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Sharing is Caring

An Exploration of Motivations for Social Sharing and Locational Social Media Usage among Sport Fans

Galen Clavio
Evan Frederick

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine motivations for social sharing and using locational social media within the framework of uses and gratifications. Specifically, fans of five college football teams were surveyed regarding social sharing and their use of locational social media applications. Exploratory factor analysis revealed two factors for the social sharing of sport-related check-ins, including promotion, fanship, and personal gain. Regarding incentives for the future use of locational social media and social sharing, fans revealed that they were motivated by recognition and monetary factors. The findings indicated a strong desire among fans to feel a sense a community and receive recognition when engaging in social sharing or using locational social media applications. These and other findings are discussed, and recommendations for sport organizations interested in promotion of social sharing are provided.

Keywords: *locational social media; social sharing; sport communication; fanship; community*

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In less than a decade, social media platforms have woven their way into the cultural fabric of sports, effectively altering the very nature of sport-based communication. Social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook have changed the way we engage with others, providing centralized digital locations for interaction (Wallace, Wilson, & Miloch, 2011). Due to their ability to impact interaction among vested constituencies, sport organizations have begun to utilize social media to further their communication and marketing efforts (Coyle, 2010). With the increased use of these platforms came a heightened interest among both professionals and academics regarding the implications of their use.

Social sharing has been recognized as a concept that is bigger than any one individual social medium (Armano, 2010). Described as “the broadcasting of our thoughts and activities” (Armano, 2010, ¶3) via social media, social sharing encompasses a wide variety of social media activities, including a user’s feelings on a product or service, their past, current, or future activities, their likes and dislikes, and even images and video focusing on a particular event or occurrence. Social sharing has become a major part of the architecture of sites such as Facebook and Twitter during the lifespan of both social mediums’ development.

Closely related to social sharing is the development of locational social media. While the body of research examining various types of social media has grown tremendously in recent years, locational social media is an untapped research area waiting to be explored. Locational social media is defined as any media application that allows users to engage in social interaction based on their physical location by utilizing the GPS data on their smartphone (Clavio, 2013). One of the most popular locational social media is Foursquare, which allows users to check-in at locations and receive awards for frequent check-ins. Following its introduction, multiple popular press articles suggested techniques in which Foursquare (and other locational social media) could be used effectively by sport entities during sporting events (“40 Ways”; Foster, 2010). Additionally, Buchheim (2011) suggested that locational social media such as Foursquare serve a greater purpose for sport fans, as checking in at one’s favorite sport venue acts as a valuable status symbol where the individual can engage with the sport entity. Other social media possess locational social media features and characteristics, including Facebook with its check-in feature, the crowd-sourced review app Yelp, and Twitter with its relatively nascent geo-tagging features. Despite the variety of locational social media and the opinion surrounding these services, there is a lack of empirical evidence indicating how these media impact the fan experience.

Due to the rapid creation and growth of social media platforms, there is an increased need to understand the audiences that are utilizing these mediums (Clavio & Walsh, 2013) and the types of social sharing that they allow. Furthermore, there is a need to understand the wants and desires of individuals using locational social media, as these applications have become a popular phenomenon within sport with no existing empirical research. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to

explore motivations for social sharing and using locational social media. In order to accomplish these tasks, the uses and gratifications approach was employed as this study's theoretical framework. This study was one of the first known attempts to ascertain the motivations for social sharing and using locational social media. Furthermore, this was one of the first studies to provide recommendations for sport management practitioners regarding the use of these applications.

Review of Literature

Uses and Gratifications on the Internet

This research is grounded in the uses and gratifications perspective (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974), which shifts from a direct effects perspective to assessing how users consume media to fulfill certain needs (Fisher, 1978). This perspective is based in the concept of active audience, which refers to the utility, intentionality, selectivity, and involvement of the user with the medium (Blumler, 1979). According to Rubin (2009), individuals within a media audience are active communicators rather than passive recipients of media messages. In that regard, the uses and gratifications perspective stresses that media behavior is goal-directed in nature, with media users making conscience decisions regarding their media use (Clavio & Walsh, 2013; Rubin, 2009).

