



# Who is the better player? Off-field battle on Facebook and Twitter

Teresa Tiago<sup>\*</sup>, Flávio Tiago, Sandra Dias Faria, João Pedro Couto

*University of the Azores, Rua da Mae de Deus, 9501 Ponta Delgada, Portugal*

## KEYWORDS

Social media;  
Customer Relationship Management;  
Facebook and Twitter;  
Fan engagement;  
Athletes

**Abstract** Social media networks have become essential to the modern business world, and are especially vital for sports firms and athletes. Social media networks are new channels for firms to connect with their audience and establish a social customer relationship. For sports firms, athletes play a special role, as they are the firms' ambassadors and the focus of virtual communities of fans. For most athletes, social media is a powerful tool to take advantage of their time in the spotlight. However, social media has much more potential. This work analyzes the social media profile and content created by six well-known sports figures—Cristiano Ronaldo, Lionel Messi, Tom Brady, Aaron Rodgers, LeBron James, and Kevin Durant—to develop a model (STAR) for social media use. The adoption of this model can enhance fan engagement online and therefore increase athletes' and firms' brand value and connectivity with consumers.

© 2015 Kelley School of Business, Indiana University. Published by Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

## 1. The social media movement

Social networking increases the size of one's personal network through meeting friends of friends or family, and their friends or family. The ability to enlarge and maintain a personal network has been widely studied from a sociological perspective, and the key actors in these networks are the customers and users of a firm's products and services. This display of connections became digitally available

via social network sites, including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Badoo, and Orkut. These digital platforms give anonymous people—sometimes with less social ability—the capability to belong to wider networks with others who have common interests, and to be active participants in creating, sharing, and removing content. Social networking has become a valuable tool for sports firms and athletes. Thus, the primary objective of this study was to analyze social media content and develop a model for social media use for sports firms and athletes.

The exponential growth and influence of social media on firm and consumer behavior over the past decade has been well documented (Berthon, Pitt,

<sup>\*</sup> Corresponding author

E-mail addresses: [mariaborges@uac.pt](mailto:mariaborges@uac.pt) (T. Tiago), [flaviotiago@uac.pt](mailto:flaviotiago@uac.pt) (F. Tiago), [sfaria@uac.pt](mailto:sfaria@uac.pt) (S.D. Faria), [jpedro@uac.pt](mailto:jpedro@uac.pt) (J.P. Couto)

Plangger, & Shapiro, 2012; Dollinger, 2015; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Tiago & Veríssimo, 2014). As social media became more common, firms and brands developed new communication approaches to generate revenue through interactive online tools (Filo, Lock, & Karg, 2015).

In 2014, social media was saturated with official and co-created content about the World Cup and Champions League. Athletes, sports organizations, and sports businesses were in the spotlight of millions of users worldwide. With fans, athletes, sports organizations, and journalists engaging in social media platforms, brand management and sports communication can be leveraged through social media adoption (Holzner, 2008).

In 2010, Kaplan and Haenlein suggested that firms could decide to either participate in this communication or continue to ignore it. Currently, the decision to participate in social media can be made by sports firms, but no longer by sports organizations or athletes since fans consume the media's representation of sports and sports figures. Through social media adoption, the representation of sports and athletes is composed of constantly changing tweets, 'likes,' videos, photos, and movies from firms, athletes, and other fans.

Social media has changed the sports world, making information instantaneously available to view, comment on, and share. In particular, social media can create or destroy images in real-time, since content communication about brands, sports events, and athletes occurs with or without permission from sports firms or athletes (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Although social media sites such as Facebook, Google+, Vine, and SportNetwork are considerably changing the sports world (Pieper, 2013), Twitter is still preferred by millions of users (Hull & Schmittel, 2015). An in-depth analysis of these networks shows that Twitter users can easily search for other people with similar interests by using hashtags (Hull & Schmittel, 2015).

According to Baird and Parasnis (2011a), firms must incorporate social media programs with customer relationship management (CRM). For the sports industry, this creates a unique opportunity to leverage the 'fan-sport' relationship and transform fans into consumers of the brands.

Gwinner and Swanson (2003) examined the impact of fan identification on brand sponsorship outcomes, acknowledging four distinctive impacts: sponsor recognition, attitude toward the sponsor, sponsor patronage, and satisfaction with the sponsor. However, sports revenues are not confined to sponsorship, and can be driven by ticket sales, players' value in the sports market, and media streams

(Fort & Winfree, 2013). Therefore, the relationship between fan attitudes and sports figures, organizations, and brands is crucial to many sports firms' performance. Brands must consider the implications of adopting social media, such as the requirements to set clear objectives, establish a uniform attitude toward social media, integrate social media with the traditional communication and promotion strategies, and—above all—explore the fan-sports figure relationship and fan identification with the brand.

Social media creates a digital proximity between fans and athletes, particularly for those sports figures that use social media to invite interaction and leverage engagement and brand value. Considering global sports figures, we focus on players who are active in social media—specifically Facebook and Twitter—and who have a large number of followers. We studied:

- Cristiano Ronaldo (soccer player for Real Madrid);
- Lionel Messi (soccer player for Barcelona);
- Tom Brady (football player for the New England Patriots);
- Aaron Rodgers (football player for the Green Bay Packers);
- LeBron James (basketball player for the Cleveland Cavaliers); and
- Kevin Durant (basketball player for the Oklahoma City Thunder).

Filo et al. (2015) performed a careful review of the literature concerning sports and social media and noticed that most studies focused on Twitter, neglecting the other social networks. As advised by Billings, Butterworth, and Turman (2014), and as shown in Figure 1, focusing on Twitter can be deceiving, since in most cases the community built around the athletes is smaller than on Facebook. Even though the data retrieval process is open access, it will not cover all the sports figures and fan interactions. Therefore, further research of other social network sites with different analysis metrics is required.

In summary, as the social network phenomenon continues to evolve, sports organizations that focus on long-term consumer retention can improve their CRM and strengthen their brand value by adopting an active digital presence and promoting sports figures' activity on diverse social media sites.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/1013920>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/1013920>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)