OREGON ATHLETICS' SOCIAL MEDIA PRESENCE AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH CURRENT UNIVERSITY OF OREGON STUDENTS

by

KAITLYN CHOCK

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Title: Social Media's Role in Oregon Athletics' Relationship With Current University
of Oregon Students

Approved:_____

Kelli Matthews

This study seeks to understand the role social media plays in relationships

between brands and their publics. More specifically, this study analyzes Oregon

Athletics' relationship with current University of Oregon students.

Relationship research is extensive but research on social media's role in

relationship building is less substantial. Social media is referenced as an important

venue for relationship building but not much is said about how to use the media to build

relationships.

This study used data gathered from an online questionnaire to determine the

relationship between Oregon Athletics and current University of Oregon students. The

questionnaire also shed light on what platforms students use and students' posting

habits. Although no definitive claims can be made from this data, the information

gained from this study can help Oregon Athletics better understand its relationship with

current students and better understand how current students use social media.

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Introduction

Social media have contributed to relationship building between an organization and its publics by facilitating two-way communication (Coombs & Holladay, 2014). And college athletic departments are increasingly incorporating social media into their public relations programs. To better engage with fans, college athletic departments need to develop strategic public relations plans that incorporate and emphasize social media.

The growth in popularity of social media networks has encouraged many athletic departments to include social media as a part of their overall communication strategies. According to Indiana athletic department's social media coordinator, Shana Daniels, one of the main reasons is to build relationships with fans (Talty, 2011). As traditional communication methods become less efficient because of cost, consumer resistance to advertising, and variety of products, social media use continues to rise (Rothschild, 2011).

Social media have become "a major factor in influencing various aspects of consumer behavior including awareness, information acquisition, opinions, attitudes, purchase behavior, and post-purchase communication and evaluation" (Mangold, 2009). Consumers are turning away from traditional sources of advertising and demanding more control over their media consumption (Rashtchy et al., 2007 and Vollmer and Precourt, 2008). Social media is better able to satisfy this need for immediate access to information than traditional media, so consumers are turning to social media platforms to gather information and to make purchasing decisions (Lempert, 2006; Vollmer & Precourt, 2008). Social media are a quick way to access information and are perceived to be a more trustworthy source of information, about products and services, than

corporate communications "transmitted via the traditional elements of the promotion mix of information" (Foux, 2006).

In terms of college sports, social media can increase revenue by fostering fan loyalty and fan appreciation (Wallace, Wilson & Miloch, 2011). Fans provide a steady stream of revenue for athletic departments, and social media can help to build and maintain relationships with these potential buyers (Wallace, Wilson & Miloch, 2011).

This thesis focuses specifically on Oregon Athletics' social media presence. The study looks at the athletic department's relationship with current students at the University of Oregon through the lens of Oregon Athletics' social media presence. It uses data from questionnaires completed by students to analyze the relationship. Social media was often mentioned in the literature as a venue through which organizations and publics could strengthen their relationships through communication. However, there is limited information on how to effectively use social media in relationship building. When we consider athletic departments and their use of social media in relationship building there is even less information. This study starts to fill those gaps in information and provide a guide of best practices for Oregon Athletics to effectively use social media in its communication strategies.

The study begins with a review of relevant literature of public relations, social media and college athletic departments use of social media. Then the methodology of the study is described and the results of the questionnaire are evaluated.

Literature Review

Public Relations

The Public Relations Society of America defines public relations as "a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics" (PRSA, n.d.). The emphasis is on strategic communications, two-way relationships and uniting organizations with their publics. Public relations also encompasses monitoring public opinions and attitudes about the plans and operations of an organization, counseling management about the public ramifications of potential company decisions, research about effective ways to communicate with key audiences, creating strategic plans and managing resources (PRSA, n.d.).

