	•	•	•	•
News/Headlines	•	•	•	•
FAQ's	•		•	
Membership	•	Kids Only	•	•
Blog	•	•	•	•
iPhone Apps			•	
Chat				
Polls	•	•	•	•
800 Number	•	•	•	
Site Index/Map	•	•	•	•
Search Function	•	•	•	•
Fan's Network	•	Kids Only	•	•
Databases				
Web Streaming			Live Cam	
Social Media (Qty)	2	4	2	4
Facebook		2	1	3
Twitter	2	2	1	1
YouTube				hulu
Spanish Option				

Appendix G
Content Analysis Chart

	NFC South			
	Atlanta	Carolina	New Orleans	Tampa Bay
Podcast				•
RSS Feeds	•	•	•	•
Forum/Boards	•			•
Games/Contests	•	•	•	•
Photo Albums	•	•	•	•
Live Broadcasts				
Mobile Services	•	•		
Live Audio				
Video/Audio Clip	•	•	•	•
Desktop Alerts				
E-Mail	•	•	•	
Newsletters	•	•	•	
Feedback Option	•	•		•
Live Scores				
Merchandise	•	•	•	•
News/Headlines	•	•	•	•
FAQ's	•		•	
Membership		•		
Blog		•	•	
iPhone Apps	•			
Chat				
Polls		•	•	•
800 Number	•	•		•
Site Index/Map	•	•	•	•
Search Function	•	•	•	•
Fan's Network				
Databases				
Web Streaming				
Social Media (Qty)	10	6	3	6
Facebook	3	3	1	3
Twitter	4	3	2	3
YouTube	3			
Spanish Option		•		

Appendix H
Content Analysis Chart

	NFC West			
	Arizona	San Francisco	Seattle	St. Louis
Podcast				
RSS Feeds	•	•	•	•
Forum/Boards	•	•	•	•
Games/Contests	•	•	•	•
Photo Albums	•	•	•	•
Live Broadcasts				
Mobile Services		•		•
Live Audio				
Video/Audio Clip	•	•	•	•
Desktop Alerts		•		•
E-Mail	•	•		•
Newsletters	•	•		•
Feedback Option	•		•	
Live Scores	•			
Merchandise	•	•	•	•
News/Headlines	•	•	•	•
FAQ's			•	•
Membership			•	•
Blog	•	•	•	•
iPhone Apps		•		
Chat				
Polls	•	•	•	
800 Number	•	•	•	•
Site Index/Map	•		•	•
Search Function	•	•	•	•
Fan's Network			•	
Databases				
Web Streaming				
Social Media (Qty)	4	7	3	6
Facebook	3	3	2	3
Twitter	1	3	1	3
YouTube		1		hulu
Spanish Option	•	•		

Appendix I

Population Information for Team Classification

Team	Population Number	Market Classification
Arizona	4,192,887	Large
Atlanta	5,268,860	Large
Baltimore	2,710,489	Small
Buffalo	1,135,590	Small
Carolina	1,758,038	Small
Chicago	9,461,105	Large
Cincinnati	2,130,151	Small
Cleveland	2,077,240	Small
Dallas	6,371,773	Large
Denver	2,543,482	Small
Detroit	4,296,250	Large
Dolphins	5,564,635	Large
Green Bay	306,421	Small
Houston	5,946,800	Large
Indianapolis	1,756,241	Small
Jaguars	1,345,596	Small
Kansas City	2,035,334	Small
Minnesota	3,317,308	Small
New England	4,552,402	Large
New Orleans	1,167,764	Small
New York Giants	18,897,190	Large
New York Jets	18,897,190	Large
Oakland	4,335,931	Large
Philadelphia	5,965,343	Large
Pittsburgh	2,356,285	Small
San Diego	3,095,313	Small
San Francisco	4,335,931	Large
Seattle	3,439,809	Small
St. Louis	2,812,896	Small
Tampa Bay	2,783,243	Small
Tennessee	1,589,934	Small
Washington	5,582,170	Large

Table 1

Frequency of Use Based on Market Size & Conference

		Market Size		**Conference**	
Content Piece	*Teams Using*	*Large*	*Small*	*AFC*	*NFC*
Podcast	9	5	4	5	4
Spanish	12	7	5	9	3
RSS Feeds	31	13	18	15	16
Forums/Boards	24	11	13	12	12
Games/Contests	22	8	14	9	13
Photo Albums	32	14	18	16	16
Mobile Services	25	12	13	15	10
Video/Audio	32	14	18	16	16
Desktop Alerts	7	4	3	3	4
E-mail	19	9	10	10	9
Newsletters	22	10	12	13	9
Feedback	15	7	8	4	11
Merchandise	32	14	18	16	16
News/Headlines	32	14	18	16	16
FAQ's	16	6	10	8	8
Membership	22	8	14	13	9
Blog	26	11	15	12	14
iPhone App	10	5	5	5	5
Chat	5	3	2	5	0
Polls	27	12	15	14	13
800#	19	7	12	9	10
Site Index/Map	32	14	18	16	16
Search Function	31	13	18	16	15
Fans Network	13	7	6	6	7
Webstreaming	3	0	3	2	1