Ruggiero (2000) stated that uses and gratifications perspective is a "cutting-edge theoretical approach" that can be used in the early stages of new communication media (p. 27). Furthermore, Clavio and Walsh (2013) stated that uses and gratifications is well suited for the study of social media due to the nature of its users and the unique media experience that the platforms provide. That being said, uses and gratifications has been applied to the consumption of specific Internet platforms such as message boards (Clavio, 2008) and blogs (Armstrong & McAdams, 2011; Hollenbaugh, 2011; Kaye, 2010; Kim, 2011; Sweetser & Kaid, 2008; Sweetser, Porter, Chung, & Kim, 2008; Trammell, 2005). In his examination of sport message board users, Clavio (2008) revealed four dimensions of gratification, including interactivity, information sharing, diversion, and argumentation. Premium users were motivated by premium information, patronage and community. Blog-specific research has revealed several user motivations, including interactivity and information sharing (Armstrong & McAdams, 2011; Kaye, 2010; Kim, 2011; Sweetser & Kaid, 2008), self-expression (Trammell, 2005), surveillance (Sweetser et al., 2008), as well as helping/informing, social connection, to pass time, exhibitionism, professionalism, archiving/organizing, and to obtain feedback (Hollenbaugh, 2011). In their analysis of a mixed martial arts blog, Frederick, Clavio, Burch, and Zimmerman (2012a) found six dimensions of gratification, including evaluation, community, information gathering, knowledge demonstration, argumentation, and diversion.

Beyond message boards and blogs, Internet-specific uses and gratifications research has been extended to include social media sites such as Facebook, MySpace, and Twitter (i.e., Chen, 2011; Hanson, Haridakis, Cunningham, Sharma, & Ponder, 2010; Park, Kee, & Valenzuela, 2009; Johnson & Yang, 2009; Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008; Urista, Dong, & Day, 2009). Raacke and Bonds-Raacke (2008) found that a primary usage factor for MySpace and Facebook included social interactivity such as keeping in touch with friends, making new friends, and reconnecting with old friends. Similarly, Urista et al. (2009) found that college students utilized Facebook to attain a form mediated interpersonal communication. Research has also explored how Facebook use impacts political cynicism during presidential campaigns (Hanson et al., 2010) and civic action offline (Park et al., 2009). Twitter-specific research has found that individuals utilize this media platform as a forum for developing informal bonds of camaraderie (Chen, 2011), where they can engage in information-sharing and interactivity (Johnson & Yang, 2009).

Sport communication scholars have also begun to apply the uses and gratifications perspective to Twitter. Specifically, these studies have analyzed usage trends among athletes and fans. In their study of a retired female athlete's Twitter followers, Clavio and Kian (2010) found that the most important motivating factor for following the athlete's Twitter feed was the perception of the athlete as an expert in her respective sport. Additionally, the authors found three factors to explain follower motivations, including organic fandom, functional fandom, and interaction. In their study of professional athletes' Twitter feeds, Hambrick, Simmons, Greenhalgh, and Greenwell (2010), revealed six uses for these feeds, including interactivity, diversion, information sharing, content sharing, promotional, and fanship. Most athlete tweets fell within the interactivity and diversion categories. Frederick, Lim, Clavio, and Walsh (2012b) explored the motivations of fans who followed athletes on Twitter with different interaction styles. Specifically, exploratory factor analysis was conducted for each follower set. Followers of the social athlete were motivated by four factors, including consumption, admiration, promotion, and community. Followers of the parasocial athlete were also motivated by four factors, including newsgroup, modeling, engaged interest, and media use. Individual items loaded differently between the two follower sets.

While the previously mentioned studies applied uses and gratifications to specific platforms, Clavio and Walsh (2013) explored the usage patterns of multiple social media platforms among college students. Their analysis revealed that there was little participation among fans with the official Twitter feed and Facebook page of their team. Fans were more inclined to use traditional media (i.e., print, television, and radio) for the purpose of information-gathering. However, exploratory factor analysis did reveal a content creation factor among fans that were using social media. The authors concluded that greater efforts were needed by the

team to draw fans into their social media sphere in order to truly maximize the communication and branding potential of their social media platforms.

Study Rationale and Research Questions

Uses and gratifications is the best theoretical framework for this type of study for several reasons. First, the uses and gratifications approach assumes an active audience, which is a prerequisite of social sharing, due to both the technical act of sharing and the mental or emotional intent of sharing a particular item. Second, this approach highlights that users are hoping to satisfy wants or desires through their media actions, which seems logical given the nature of social sharing and the existing literature on social media in sport.