The emphasis on mutuality necessitates active listening and transparency. It is important for an organization to communicate with its publics so that it can better understand and account for reactions toward company decisions or practices (PRSA, n.d.). The strategic communication process involves effective communication between an organization and its audiences. The growth and increasing importance of social media has facilitated relationship building in public relations (Coombs & Holladay, 2014). Social media enable organizations to talk to their audiences and allow for these audiences to talk amongst each other (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). This concept of "joining the conversation" is a key component of interpersonal communication in relationships (Coombs & Holladay, 2014). Social media are a venue through which

brands are able to reach their publics directly, and social media facilitate two-way communication between brands and their publics.

Public relations facilitates mutual understanding among various publics and institutions, allowing society to function more efficiently. Public relations practitioners work in a variety of fields, including business, government, healthcare and nonprofit organizations. In order to achieve their goals, institutions need strong relationships with their key publics, employees, customers, news outlets, activists or other institutions (Grunig, 2002). A public relations practitioner serves as the liaison between the institution and its public, communicating an organization's goals into acceptable policy and action (PRSA, n.d.). A public relations also communicates with internal audiences, employees, as well as the public. Public relations is about human relationships (Kent, & Taylor, 1998).

Relationships

Because of public relations' role as a conduit of information, it is most effective when organizations identify strategic publics are identified and reestablish effective long-term relationships (Porter, 1994). Therefore, the value of a public relations program can be determined by measuring the quality of its relationships with its strategic publics (Porter, 1994).

According to Hon and Grunig, relationship measurement assumes a two-way communication between both parties. The two-way symmetrical model was proposed by Grunig and Hunt in 1984. Relationships that are most productive and sustainable benefit both parties not just the organization (Hon & Grunig, 1999).

When assessing the relationship between an organization and public, two types of interpersonal relationships are commonly used: exchange and communal relationships (Grunig, 2002). An exchange relationship occurs when one party serves the other only because said party provided benefits in the past or is expected to do so in the future. Essentially, the party that receives benefits incurs an obligation to return the favor. This type of relationship is not effective for organizations because publics expect them to contribute to the community and to their stakeholders without expecting anything in return.

In a communal relationship both parties provide benefits to the other, even when they do not receive anything in return because they are concerned for the welfare of the other party. Public relations practitioners strive to achieve communal relationships with its key publics, namely its employees, the community and the media, because it is through communal relationships that organizations add value to society (Grunig, 2002).

Relationships often begin as exchanges but can develop into communal relationships as the company establishes itself in the community (Hon, & Grunig, 1999). Grunig stresses the importance of communal relationships, stating that the "degree to which a public believes that it has a communal relationship with an organization is perhaps the purest indicator of the success of the public relations management function" (2002). The outcomes of these longer-term relationships with key publics are best done by focusing on six elements and can be measured through questionnaires sent to these key publics (Hon, & Grunig, 1999).

Control Mutuality: According to Han and Grunig, control mutuality is "The degree to which parties agree on who has the rightful power to influence one another"

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(1999). Some imbalance is natural, but in a stable relationship both parties exert some control over the other.

Trust: The level of confidence and willingness that one party has to open itself up to the other. Trust encompasses three dimensions: "integrity: the belief that an organization is fair and just … dependability: the belief that an organization will do what it says it will do … and, competence: the belief that an organization has the ability to do what it says it will do" (Hon & Grunig, 1999)

Satisfaction: Satisfaction is defined as "The extent to which each party feels favorably toward the other because positive expectations about the relationship are reinforced" (Hon & Grunig, 1999). A satisfying relationship is one in which the benefits outweigh the costs.

Commitment: Hon and Grunig define commitment as "The extent to which each party believes and feels that the relationship is worth spending energy to maintain and promote" (Hon & Grunig, 1999). There are two dimensions to commitment: continuance commitment, which deals with actions, and affective commitment, which refers to emotions.

Exchange Relationship: Where one party only gives benefits to the other because of an expectation or obligation.

Communal Relationship: Where both parties are concerned for the welfare of the other and thusly provide benefits, even if they receive nothing in return.

