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Utilization of Social Media Platforms in the National Hockey League

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The rise of social media has created a plethora of new opportunities for the savvy sport marketer. Despite the existence of data pertaining to social media marketing, there is a distinct lack of literature regarding its implementation within the evolving sports industry. Using content analyses of the official National Hockey League and team websites, this study identifies patterns of social media usage around the league. Specifically, it looks into the ways that social media and other forms of web content are used on both the traditional and mobile versions of National Hockey League websites. From the findings, conclusions regarding the current use of social media in the NHL have been drawn.

Utilization of Social Media Platforms in the National Hockey League

As technology and social trends change, sport organizations must adjust accordingly to keep up with the times. This is particularly true within the field of sport marketing, where innovations in technology constantly provide sport organizations with greater opportunities to reach and connect with an audience. Over the past several years, one of the largest trends in the sports industry has been the surging popularity of social media platforms, both on the organizational and consumer ends. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) define social media as "a group of Internet-based applications that build upon the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content" (p. 61). While platforms such as Facebook and Twitter immediately come to mind, social media also takes other forms, such as streaming video, online forums, picture sharing, and podcasts. Many sport organizations have adapted to this in some way or another, implementing league or team-themed Facebook pages, Twitter feeds, and hosting video content on their websites (Kadlecek, 2010). These tools allow teams to establish a deeper connection with their fans, improve brand equity, keep fans up to date on the latest news, and in some cases, generate revenue for the organization. Even experienced sport marketers are still unlocking more and more benefits from social media (Kadlecek, 2010). As a relatively new phenomenon, effective use of social media is still a work in progress for a number of sport organizations and marketers (Talbot, 2010).

While a significant amount of information is known about marketing as a whole and there is a substantial amount of literature regarding sport marketing, there is still a distinct lack of concrete research regarding social media's implementation as a sport marketing tool. Greater understanding of its use within the sports industry should enable future sport marketers to more effectively leverage their web presence in order to achieve their marketing goals. In order to learn more about social media, it is logical to examine the existing work of industry professionals. Doing so will help determine and visualize the current landscape of social media within the world of professional sports.

Ideally, one could examine the sports industry as a whole in order to draw the most accurate and informed conclusions about the state of social media. However, this is not a feasible reality as the sports industry encompasses not only professional sports, but also a number of other fields such as collegiate sports, event management, recreational sports, manufacturing, and a seemingly endless amount of other categories. Undertaking such a widespread study would be both incredibly time-consuming and too difficult to draw real conclusions about any one category of sport. With this in mind, this research focuses solely on the realm of professional sports, and narrows the scope down to one league in particular. For the purpose of this study, the subject of analysis is the National Hockey League.

Literature Review

The rise of social media has drastically changed the landscape of the sporting market. Mangold and Faulds (2009) introduce the New Communications Paradigm model to show the impact of social media on the traditional marketing mix. In the past, messages were sent via an organization, possibly through a marketing firm or their own channel – through traditional form of advertising, public relations, and other forms of promotion. These messages were relayed to the customer who could impact a small number of people based on word of mouth, and possibly give feedback to the organization to complete the cycle. For this most part however, this was a one-way street where the message went straight from the organization to the consumer, and had limited opportunity for growth (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). With the emergence of social media, the New Communications Paradigm dictates that once the message gets to the consumer, it is capable of generating a large amount of "groundswell" (Li & Bernhoff, 2008). Rather than the message simply impacting the receiver and the few people influenced by that target on a personal level, the message is now able to expand and become more popular as it gets shared, liked, or retweeted. Much like a pyramid effect, well-developed messages can quickly branch out to reach a massive audience. With statistical tracking of how much traffic each message receives and where the traffic comes from – both geographically and via web

address – it is becoming easier for marketers to determine whether or not they are conveying effective

messages (Twitter, 2011). As if these statistics are not enough, the social aspect of new media makes it

natural for large amounts of feedback to make its way back to the organization.