While multiple studies have applied the uses and gratifications perspective to Internet platforms such as message boards, blogs, Facebook, and Twitter, there is a lack of understanding regarding the use of locational social media and how these technologies impact the fan experience. Therefore, these applications provided a worthy avenue for investigation. Due to the exploratory nature of the current study, the following research questions were employed:

RQ1: Why do college sport fans engage in social sharing of their sport-related check-ins and purchases?

RQ2: Are there incentives that would encourage college sport fans to engage in more sharing of sport-related check-ins and purchases?

Methodology

The study utilized survey methodology to investigate social sharing and locational social media usage trends among college sport fans. The survey instrument was created as a joint project between the researchers and a sport communication and marketing company. The researchers worked with the company to devise the questions utilized in the survey, ensuring their validity as research instruments. Initially, the company contacted the marketing departments of all athletic departments in a prominent BCS-level athletic conference. Of the 12 departments contacted, five agreed to take part in the survey. These five departments then advertised the survey link on their official Facebook and Twitter accounts, and invited fans to take part in the study. Once the data were gathered, the company provided access to the researchers, who performed advanced statistical analysis on the data.

Respondents were first asked to respond to a series of statements relating to social sharing of sport event-related activity, on a 5-point Likert-type scale. These statements, which are provided in Tables 1 and 3, focus on a variety of popular locational social media features present in the sport communication and marketing industry. The statements were derived from conversations with industry experts and scholars familiar with the various types of social media. Respondents

were also asked to rate the likelihood of their sharing various sport event-related occurrences on social media, again on a 5-point Likert-type scale. A list of these questions is displayed in Table 2. Survey respondents were also asked to evaluate a series of potential incentives to share sport event-related items on social media, and indicate their level of agreement that those items would lead to a greater likelihood of sharing these events. These statements were responded to on a 5-point Likert-type scale, and can be found in Table 4.

In order to satisfactorily respond to the research questions posed above, a series of statistical analyses was performed using SPSS version 21. Frequencies and descriptive statistics were performed on the three sets of questions utilized in the initial inquiry. Following this, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was performed on the two sets of questions related directly to the research questions. After rotation, all items loading at .60 or above on one factor while not exceeding .39 on another factor were retained. Any resulting factors from the EFAs were tested using scale reliability analysis.

Results

The combined samples of fans who responded to the survey resulted in an *N* of 1,267. The response rates from the five teams varied, with Team E returning a low number of 84 usable responses (6.6% of total) and Teams C and D each returning 337 usable responses (26.6% each of total). A total of 883 responses were returned through links posted on Facebook pages (69.7%), while 384 were returned through links posted on Twitter (30.3%).

Respondents varied in age, with a plurality identifying themselves as 25 to 34 years old ($n = 303$, 23.9%), while 33.1% of respondents ($n = 419$) indicated they were aged 45 and older. In terms of gender, the sample was predominantly male ($n = 827$, 65.3%). A large majority of respondents indicated that they owned a smartphone ($n = 941$, 74.3%).

In addition to the previously mentioned survey items, fans were also asked questions relating to their fanship. College basketball was the most popular response when fans were asked what sport their favorite team played ($n = 488$, 38.5%), with college football ($n = 281$, 22.2%) placing second. A large majority ($n = 1,049$, 82.8%) indicated that they had attended at least one university sporting event in the previous 12 months, and 44.8% indicated that they had attended at least six university sporting events in that time frame.

RQ1 asked why college sport fans engaged in social sharing of sport-related check-ins and purchases. The first series of questions relating to this process asked respondents to rate their level of agreement with a variety of motivation statements related to sport-related social sharing. The responses to these questions are listed in Table 1. Event promotion and related motivations appeared as the items with the strongest agreement, while items relating to earning deals, prizes, and recognition were the items with the weakest agreement.

Table 1

What Are the Reasons You Share Sport Event-Related Information Via Social Media?

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
I want to help promote the sporting event	3.33	1.3
I want my friends to know that I am attending the sporting event	3.30	1.4
I want my friends to consider going to the sporting event themselves	3.15	1.3
Because posting on social media is fun and adds value to my experience at the sporting event	2.97	1.4
I feel like I belong to the fan community that is talking about the event via social media	2.93	1.4
I want to find other people who are also going to the sporting event	2.88	1.4
I feel like more of a fan by sharing my purchases and reviews of the sporting event	2.76	1.4
To encourage other people to share their experiences at the event in question	2.50	1.3
The team or event encourages social sharing of check-ins, pictures, and reviews	2.43	1.3
I want to earn special deals on concessions or merchandise at the event	2.11	1.4
I want to earn prizes such as gift cards or backstage passes from sponsors or the team	1.98	1.3
I want to earn an online badge or other form of online public recognition from my social media provider	1.56	1.0

Derived from 5-point Likert-type scale, with 1 indicating *Strongly Disagree* and 5 meaning *Strongly Agree*.