Research conducted by Grunig, Grunig, and Ehling (1992) for the IABC Research Foundation on Excellence in Public Relations and Communication Management found over the long term effective organizations achieve their goals

because they choose goals valued by both management and key constituencies internally and externally (Hon & Grunig, 1999). Because effective organizations have communal relationships with their publics they can create and achieve appropriate goals. Better decisions are made when organizations collaborate and listen to stakeholders before deciding on an outcome. Persuading publics to accept organizational goals after decisions can result in public opposition. Therefore, public relations is effective when it identifies and maintains long-term relationships with strategic publics.

The two-way symmetrical model focuses on furthering relationships between a brand and its public through communication. But Karlberg (1996) argues that this approach ignores two critical premises: "that public relations is primarily an instrument of commerce, and secondarily an instrument of state". This means research using the two-way symmetrical model has neglected the interests of communities in favor of the interests of corporations and states (Choi, 2009) and ordinary citizens are often overlooked in public discourse. The model is limited in explaining how a consensus would be achieved when multiple key publics with varying points of view on a single issue are added to the mix (Berger, 1999). The two-way symmetrical model does not account for the fact that all participants in the model are not afforded the same opportunities in terms of organizational dialogue (Choi, 1999). According to Karlberg (1996), Grunig's normative analysis rules out the "ideological process in the two-way symmetrical approach" (Choi, 1999). However, Grunig's approach to the ethical aspects in this model is important and these views on dialogue play a crucial role in analyzing challenging or ideological problems in public relations (Choi, 1999).

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Social media as a function of PR

Kent and Taylor's (1998) dialogic principles were taken a step further by Hallahan (2008) who applied five concepts to measure online relationships between business and publics. As stated earlier, these concepts are commitment, control mutuality, communality, trust, and satisfaction. Dialogic communication refers to a negotiated exchange of ideas and opinions guided by two principles. The first principle states individuals engaging in dialogue do not have to agree but they have to share a willingness to reach a mutually satisfying position (Kent & Taylor, 1998). The second principle states dialogic communication is about intersubjectivity rather than an objective truth. Since dialogic communication emphasizes negotiated communications it is thought to be an ethical manner of conducting public relations (Kent & Taylor, 1998). In terms of online engagement, commitment refers to how publics evaluate an organization's level of commitment to the practice; this includes factors such as a willingness to invest resources and making the effort to communicate. Control mutuality refers to the level of interactivity between an organization and its publics (Briones, Kuch, Liu & Jin, 2011). Communality has to do with identifying with each other and sharing similar values and beliefs. In regards to trust, the company should be viewed as "believable, competent, reliable, and consistent" (Briones, et. al., 2011). Trust is difficult to achieve online. Satisfaction refers to meeting needs and exceeding expectations (Briones, et. al., 2011).

An organization is connected to its environment through its publics (Patel, Xavier & Broom, 2005), and understanding the changes within the publics' environment can be crucial for organizational survival. This understanding lends well to

a dialogic model of public relations (Kent & Taylor, 1998). This dialogic approach has an emphasis on exchange, reciprocity, and mutual understanding (Reitz, 2012). It denotes a "communicative give and take," an open process between an organization and its publics (Kent & Taylor, 1998). The American Red Cross is an example of the success of a dialogical approach to social media. Through its active responses to consumer posts and through the ideas it gains from its various publics, the Red Cross demonstrates Taylor and Kent's (1998) dialogic principles. The Red Cross emphasizes two-way dialogue as an essential component to relationship building (Briones, et. al., 2011). These conversations also act as venues to determine how publics think about the organization and how the organization can be improved (Briones, et. al., 2011). This strategy achieves strategic value for the American Red Cross (Briones, et. al., 2011).