The construction of a sport organization's website is very important, as a well-constructed one

has been shown to encourage a higher level of interaction by web users (Youngjin et al., 2011). While

aesthetics and functionality are important attributes for websites, there are other variables that

determine the extent to which users interact with a website. Youngjin, Yong Jae, and Claussen (2011)

developed the Sport Website Acceptance Model (SWAM) that illustrates the aspects that fans find

important when deciding whether or not to use a website. The first four factors are pulled directly from

the Davis's Technology Acceptance Model, and are the "perceived usefulness" of the website in terms of

providing some value for the user, the "perceived ease of use" in terms of navigation, the "perceived

enjoyment" of using the website, and the "perceived trustworthiness" of the content on the website

(Youngjin et al., 2011). On top of those four established factors, the SWAM also includes "sports

involvement" – or the degree to which the user participates in the related sport – and the user's

"psychological commitment" to a team (Youngjin et al., 2011). According to the model, these six factors

impact the user's intention, which then dictates the extent to which the user engages with the website

(Youngjin et al., 2011). With this in mind, it is clear that those in charge of NHL websites – and sport

websites as a whole – must do what they can to ensure that the four attributes directly related to the

website encourage interaction. While the content creators and webmasters have no control over the

users' level of involvement in the related sport, they can utilize external platforms such as Facebook and

Twitter to increase the fan base's psychological commitment to the team by developing a tribal

mentality amongst fans, as theorized by Smith and Westerbeek.

It has been suggested that social media will serve as a bonding tool amongst fans and

spectators. Smith and Westerbeek (2010) theorize that the rapidly evolving role of social technology in

sports will, or may already be, creating a new environment in which fans are so actively engaged with

like-minded fans that they form a "powerful tribal belonging" (p. 352). While fan groups may already be

considered "tribes" in a sense, their bond stems solely from the fact that they support the same team.

As social media fosters fan-to-fan interaction, this somewhat primitive group evolves into one that more

closely resembles a community rather than simply a group of followers (Smith & Westerbeek, 2010).

Individuals from opposite ends of the country or even the world, who would likely have never met, can

all come together and have positive interactions as a result of supporting the same team. Sport

marketers must be aware of these developing cliques and attempt to properly engage their fan bases in

ways that appeal to this tribe mentality.

Social media is not simply a channel for communication in the sports industry; it also motivates

businesses to involve themselves with sport organizations via sponsorships (Santomier, 2008). While

sponsorships have long since been a part of the sports industry, the rise of social media has provided

additional incentive for businesses to sponsor teams or events. Compared to advertisements in the mass

media, messages relayed via social media are more easily counted and tracked by those controlling the

content (Santomier, 2008). Additionally, consumers are more immediately capable of acting on a

sponsor's message; it is easier for a consumer to click on a sponsor's link to find out more about their

product or service than it is for a consumer to take note of a commercial or sponsor's message during a

sporting event, recall that message later, and act upon it by making a purchase. These factors make

sport sponsorships incredibly appealing to companies seeking out a measurable and effective

advertising channel (Santomier, 2008).

The rise of social media has led to the creation of highly developed, thematically focused

strategic marketing initiatives that have increased the value of sport sponsorships. An example of this

can be seen in Cisco's release of NHL team-themed flip video cameras (Cisco, 2010). This product launch

leveraged the popularity of social media and the NHL by releasing a product that allowed consumers to

display their team colors on a product that directly relates to the creation of social media in the form of videos. Cisco and the NHL took it one step further by holding a contest on Facebook where daily prize winners received the team camera of their choice, and the grand prize winner also received tickets to the annual NHL All-Star Game (Cisco, 2010). This is just one of many examples of a multi-layered, creative and thematically linked marketing campaign that leverages the fan base of a sport entity, the innovative design of a product, and the popularity of social media.