Figure 1. Most Frequently Used New Media Content

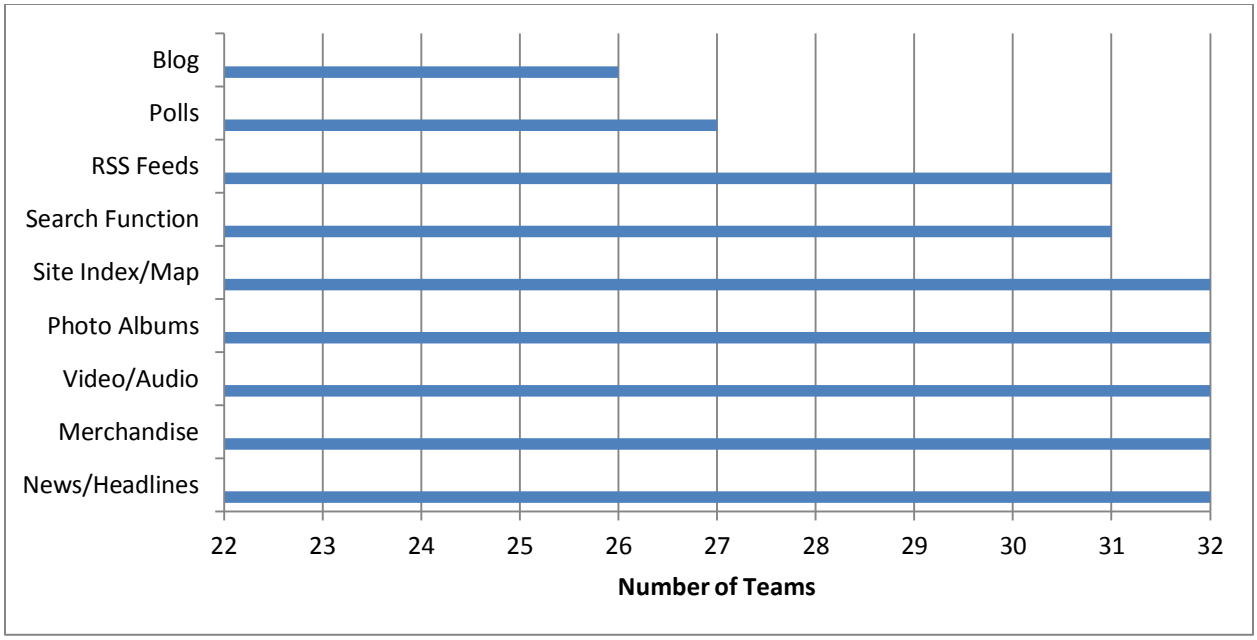

Figure 1. This figure displays the pieces of media content that were mot used by the 32 NFL teams. As depicted, there were five pieces of content that every NFL team utilized. This figure only shows the top 9 nine pieces of content that were most used.

Figure 2. Teams with Most Content Use

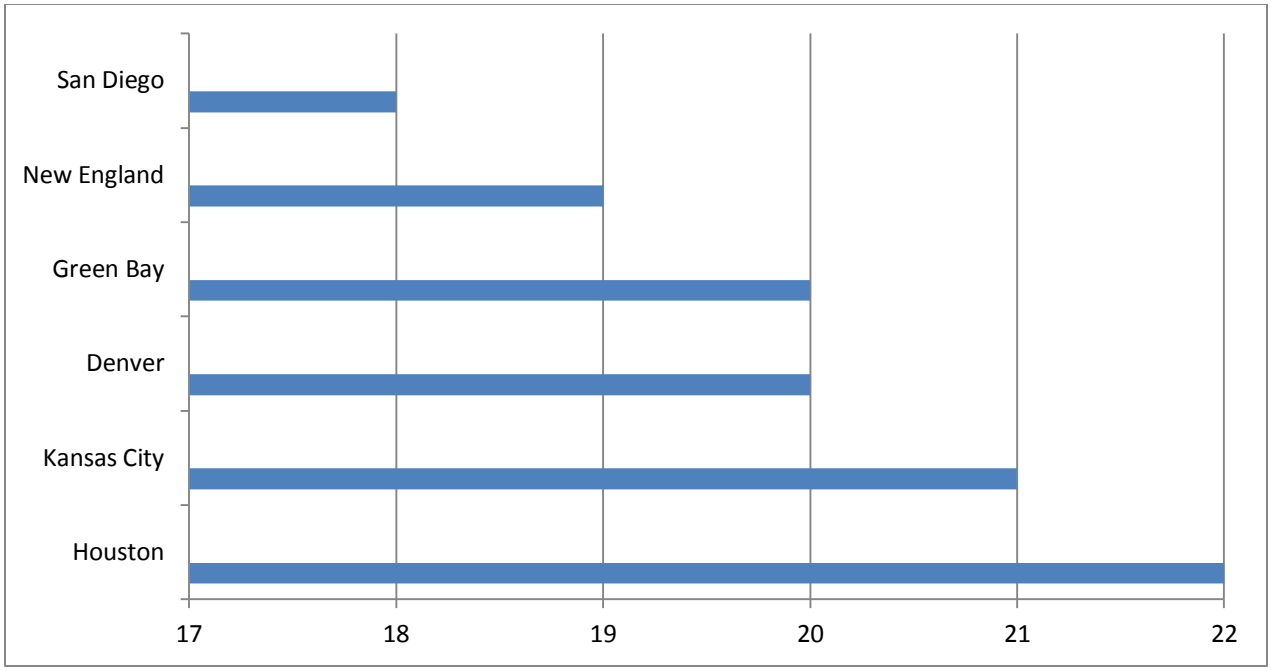

Figure 2. This figure displays the top 6 franchises that had the highest number of content pieces readily present within their official websites on the date of data collection. As shown, Green Bay and Denver tied with 20 pieces of content present.