Social media facilitates "an open systems approach to public relations" (Universal McCann, 2008, cited in Reitz, 2012). Social media are described as a collaborative environment focused on the exchange of content (Reitz, 2012). Since social media are defined as "anything that uses the Internet to facilitate conversations" (Solis, & Breakenridge, 2009), they are tools that can be used to build relationships through open communication, providing both opportunities and challenges (DiStaso, McCorkindale & Wright, 2011 as cited in DiStaso & Bortree, 2012). "Social media have changed the nature of everyday communications by providing a platform for individuals and organizations alike to engage with each other in a dynamic, synchronized, and multidirectional dialogue that represents varied voices" (Reitz, 2012).

Social media are significant because an organization and its publics can be both senders and receivers of information (Reitz, 2012). Social media have given consumers' more power by increasing their ability to communicate with each other and by amplifying the power of word-of-mouth communication (Reitz, 2012). This limits the control organizations have over their content and dissemination of information. (Vollmer, & Precourt, 2008 cited in Mangold, & Faulds, 2009). This shift has influenced the way consumers receive and react to market information (Veron-Jackson, & Cullinane, 2008, cited in Mangold, & Faulds, 2009). Therefore, communication professionals are incorporating social media into their practices (Li & Bernoff, 2008). Since consumers turn to social media to disseminate information on their experience with products and services, it is crucial that organizations actively monitor and participate in the social media dialogue (Mangold & Faulds, 2009).

Social media as a communication channel

Social media can be integrated into business functions, allowing organizations to more effectively communicate with consumers (Li & Bernoff, 2011). "Traditional means of communications, marketing, and regular business functions such as research, marketing, sales, support, and development can now be accomplished in the social media space" (Wysocki, 2012). This communication can transform customers into outspoken brand advocates (Swedowsky, 2009).

In Wright and Hinson's 2010 study, they found 81 percent of public relations professionals believed that social media offered organizations low-cost ways to improve their organizational transparency (Wright & Hinson, 2012). A survey conducted by DiStaso and Bortree (2012) found that public relations professionals in both nonprofit

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and for-profit organizations felt social media brought more benefits than challenges. The benefits they mentioned included increased engagement and feedback, access to new audiences and increased awareness of causes and organizations.

Social media use among college students

A study by Pew in 2011 found that 86 percent of undergraduates used social media networking sites (Zickuhr, Smith, & Rainie, 2011). A study done by re:fuel discovered the principal reason young adults join social networking websites was to communicate with others in their real life social network (Sheldon, 2008). This motivation supports the Uses and Gratification Theory, which hypothesizes people use media to satisfy certain needs (Karimi, Khodabandelou, Ehsani, & Ahmad, 2014). The majority of users interact with current contacts rather than use the sites to meet new people (Boyd, & Ellison, 2007). Social media is also commonly used as a form of entertainment (Sheldon, 2008).

College students use social media in a variety of ways. Although students do post on social media to communicate with their social networks, they spend a great deal of time viewing information without interacting (Pempek, Yermolayeva & Calvert, 2008). The majority of respondents in a 2009 study by Pempek, Yermolayeva, and Calvert admitted to frequent lurking on social media. Although this activity does provide information, it is one-sided communication (cited in Sponcil & Gitimu, 2013). Lurking is defined as reading posts without interacting with them (Suziki & Calzo, 2004).

The popularity of social media with college students (Zickuhr, Smith, & Rainie, 2011) has provided new opportunities for college athletic departments to connect with

fans. Oregon Athletics is an example of a department committed to building relationships on these platforms.

Research question

The literature review provides an overview of relationship research, the role of social media in public relations and the importance of social media in relationship building. In the introduction, applications of social media in college athletics have been discussed.

This study will take a deeper dive into Oregon Athletics' use of social media specifically and investigate Oregon Athletics' relationship with current students. This study intends to fill in the gap about relationship research about college athletics and social media use.This study will look at the following research question:

What is Oregon Athletics' relationship with current University of Oregon students?