Although social media is a powerful marketing tool, it is important to remember that it is in an infant stage and is still not entirely understood. Crolley's 2008 study on Spanish soccer teams discovered that although the teams from Spain's top league utilized various web-based strategies to communicate with fans, the teams generally struggled to make the connections that they sought out in their marketing efforts in order to improve brand equity. Overall, they failed to strengthen their own brand identity and association with fans despite their efforts to create web content using their specific region's native indigenous dialects. This uncertainty about how to effectively use the internet and social media was echoed in an interview panel consisting of numerous American major league professional team marketers who admitted that their current understanding of social media was limited but improving in terms of being able to generate revenue and inspire consumer purchases (Kadlecek, 2010). Various representatives from Major League Baseball, the National Football League, the National Basketball Association and the National Hockey League all agreed that they had much to learn about the usage of social media in a sport marketing context (Kadlecek, 2010).

The role of social media may become even more important for sport organizations in the future. Statistics indicate that teens and young adults are frequent users of social media. Sago (2010) examines the impact of social media on members of the Millennial Generation – those born between 1982 and 2002 – a group made up of roughly 80 million people. Of this large population, 71% of people aged 18-24 use social networking regularly while 70% of females and 54% of males aged 12-17 make use of social

networking (Sago, 2010). As these members of the Millennial Generation grow and accumulate discretionary income, they will become a major asset to any sport organization. With this in mind, it is clear that marketers must find ways to attract the attention of this population in particular by relaying messages where they will most likely be seen – via social media.

While there has been some research done on the fairly new topic of social media in sports, there is still a distinct lack of literature regarding its actual application within professional sports. This study examines the implementation of social media throughout the National Hockey League (NHL) by investigating the methods used by the league as a whole as well as the club teams. It addresses the question of "Which forms of social media and other web content are used most frequently by the NHL and its member clubs?" This is significant to sport marketers as it illustrates the social media trends within one of North America's largest and most publicized leagues. Additionally, it seeks to highlight the developed patterns of social media platform usage by answering the question "What usage patterns have emerged from the NHL and its member clubs?"

Method

This research examines the websites of the thirty National Hockey League teams, as well as the league's main website. In total, these thirty one websites were subject to examination. In order to determine the methods currently being used to create a social media presence for the NHL and its clubs, a few steps were taken. First, a thorough list of the different forms of social media was developed specifically for the purpose of this study, and categorized into broader sections. For instance, video content consisted of live streaming video and stored streaming video, and was also broken down into subcategories of game highlights, player or coach interviews, promotional videos, and so on. Likewise, social networking encompasses links or mentioning of Twitter feeds, Facebook posts, Foursquare, official fan forums, and other forms of interactive platforms. The comprehensive list can be seen in Appendix A.

Using this list, two separate content analyses were conducted. The first content analysis examined the traditional versions of the thirty one websites as accessed from a computer. During this process, each of the official websites was scoured individually to determine which pieces of content from the list were present on their websites. In order to keep the research manageable within the projected timeframe, only content on the home page or available via a link from the home page was recorded in this study. The findings were recorded by hand on the worksheet shown in Appendix A. This first analysis provides an informative background on which forms of social media are the most common, which are used sparingly, and which are disregarded entirely.

While the traditional, computer-oriented version of the website is important, new media trends dictate that websites should be compatible on devices other than standard computers. Smith's 2011 study on the usage of smartphones reveals that 25 percent of surveyed smartphone owners rely on their device as their primary means of browsing the internet (Smith, 2011). In order to determine the amount of social media utilized on the NHL's mobile websites, a second content analysis was applied to the mobile form of the thirty one sites, as viewed from an HTC Droid Incredible smartphone, which utilizes the Android operating system. Apple devices were not used due to their lack of compatibility with Adobe Flash. This content analysis was also recorded by hand using the worksheet displayed in Appendix A. For the mobile analysis, information was recorded from the home page as well as from the "Menu" that allows for navigation of the website. The unique study of the mobile websites is important because as more people purchase smartphones and tablets, there will be a higher demand for a greater level of functionality on mobile versions of websites. The purpose of this distinct analysis is to determine which features of the traditional websites are also present on the mobile versions. It could be argued that mobile versions of websites are already a necessity as consumers often attempt to access web material on-the-go.