The second series of questions asked respondents how likely they were to share items on social media. The means and standard deviations of these responses are presented in Table 2. Of note is the relatively high likelihood for respondents to share images, attendance, satisfaction, and in-game information.

In order to evaluate the sample holistically and determine if underlying factors were present in social sharing motivation, an EFA with Varimax rotation was performed on the 12 items present in Table 1. Analysis of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO) found that the sample was adequate, at .904. The results of this factor analysis are visible in Table 3. Two factors were revealed, explaining 67% of the observed variance. The first factor, labeled *Promotion and Fanship*, explained 40.8% of the variance, and contained seven items which focused primarily on the promotion of the sporting event and the social benefits of sharing. This seven-item scale was tested for reliability, and possessed an acceptable Cronbach's Alpha level, $\alpha = .904$. The second factor, labeled *Personal Gain*, explained 26.1% of the variance, and contained three items which focused on earning of prizes, discounts on merchandise, and online recognition. This three-item scale was found to possess an acceptable reliability level ($\alpha = .867$).

Table 2

How Likely Are You to Share the Following Sport Event-Related Information Via Social Media?

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Pictures that I've taken on my mobile device while attending a sporting event	3.84	1.3
That I liked attending a sporting event	3.64	1.2
That I am planning to attend a sporting event	3.46	1.4
That I am currently at a sporting event	3.43	1.4
Scoring updates or other breaking news related to the event	3.30	1.4
A review of my experience at a sporting event	3.07	1.3
That I am attending a non-ticketed sporting event, such as a fan fest or tailgate	2.97	1.4
My feelings on the crowd's behavior sitting around me at a sporting event	2.78	1.3
That I've just purchased tickets to a sporting event	2.69	1.4
That I just had a negative customer service experience at a sporting event	2.50	1.3
That I am stuck in traffic on my way to a sporting event	2.13	1.2
That I am stuck in traffic while leaving a sporting event	1.96	1.2
Questions about directions or asking for assistance to get to a sporting event	1.79	1.0
The seat section or seat number of the tickets I've just purchased to a sporting event	1.76	1.0

Derived from 5-point Likert-type scale, with 1 indicating *Very unlikely* and 5 meaning *Very likely*.

Table 3

What Are the Reasons You Share Sport Event-Related Information on Social Media?

	1	2
I want my friends to know that I am attending the sporting event	.82	.10
I want to help promote the sporting event	.79	.14
I want my friends to consider going to the sporting event	.77	.17
I feel like more of a fan by sharing my purchases and reviews of the sporting event	.75	.22
I feel like I belong to the fan community that is talking about the event via social media	.75	.35
I want to find other people who are also going to the sporting event	.74	.21
Because posting on social media is fun and adds value to my experience	.74	.24
I want to earn prizes such as gift cards or backstage passes from sponsors or the team	.18	.90
I want to earn special deals on concessions or merchandise at the event	.18	.89
I want to earn an online badge or other form of online public recognition from my social media provider	.17	.77

Factor 1 (Eigenvalue = 4.90) explains 40.8% of total variance. Factor 2 (Eigenvalue = 3.14) explains 26.1% of total variance.

RQ2 asked if any incentives existed that would increase the likelihood of college sport fans sharing their sport-related purchases and reviews on social media. A separate 12-item questionnaire addressed this topic. The mean rates of agreement are found in Table 4. The top two items in terms of agreement level focused on team-based incentives and deals for such actions.

Table 4

The Following Incentives Would Increase My Likelihood of Engaging in Social Sharing of Purchases and Reviews at Sporting Events

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Get special deals on tickets for games	3.35	1.4
Get special deals on concessions and merchandise at games	3.15	1.4
Gain access to special interviews or stories about the team that non-sharing fans don't get	2.82	1.5
In order to earn points which could be redeemed for real prizes and special opportunities	2.74	1.4
Gain access to a "social media meet-and-greet" where people who share content can interact with players and coaches	2.74	1.5
Helping influence the team to donate money to a charitable cause for each time I share my purchase or review	2.71	1.4
To be entered into a contest with other people who share content, where the person who shares the most wins a prize package at the end of the season	2.52	1.5
Gain personal recognition on the team website or social media site	2.36	1.4
Gain personal recognition on the "big board" at the game	2.23	1.4
See my review of the event posted on the team website	2.21	1.3
Gain access to a special "social media check-in" where I could meet and interact with other fans who have shared content at the event	2.14	1.3
Earn online badges for checking in on social media like FourSquare or Facebook	1.79	1.2

Derived from 5-point Likert-type scale, with 1 indicating *Strongly Disagree* and 5 meaning *Strongly Agree*.