Methodology

Interview

In order to better understand Oregon Athletics' social media strategy, I spoke with Craig Pintens, senior associate athletic director of marketing and public relations for Oregon Athletics. In our interview, I asked Pintens questions about Oregon Athletics' overall strategy, target audiences, follower demographics, key influencers, and goals. After the interview, Pintens emailed me Oregon Athletics' social media plan.

Data collection and target group

This study was conducted through an online questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed on Qualtrics and distributed through snowball and convenience sampling through. The survey was disbursed through email, Facebook and Twitter. The questionnaire was emailed out to a few lecture classes in the journalism school and the Public Relations Student Society of America University of Oregon chapter's, Allen Hall Public Relations' and American Marketing Associations University of Oregon chapter's email lists. The survey was also shared through personal Twitter and Facebook accounts of several University of Oregon students. The questionnaire was made available the evening of May 5 and closed about a week later on the evening of May 13.

The questionnaire

Since the questionnaire was online, I could disseminate the questionnaire easily from where I was based in Portland to the Eugene campus. Furthermore, online questionnaires are low-cost and convenient. I used Qualtrics to create my questionnaire.

The questionnaire consisted of two parts. The questionnaire started with demographic questions and was followed by the introduction of social media use. The survey ended with relationship questions about Oregon Athletics specifically. The relationship questions were adapted from Hon and Grunig's (1999) Guidelines for Measuring Relationships in Public Relations. The questionnaire shortened Hon's and Grunig's shorter questionnaire. Since the questionnaire was adapted for college students and for online use, questions were cut for brevity. The questionnaire can be found in the appendix.

The demographics section asked respondents questions about gender, year in school, major and about the respondents' social media use. The questions about social media were to determine each respondent's social media activity level, in terms or reading content and posting content. The questions asked about the platforms the respondents used and whether or not they followed and interacted with Oregon Athletics' main account.

The second part of the questionnaire was relationship-oriented. The respondent was given a statement about Oregon Athletics, and asked they indicate level of agreement. This section used a 5 point Likert scale, the minimum value, zero, meant they disagreed with the statement and the maximum value, five, meant they strongly agreed with the statement. A Likert scale was used because it measures levels of agreement and disagreement (Simply Psychology, 2014).

Table One: Relationship Components Measured in Questionnaire

Statement	Scale
Trust (Dimensions Integrity, competence, dependability)	
Oregon Athletics treats students fairly and justly. (Trust--Integrity)	0= disagree, 5=agree
Oregon Athletics is known to be successful at the things it tries to do. (Trust--Competence)	0= disagree, 5=agree
Control Mutuality	
Oregon Athletics listens to what students have to say.	0= disagree, 5=agree
Oregon Athletics believes the opinions of students are legitimate.	0= disagree, 5=agree
Commitment	
I value my interactions with Oregon Athletics. (Satisfaction and Commitment)	0= disagree, 5=agree
There is a long-lasting bond between this organization and students.	0= disagree, 5=agree
I feel a sense of loyalty to Oregon Athletics.	0= disagree, 5=agree
I can see that this organization wants to	0= disagree, 5=agree

maintain a relationship with students.	
Satisfaction	
I am pleased with the relationship this organization has established with students.	0= disagree, 5=agree
I feel students are important to Oregon Athletics.	0= disagree, 5=agree
Exchange Relationships	
Whenever Oregon Athletics gives or offers something to students, it generally expects something in return.	0= disagree, 5=agree
Oregon Athletics takes care of students who are likely to benefit the organization.	0= disagree, 5=agree

Findings and Discussion

Interview Findings

Like the Red Cross, Oregon Athletics social media strategy hinges on engagement with its audience. Engagement is a key way to strengthen relationships and trust with your audience (Hutchinson, 2014). Oregon Athletics treats social media as another venue for customer service—if a question is poised on social media, Oregon Athletics challenges itself to respond as quickly as possible with helpful answers. According to Dennis Stoutenburgh, co-founder of Stratus Contact Solutions, an organization providing one-to-one customer engagement and multi-channel solutions, "We're getting to the point now that if organizations don't respond [to customer questions or complaints], they will have a black mark against them." Oregon Athletics recognizes the importance of interacting with their online audience and responding to questions as quickly as possible.