The categories of content that were tallied are "Social Networking," "Video Content," "Audio Content," and "Text Content". Under the division of Social Networking, the analysis includes Facebook (with separate spaces for an on-site Facebook Feed and a link to the team's Facebook Page), Twitter (likewise, with distinct spaces for an on-site Twitter Feed and a link to the team's Twitter page), the locational networking site Foursquare, the professional networking site LinkedIn, the relatively new Google+, Myspace, as well as an official team forum or message board. The second category, Video Content, was broken down into two subcategories: Youtube and On-Site Video. Within the category of Youtube, there were two distinctions. The first is for actual videos (or links to videos), while the second is a link to an official Youtube channel. On-Site video was broken down into Highlights, Interviews (including players, coaches, management, and press conferences), Promotional Videos (videos that promote the team, upcoming games, or upcoming events and promotions), Live Feed (actual video streaming of a live game), and the presence of a team-run "Web TV" channel. The third category, Audio Content, was broken down similarly to the videos. This included Interviews (again, with players, coaches, management, or press conferences), Promotional Audio (audio that promotes the team, upcoming games, or upcoming events and promotions), and Live Feed (audio streaming of a live game). Finally, the category of Text Content was comprised of Game Recaps, Team News (not including recaps of games; includes upcoming events, transactions, and any other information related to the team), and Ticket Information. Both the traditional and mobile versions of each website were examined, and in each case the different forms of content were either marked "Yes" for being present on the home page, or "No" for not being present.

In order to examine the sites under similar circumstances, each team's site was analyzed on a Sunday, following a Saturday game. The thought process behind this is to ensure that each site's analysis is conducted under similar conditions. Having some websites examined during a stretch of multiple days

without games while others are examined the day after a game would not allow for quite as strong relationships to be drawn from the data.

After collecting this information, a few steps were taken to analyze the data. First, frequencies were generated to determine how many times each different form of content was present altogether. This information was used to make direct comparisons between the different forms of content used around the league, and also to compare the frequencies of each form of content on the traditional and mobile versions of websites. Additionally, a Pearson bivariate correlation test was used on the entire data set in order to discover pertinent relationships between the usages of any two forms of content.

Results

Research Question One

Using the compiled findings from the websites around the National Hockey League, it is possible to determine exactly how often each form of web content was present. This provides a response to the first research question, "Which forms of social media and other web content are used most frequently by the NHL and its member clubs?" The frequencies of the social media platforms and other web content can be seen in Appendices B through I, broken down by each section. As seen in Appendix B, the current usage of Social Networking on the traditional versions of NHL websites is somewhat expected. Facebook and Twitter are clearly the most commonly used platforms. 30 of the 31 sites featured a link to an official Twitter profile (labeled "TWLink" in Appendix B), while 14 of the sites featured a live feed of Twitter activity ("TWFeed" in Appendix B) on their home page. Facebook had similar numbers, with 29 links ("FBLink") and 14 feeds ("FBFeed"). After those two social networks, the next highest frequency was an official Forum or message board ("Forum"), of which there were 22. The newer networking site Google Plus ("GooglePlus") was found on 9 of the sites, while Foursquare, LinkedIn, and Myspace showed up on 5, 2, and 0 sites respectively.

This is in stark contrast to what was discovered on the mobile versions of the websites. Surprisingly, there were no occurrences of Facebook, Twitter, GooglePlus, Foursquare, LinkedIn, or Myspace on any of the 31 mobile websites examined. The only exception was that there was 1 link to an official forum (labeled "mForum" in Appendix C), but other than that, no social networks were present. Considering how social networks such as Twitter, Facebook and Foursquare are frequently used on mobile devices, it is quite shocking that not a single mobile site made any mention of those networks.