An EFA with Varimax rotation was conducted on the 12 items present in Table 4. KMO analysis again found the sampling to be adequate at .911. As noted in Table 5, two factors were revealed, and these factors explained a combined 69.4% of the observed variance. The first factor contained five items, and was labeled *Recognition*, as all five items dealt with some degree of individual recognition from the team or the social media entity in question. This factor explained 60.1% of the variance. This five-item scale possessed an acceptable reliability level ($\alpha =$

.902). The second factor, *Monetary*, contained three items related to discounts on tickets and merchandise, as well as team charitable contributions. The three-item scale, which explained 9.3% of the observed variance, also exceeded the reliability threshold and was deemed usable ($\alpha = .832$).

Table 5

What Would Make You Engage in More Social Sharing of Sport-Related Events and Purchases?

	1	2
See my review of the event posted on the team website	.82	.28
Gain personal recognition on the team website or social media site	.79	.35
Gain access to a special "social media check-in" area where I could meet and interact with other fans who have shared content at the event	.79	.29
Earn online badges for checking in on social media like FourSquare and Facebook	.77	.22
Gain personal recognition on the "big board" at the game	.75	.34
Get special deals on tickets for games	.20	.88
Get special deals on concessions and merchandise at games	.24	.86
Helping influence the team to donate money to a charitable cause for each time I share my purchase or review	.39	.65

Factor 1 (Eigenvalue = 7.20) explains 60.1% of total variance. Factor 2 (Eigenvalue = 1.11) explains 9.3% of total variance.

Discussion

This study examined the prevalence and the motivations underlying location-al social media usage within the context of sport fandom, particularly as it relates to social sharing of information and the motivations behind that sharing. The first major finding of the study dealt with the likelihood of college sport fans posting various types of information via social sharing. The most popular items to share were self-taken pictures, future, present, or past attendance, and news and reviews relating to the game(s) in question. Fans seemed more interested in creating their own game-related content or highlighting their attendance than using locational social media for information gathering. The desire for fans to create their own content is similar to the findings of Clavio and Walsh (2013), which saw general social media usage among college sport fans express a desire to create and submit a variety of user-generated content. Furthermore, these findings lend some support the work of Sanderson (2011) who indicated that social media provide platforms for the everyday individual (i.e., fan) to control content flow. Interestingly, fans did not appear interested in expressing discontent at poor customer service experiences in these types of sharing scenarios. The negative feedback aspect of customer service is a common aspect of many different types of social media, and across many different industries (e.g., Barkholz, 2013; Neal, 2014; Wirthman, 2013), so it is surprising that sharing negative customer experiences did not appear important or likely to the surveyed users.

RQ1 asked why college sport fans engaged in social media check-ins related to sport events. In evaluating their responses to the listed reasons why they currently engage in this behavior, some interesting items emerged. First, the responses provided by fans regarding their current reasons for sharing such information focused on items that represented altruism and reward without receiving a tangible benefit. Fans identified event promotion, friend involvement, and satisfying their personal aims of fanhood as the most popular reasons for why they engaged in this behavior, while reward-based reasons for sharing ranked as the lowest-rated responses. This is significant because it highlights that the act of using locational social media for sharing is not solely determined by an expectation of receiving something from the team or service in return. Perhaps fans are currently using social media check-ins to further validate their level of fandom, which heightens the connection and identification with their favorite team, while also providing them with the status of “super fan,” thereby enhancing the overall fan experience. This concept was noted by Buchheim (2011), but runs counter to the current strategies of some teams, which do not incentivize the fanship and altruistic aspects of social check-ins. The factor analysis relating to RQ1 bears this out, as the *Promotion and Fanship* factor explained a larger percentage of variance than the *Personal Gain* factor. The focus on fan community aspects within the *Promotion and Fanship* factor recalls the community factors present in Frederick et al. (2012a) and Frederick et al. (2012b).