Oregon Athletics places an emphasis on unique content, such as pregame shots from the football field or recordings of a coach's postgame speech (Pintens, 2013). According to Brian Gainor, sports marketer and founder of Partnership Activation Inc., sports fans want "unique, behind-the-scenes, exclusive access" (Tomko, 2011). And Craig Pintens, has found that unique content keeps fans engaged (Pintens, 2013). The second tenant of Oregon Athletics social strategy is an emphasis on influence over growth. Although Oregon has some of the biggest social accounts nationally (Coyle Media, 2014), Oregon is not as concerned with its rankings on social media or number of followers it has because it emphasizes influence. Pintens recognizes the number of

likes and followers do not translate into engagement or relationships. An individual who has "Liked" a Facebook Page or followed a Twitter account might not interact with the brand beyond that initial "Like" or follow. Engagement is more valuable than the number of likes because engagement refers to people connecting with the brand—commenting, liking and sharing the brand's posts and mentioning the brand and its content (Ken, 2014).

In creating a unique and engaging fan experience, Oregon positions itself as a resource for its fans. The integration of social media into Oregon Athletics communication strategy changed its process of releasing information. Traditionally, messages were pushed out through news releases and disseminated by the media (O'Neill, 2014). However, with the advent of social media, consumers can get this information straight from the source. Now, Oregon posts breaking news to its social media accounts before it puts the information on its website and before it sends a press release so that its own accounts do not get scooped by media. (Pintens, 2013)

Although students typically interact with Oregon Athletics social media accounts more than any other demographics, current students are not a target audience of Oregon Athletics (Pintens, 2013). The content posted on any of Oregon Athletics' platforms are not tailored to current students because each post is geared to reach a broad audience. Oregon Athletics has never segmented its audience by demographic but recognizes that current students make up only a small percentage (Pintens, 2013). But Pintens has found that students are more engaged than other audiences and hopes to continue the higher levels of engagement with students after they become alumni. Oregon Athletics is striving to increase engagement and hopes current students can set a

precedent for engagement. Pintens has found that other followers on Twitter tend to be "lurkers," meaning they read posts but do not post. In Pintens' experience, students tend to post very frequently. Oregon Athletics hopes to leverage this activity and encourage students to post about Oregon Athletics (Pintens, 2013).

Social media users tend to follow Oregon accounts in batches. There might be a wave of followers that follows an account after the account tweets something that gets a large number of retweets (Pintens, 2013). Most of the time there's a common thread that connects each of the people in the wave of new followers. For example, they could all be from the same sorority. This is probably because someone in that sorority retweeted an Oregon Athletics account and her sisters started following said account. This speaks to the influence that students have over other students.

Oregon athletics does not seek out these student leaders but recognizes that there are students who wield considerable influence over other students (Pintens, 2013). According to a study by Meteor Solutions, social media influencers account for at least 30 percent of a website's actions (Brand Monitor, 2013). These influencers can significantly impact a brand's reputation and may even affect the bottom line (Brand Monitor, 2013). Student athletes are a great example of student influencers. Well-known athletes have high numbers of followers on social media and when they mention other sports, those accounts pick up followers quickly (Pintens, 2013).

Oregon Athletics breaks down its follower of its main account, @GoDucks, into three categories. There are "Super Ducks," who follow every Oregon Athletics account and are heavily invested in Oregon sports; Oregon Alumni, who want to have a connection with their school; and fans of college sports in general (Pintens,

2013). For each individual sport's account there are three types of followers, the "Super Duck," fans of that specific team and fans of that particular sport. The last group, fans of the sport, is the most important because they are not as invested in the university as the other two groups. But when that sports account shares a success story about another Oregon team, these fans may be inclined to learn more about other Oregon sports teams and may become loyal fans (Pintens, 2013).