Video content was also examined, taking into account both on-site video and Youtube. All 31 traditional websites possessed their own video library hosted on their NHL website ("VidWebTV" in Appendix D). Additionally, game highlight videos ("VidHighlight") were present in all 31 sites, while interview videos ("VidInterview") and promotional videos hyping the team or upcoming events ("VidPromotion") were seen on 29 and 28 of the sites, respectively. On top of the on-site video, many teams also featured Youtube video content. Out of the 31 sites, 11 of them featured a link to their official Youtube channel ("YTChannel") while only 4 featured a Youtube video ("YTVideo") on their home page.

On the mobile versions of the websites, only on-site video content was featured, and even this was infrequent. Only 9 sites featured video highlights of games ("mVidHighlight" in Appendix E), while only 6 contained a video interview ("mVidInterview") or links to the site's video library ("mWebTV"). Additionally, only 4 had videos promoting upcoming games or events ("mVidPromotion"). None of the sites featured an online live feed where users could watch games ("mVidLiveFeed"), or any Youtube channels or videos ("mYTChannel" and "mYTVideo").

Audio was quite popular on the websites, as all 31 featured links where users could listen to, but not watch, live streams of games ("AudLiveFeed" in Appendix F). In most cases, this was an online feed of a radio station local to one or both of the participating teams. Additionally, 12 of the sites contained audio interviews of players, coaches, or other members of the staff ("AudInterview"). Promotional audio

clips ("AudPromotion") were featured on only 5 of the sites. On the mobile sites, there were no instances of any audio content, as seen by the 0 value for live feeds ("mAudLiveFeed"), interviews ("mAudInterview"), and promotions ("mAudPromotion") in Appendix G.

Text-based content had the greatest frequencies across traditional websites. All 31 websites featured text-based game recaps ("TextRecap"), text-based league or team news ("TextNews"), and ticket information ("TextTickets") as shown in Appendix H. Of all the major categories, text content on traditional websites was the only one with a 100 percent frequency rate in all forms of content. On the mobile sites, there was only a minor decline. Once again, all 31 websites featured game recaps ("mTextRecap" in Appendix I) and news ("mTextNews"), while 29 of the sites featured ticket purchasing information ("mTextTickets").

Research Question Two

All of the frequencies mentioned above were put to the test of two-tailed Pearson bivariate correlations. Every single form of content was measured against every other form in order to discover any significant relationships or patterns linking the usage of two forms. In doing so, this provides an answer to the second research question, "What usage patterns have emerged from the NHL and its member clubs?" This led to some findings that were somewhat expected as well as some that were not. The entire list of significant relationships can be found in Appendix J.

There were a number of significant relationships that featured either a Facebook link or a Facebook feed. There was a significant correlation between having both a Facebook feed and a Twitter feed, $r = .479$, $p < .01$. Additionally, there was a strong relationship between having a Facebook link as well as a Twitter link, $r = .695$, $p < .01$. A negative relationship between having a Facebook feed and an official forum or message board was also discovered, $r = -.419$, $p < .05$. Similarly, there was a negative relationship between having a Facebook link on the traditional page and a link to an official forum on the mobile website, $r = -.695$, $p = < .01$. There was also a significant relationship discovered between

having a Facebook feed and a Youtube channel, $r = .411$, $p < .05$. Finally, there was a negative relationship between having a Facebook link on the traditional website and having video highlights available on the mobile version, $r = -.411$, $p < .05$.

Only a handful of significant relationships were discovered featuring social networking platforms other than Facebook. The most common theme amongst these other relationships was the presence of a mobile forum, as seen in the relationships featuring mobile video interviews ($r = .373$, $p < .05$), mobile video promotions ($r = .474$, $p < .001$) and mobile Web TV channels ($r = .373$, $p < .05$) as shown in Appendix J. However, since only one mobile website featured a mobile forum, these relationships should be taken with a grain of salt and are not truly indicative of any league-wide trend. Aside from Facebook and mobile forums, there were only two other significant relationships featuring social networks. One such relationship exists between Foursquare and the presence of a video live feed on the traditional website, ($r = .599$, $p < .01$). Additionally, GooglePlus and Audio Interviews on the traditional websites possessed a significant relationship, ($r = .513$, $p < .01$).