RQ2 asked about incentives for future utilization of social sharing of purchases and reviews at sporting events. The most salient items dealt with the receiving of special deals on tickets or merchandise, which were low in terms of item salience regarding fans’ current usage trends of social sharing and locational social media. This could possibly indicate that the college athletic departments in question have done a poor job of offering any such incentives to fans. Additionally, this finding implies a subtle discrepancy between actual usage trends and underlying desires, which mirrors the conflicted nature of social media users revealed in previous studies (i.e., Sheffer & Schultz, 2010).

However, in examining the factors relating to this research question, the *Monetary* feature explained relatively little of the observed variance. This could be due to the desire for greater monetary gain being universal throughout the sample, or it could be an indicator that the financial incentive is isolated to a small number of individuals who are motivated by such incentives. The much larger percentage of variance explained by the *Recognition* factor is of interest. Clavio (2013) argued that social media provide fans with a platform for putting their voice on display. The findings of this study beg the question, what good is having a voice if that voice is not heard? In other words, while monetary incentives may be desired from time to time, it appears that as a whole fans want to have additional recognition for their loyalty and dedication beyond the occasional monetary award. Perhaps, when it comes to social sharing and locational social media, the fan experience is still predicated on psychological rather than financial benefits.

Recommendations for Sport Management Practitioners

There are multiple recommendations for sport management practitioners that can be gleaned from this study. First, it is recommended that college athletic departments looking to make more efficient use of their locational social media check-ins should strongly consider fostering a sense of community among the fans who engage in that behavior. This would involve promoting and discussing the team's locational social media check-ins on their Twitter feed and Facebook page. By cross-promoting social media outlets, an organization could increase feelings of connectivity among fans who utilize multiple platforms to engage with their favorite teams. Additionally, teams should encourage or invite others to join in who have not previously utilized the services.

Second, college athletic departments would be wise to engage their fan bases through recognition-rich practices rather than simply rewarding them with discounts on tickets or merchandise. This could involve creating specific web pages or sections on the team's website dedicated to recognizing frequent fan check-ins. Creating sections where fans could comment on these recognition pages would also augment the fan experience by creating a communal space for communicating one's fanship. Additionally, links to these recognition pages could be placed on the team's Twitter feed and Facebook page to enhance interconnectivity. The results of this study seem to clearly indicate that fans desire recognition and control from their utilization of social media in relation to sport, and practitioners would be wise to emphasize these elements in their locational social media approach.

Third, given the overall interest in social sharing and locational social media observed in this study, it would be advisable for college athletic departments to invest significant resources in publicly-accessible Wi-Fi and cellular phone service in and around stadiums and arenas. Many university athletic departments across the country have already seen improved Wi-Fi and phone services as a needed amenity in their stadiums (Steinbach, 2013), including the schools of the Southeastern Conference spending a reported \$2 million per stadium to upgrade these services (Barnhart, 2013). As noted by the athletic director at the University of Tennessee, "Our next generation of fans is used to staying connected. They should be able to communicate in real time with somebody on the other side of the stadium" (Barnhart, 2013, ¶18). Despite these efforts, many stadiums in both college and professional sport lack an effective digital infrastructure to allow for on-site social sharing and locational social media usage by fans, thereby eliminating valuable opportunities for effective fan-to-team or team-to-fan on-site communication. Providing an appropriate and effective digital platform for fans and organizations to effectively utilize social media during a game or event would be a logical step.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine the factors underlying social sharing and locational social media utilization by fans of college sport teams, providing

a look into an important and growing segment of social media use in the sport world. The findings indicated that social sharing is a process which many fans are taking part in, that locational social media plays a role in that process, and that clear dimensions of motivation are present.

This study is not without limitations. The sample focused on college sport fans, and the motivations and uses of social sharing and locational social media may differ based upon the level of sport being observed. Similarly, the Midwestern location of the involved teams may introduce a geographical bias into the findings. Also of note is that the survey focused on social sharing and locational usage across a variety of social media, rather than focusing solely on a specific locational social media service such as FourSquare or Facebook. Investigations focusing on a specific service may yield different results.

Future studies should examine the impact that social sharing has on attendance and purchase motivations in sport, to see if the communal perception discovered in this study has wider implications. Researchers should also consider adapting this study to professional sport teams' audiences, to see if there is consistency in response and motivation. Finally, it is recommended that marketing efforts of college and professional sport teams in the area of locational social media be evaluated, to see if the efforts of those teams are in sync with the motivations and desires of the fans who utilize the services.

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