Questionnaire Findings

All questionnaires that were started were completed; there was a zero percent dropout rate. There were 194 respondent in total and out of those respondents, 139 were female, 50 were male, two were genderfluid and one person chose not to specify. 29 were science majors (biology, biochemistry, chemistry, environmental science, human physiology or general science), 24 were public relations majors, 23 students were journalism majors, 10 were advertising or pre-advertising, and 16 were business students.

The majority of respondents, 41.97 percent, were seniors, followed by juniors at 23.83 percents, and sophomores at 16.58 percent and freshmen at 15.54 percent. The majority of respondents were active on Facebook, 97.4 percent, followed by SnapChat at 70.83 percent, Instagram was third with 60.06 percent and Twitter was fourth with 53.13 percent. 44.97 percent of respondents use YouTube, 40.63 percent use Pinterest and 13.02 percent use Google+. Oregon Athletics has an active presence on all of these platforms with the exception of Snapchat.

Table Two: Frequency of Current Students' Social Media Activity

All respondents were active on social media, 74.09 percent of respondents check social media multiple times a day, 22.8 percent check social media daily and 3.11 percent check social media two to three times a week. The number of students who post was fewer—only 6.77 percent of respondents post on social media multiple times a day. But the majority of students did post and only 4.17 percent of students said they never post. The majority of students post two to three times a week or once a week.

Although all students were active on social media, most respondents, 57.51 percent, did not follow Oregon Athletics social media accounts. 33.68 percent of

#	Answer	Bar	Response	%
1	Never		8	4.17%
2	Less than Once a Month		19	9.90%
3	2-3 Times a Month		30	15.63%
4	Once a Week		34	17.71%
5	2-3 Times a Week		59	30.73%
6	Daily		29	15.10%
7	Multiple Times A Day		13	6.77%
	Total		192	100.00%

students followed Oregon Athletics' official account on Twitter, 25.91 percent "Liked" Oregon Athletics' official Facebook Page, 17.1 percent followed the official account on Instagram, 5.18 percent followed the official YouTube account, 1.04 percent followed Oregon Athletics Pinterest boards and no one had Oregon Athletics in his or her Google+ circle. A slightly larger percentage of respondents did not follow individual

team accounts, 58.64 percent. If a respondent did follow a specific team, he or she was most likely to follow the team on Twitter. 30.37 percent of respondents followed individual sport or spirit accounts, 20.94 percent liked a Facebook Page and 13.61 percent of respondents followed a specific Instagram account.

Of those who followed Oregon Athletics' main account, the primary motivation for following was to keep updated on sports news. Multiple answers could be selected; this option was selected by 55.97 percent of respondents. Another popular reason for connecting was to be connected with the university, 44.78 percent, or to show support for Oregon sports, 42.54 percent. 32.09 percent of those who followed the account did so because of interesting or entertaining content. Access to exclusive content was the motivator for 13.43 percent of those who follow the account and 7.46 percent followed because their friends did. Two respondents elected to write in their motivation for following the account and these respondents either follow the account to receive news about the Oregon Marching Band or to gather information about cheer auditions. Because a larger percentage of students did not follow Oregon Athletics on social media, only 17.17 percent of respondents interacted with Oregon Athletics on social media. Of those who interacted with the account, 85.59 percent favorited a tweet or liked a post or picture. 55.86 percent retweeted or shared content created by Oregon Athletics. 27.03 percent commented on a post or replied to a tweet. 7.21 percent tagged themselves in one of Oregon Athletics' photos and 0.90 percent posted directly on Oregon Athletics' Facebook Page.

The second part of the questionnaire focused on the relationship between Oregon Athletics and current students. Respondents were asked questions about five

key areas: trust, control mutuality, commitment, satisfaction and exchange relationships.