The different forms of video content were involved in many significant relationships. Aside from the aforementioned ones involving social networks, nine other relationships were discovered. The strongest relationship exists between having a mobile Web TV channel and featuring mobile video interviews, $r = 1.000$, $p < .01$. Additionally, there were relationships between having a mobile Web TV channel and having either mobile video highlights ($r = .766$, $p < .01$) or mobile video promotions ($r = .786$, $p < .01$). A number of relationships involve the presence of mobile video highlights, which have significant correlations with mobile video interviews ($r = .766$, $p < .01$), mobile video promotions ($r = .602$, $p < .01$), and mobile text-based information about tickets ($r = -.411$, $p < .05$). Was also a relationship between having traditional video interviews and traditional video promotions ($r = .358$, $p < .05$). The mobile variation of that relationship, between mobile video interviews and mobile video promotions was much stronger, $r = .786$, $p < .01$. Finally, there was a negative relationship between

having a traditional link to a live video stream and offering users text-based ticket information on the

mobile website, $r = -.466$, $p < .01$. The only significant relationship between two forms of audio content

was between audio interviews and audio promotions, $r = .372$, $p < .05$.

Discussion

The frequencies of social media and other content used around the NHL had some results that

were expected while others were quite surprising. The high frequency of Facebook and Twitter usage on

the traditional websites comes as no surprise given the current landscape of social media. The fact that

29 of the sites linked to an official Facebook page and 30 linked to a Twitter profile shows the

dominance of those two social media giants in 2012. If anything, it is somewhat surprising that all 31

home pages did not feature both, given their massive popularity and the trends of the sports industry.

The popularity of official forums or message boards as a social network was somewhat

surprising. Twenty-two of the traditional websites featured a forum, which seems somewhat redundant

given the popularity of Facebook as a platform for discussion. One possible reason for this is that forums

allow for strict moderation and a greater sense of control over the ideas and messages that are

expressed and exposed to users. Since there was a negative correlation between having a Facebook feed

and a forum, it is possible that teams with a Facebook feed are beginning to make the transition and are

no longer using forums as their official discussion location.

The most shocking finding of this study was that the mobile versions of the NHL websites

contained such a miniscule amount of social media or networking. Given that social media is so

frequently used on mobile devices, it was expected that the mobile versions of these websites would

contain a high frequency of social media content. The fact that not a single mobile website featured any

Facebook, Twitter, Foursquare, LinkedIn, GooglePlus, or Youtube content is rather confusing. This raises

the issue of whether there is a private league-wide restriction that prohibits certain social media usage

on mobile websites, or if the lack of content simply boils down to the mobile webmasters failing to

include any. If the latter is the case, then those in charge of NHL websites need to take advantage of the mobile nature of web browsing in 2012.

Some of the correlations discovered throughout this research were rather significant when it comes to determining meaningful and impactful relationships between different forms of web content. As previously mentioned, the negative correlation between Facebook feeds and official forums may indicate that some teams are choosing one or the other as the location for team-related conversation. In the future, it is plausible that the number of forums used will drop while the number of Facebook feeds increases.

The positive relationship between having a Facebook feed and an official Youtube channel is quite meaningful. Since feeds, as opposed to Facebook links, go above and beyond the standard of simply operating a Facebook page, it is sensible that those who take that extra step also go the extra mile when it comes to video content. While many of the sites examined were content to use only the on-site video, many of those who had a Facebook feed on their home page also featured a link to their own Youtube channel. Since Youtube is such a popular and frequently used website that allows for people to find related videos that they were not even searching for, it makes sense for teams to release their video content on this site as well as their on-site channels. The challenge that this creates, however, is that teams will be required to create more video content which can be burdensome for the content creators.

Additionally, the strong relationships between various types of on-site video content, such as interviews, promotions, and highlights are all linked to the presence of a Web TV channel, which all 31 traditional sites possessed. Most of the Web TV channels featured very similar content, albeit in differing quantities. Since this study only sought to determine whether or not certain types of content were present on the websites, as opposed to the frequency with which each type appears on each site, there is little statistical variation when it comes to the on-site video content.

Other statistically significant correlations do not seem to be very meaningful when it comes to making implications about the current or future state of web content in the NHL. For instance, the positive correlation between GooglePlus and audio interviews does not say much, if anything, about how social media is being used. Instead, it seems to be more of a coincidental relationship, since these two types of content are hardly related in any fashion. Also, the relationships involving mobile forums must be taken with a grain of salt since only one site featured that content.

Due to the consistent presence of text-based game recaps, news, and ticket information on traditional websites, no significant relationships were discovered. On the mobile sites, only text-based ticket information was not present on every single website, and even still it was featured on 29 of them. There was a significant negative relationship between mobile ticket information and links to a live video stream of a game on traditional websites. However, due to the fact that only two sites featured the latter, this relationship should not be given too much thought. The same can be said about the relationship between live streams and Foursquare.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it is clear that National Hockey League teams must alter their current social media practices on their mobile websites. It is inexcusable that the most popular social media platforms are not being leveraged on the mobile versions of the league and team websites. If the league and its teams are serious about developing a strong social media presence, then they must not overlook the importance of mobile browsing and the potential for growing their online audience.

Limitations

A few key limitations restricted this research from being more informative and meaningful. Most importantly, each website was only examined one time for the traditional and mobile versions. While this allowed for a good overview of what each site contained, it is possible that certain content

was simply missing on the day that it a site was analyzed. In order to gain a clearer picture of what was

on the websites, it would have been ideal to examine each site on at least two different dates.

A second major limitation is that, for the sake of simplicity, content was only marked as present

if it was accessible from the main page of the traditional website or the main menu of the mobile page.

This flaw created some misleading information. For instance, the league and all thirty teams have a

Facebook and Twitter page, but there were a few sites that did not feature them on their home pages

and so they were marked as not being present. While it seems that the simple solution would be to

include whatever content is available regardless of location, this would have significantly complicated

the data collection phase and created more room for error based on how difficult certain content was

too find.

A third limitation is the uncertainty regarding the mobile policies implemented around the

league. This study worked under the assumption that any form of content could be found on either the

traditional or mobile websites. Based on the findings, it is possible that some league mandate prohibits

teams from featuring social media content such as Youtube videos or Facebook profiles on their mobile

sites.

Finally, the last major limitation is that this study did not include official mobile applications as a

third location for content. Upon analysis of the NHL websites, it was discovered that some teams

released their own mobile applications that may have more social media content available than their

standard mobile websites. As mentioned above, using these applications as a source for content would

have significantly complicated the process. Also, scouring these applications for content would have

created an imbalance in the data since not all teams have released a mobile application.

Directions for Future Research

This study serves as a 2012 progress report to evaluate the current state of sport marketing

campaigns in the NHL. It provides a solid framework with which to analyze future content as the

league's social media tendencies shift. Numerous ideas could be expanded on in order to increase the breadth of the research. It would be beneficial to the league and to sport marketers in general to collect this data on a yearly basis, with multiple recordings for each website, in order to mark the progress that the league makes as a whole. Doing so will allow for trends, as opposed to simple relationships, to develop. Sport marketers outside of the NHL can examine those trends and use them to emulate a major professional league.

Additionally, an alternative study could be conducted that provides an in-depth analysis of exactly how many instances of each form of content appear on each site. This would allow for a better understanding of what the websites' on-site Web TV channels are being used for the most, as opposed to simply recognizing the few types of content that are available on the team or league channels.

Sport organizations do not have unlimited funds, and as such it is imperative that they get the most out of each marketing platform available to them. For the most part, sport organizations have primarily latched onto the biggest and most popular social media platforms, not wanting to become overburdened by the massive amount of them that exist. Whether or not teams would be better off by further diversifying their social media efforts is yet to be seen. Due to the low cost of utilizing social media, savvy marketers may be able to use this information as a foundation for their own marketing campaigns.

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Appendix A

NHL Website Content Analysis

Site Type: Traditional Mobile   **Website:** _____   **Date Accessed:** _____

- -

Social Networking

Facebook		Twitter		Foursquare	LinkedIn	Google+	Myspace	Forum
Feed	Page Link	Feed	Page Link					

Others: _____

Video Content

Youtube			On-Site Video				
Channel	Video/Link		Highlights	Interview	Promo	Live Feed	Web TV

Others: _____

Audio Content

Interview	Promo	Live Feed

Others: _____

Text Content

Recaps	Team News	Ticket Info

Others: _____

Appendix B

Social Networking Content (Traditional Website)

Content	Yes	No
FBFeed	14	17
FBLink	29	2
TWFeed	14	17
TWLink	30	1
FourSquare	5	26
LinkedIn	2	29
GooglePlus	9	22
Myspace	0	31
Forum	22	9

Appendix C

Social Networking Content (Mobile Website)

Content	Yes	No
mFBFeed	0	31
mFBLink	0	31
mTWFeed	0	31
mTWLink	0	31
mFourSquare	0	31
mLinkedIn	0	31
mGooglePlus	0	31
mMyspace	0	31
mForum	1	30

Appendix D

Video Content (Traditional Website)

Content	Yes	No
YTChannel	11	20
YTVideo	4	27
VidHighlight	31	0
VidInterview	29	2
VidPromotion	28	3
VidLiveFeed	2	29

VidWebTV   31   0

Appendix E

Video Content (Mobile Website)

Content	Yes	No
mYTChannel	0	31
mYTVideo	0	31
mVidHighlight	9	22
mVidInterview	6	25
mVidPromotion	4	27
mVidLiveFeed	0	31
mVidWebTV	6	25

Appendix F

Audio Content (Traditional Website)

Content	Yes	No
AudInterview	12	19
AudPromo	5	26
AudLiveFeed	31	0

Appendix G

Audio Content (Mobile Website)

Content	Yes	No
mAudInterview	0	31
mAudPromo	0	31
mAudLiveFeed	0	31

Appendix H

Text Content (Traditional Website)

Content	Yes	No
TextRecap	31	0

TextNews	31	0
TextTickets	31	0

Appendix I

Text Content (Mobile Website)

Content	Yes	No
mTextRecap	31	0
mTextNews	31	0
mTextTickets	29	2

Appendix J

Significant Relationships

Relationship	r	p
FBFeed & TWFeed	0.479	.006**
FBFeed & Forum	-0.419	.019*
FBFeed & YTChannel	0.411	.022*
FBLink & TWLink	0.695	.000**
FBLink & mForum	-0.695	.000**
FBLink & mVidHighlight	-0.411	.022*
Foursquare & VidLiveFeed	0.599	.000**
GooglePlus & AudInterview	0.513	.003**
VidInterview & VidPromotion	0.358	.048*
VidLiveFeed & mTextTickets	-0.466	.008**
AudInterview & AudPromotion	0.372	.039*
mForum & mVidInterview	0.373	.039*
mForum & mVidPromotion	0.474	.007**
mForum & mVidWebTV	0.373	.039*
mVidHighlight & mVidInterview	0.766	.000**
mVidHighlight & mVidPromotion	0.602	.000**
mVidHighlight & mVidWebTV	0.766	.000**
mVidHighlight & mTextTickets	.-411	.022*
mVidInterview & mVidPromotion	0.786	.000**
mVidInterview & mVidWebTV	1	.000**

mVidPromotion & mVidWebTV   0.786   .000**

***Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)
** Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)