Figure One: Average Value of Responses

Average Value	Standard Deviation	Responses
3.35	2.03	143
3.17	2.10	141
2.42	2.22	133
3.36	2.30	141
4.64	2.27	149
2.96	1.87	142
3.48	2.20	146
3.28	2.29	142
2.93	2.07	145
4.13	2.38	143
3.61	2.48	143
2.99	1.94	142
3.63	2.20	144
3.88	2.74	146

A low score is a zero or a one, two and three are neutral scores, and four and five are high scores. The majority of respondents believe that Oregon Athletics is competent; the statement "Oregon Athletics is known to be successful at the things it tries to do" scored a 4.64 out of 5. But just because respondents believed Oregon

Athletics was competent does not mean they valued their interactions with Oregon Athletics. The statement "I value my interactions with Oregon Athletics was the lowest ranking statement at 2.42 on the Likert scale. The statement "Oregon Athletics takes care of students who are likely to benefit the organization" ranked a 4.13 on the scale and the statement "Whenever Oregon Athletics gives or offers something to students, it generally expects something in return." This implies that students believe Oregon Athletics has an exchange relationship rather than a communal relationship with them. That being said, "There is a long-lasting bond between this organization and students" ranked at a 3.48. Students seem to believe that the relationship is sustainable even if they do not seem to place a high value on their interactions with the brand.

When asked if Oregon Athletics values interactions with students, the average value was 3.17, which is a little bit higher than the number of students who believe they receive value as fans, 2.42. Thus, students think Oregon Athletics values their interactions more than they value interactions with the brand. This might be because the main social account is seen as engaging, 3.35. Additionally, students seem to believe that Oregon Athletics is interested in "maintain[ing] a realationship with students," 3.63. This seems on par with the fact that students seem to believe the brand values interactions, a connection could be that the brand values interactions; because it is interested in maintaining a relationship with students.

The average value on the statement "Oregon Athletics treats students fairly and justly" was a 3.36 and "Oregon Athletics listens to what students have to say" was a 2.96, which was quite high considering the recent controversy about a sexual assault case involving three basketball players. Two of the players were allowed to play in the

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Pac-12 and NCAA tournament while the case was under police investigation. This case and its potential impact on the study will be discussed in a subsequent chapter.

The average value on the statement, "I am pleased with the relationship this organization has established with students was a 3.28," which was on par with the average value for the statement "I feel students are important to Oregon Athletics," 3.61. A slightly lower number of respondents indicated they felt "Oregon Athletics believes the opinions of students are legitimate," 2.99. Ultimately, students indicated they felt a "sense of loyalty to Oregon Athletics," 3.88.

Limitations

It is important to note that the results of this survey may have been impacted by the rallies about sexual assault that took place on campus during the time when the surveys were distributed. Due to the timeline of this research, the surveys had to be sent out during the timeframe of May 6 to May 14. A police report about a rape allegation involving three Oregon basketball players was made public during the week of May 5 (Auerbach, 2014). After the news broke there were several rallies around campus that could have tainted students' view of Oregon Athletics. The rallies were well-attended and documented on social media and in school publications. Since the three alleged assailants were basketball players and thus affiliated with Oregon Athletics it was possible that this incident could have impacted students' opinions of Oregon Athletics. Especially since two of the players involved were able to participate in tournaments while they were under police investigation. Given the general sentiment around the rallies, it was clear that some students were upset with the University of Oregon and

with Oregon Athletics for letting these individuals participate in games. This could have affected the results because the questionnaire was relationship based.

Due to timing, the study was limited in its scope and was completed by a wide variety of majors. But students of the School of Journalism and Communication made up the largest group of students with 73 participants. It is also important to note, a significantly large percentage of females took this survey, 72.4 percent of my respondents were women.

This questionnaire was shortened and did not include questions about communality and about dependability. The lack of questions in these areas could have affected the survey results. If the survey were expanded the lack of these questions would make an impact on the findings. There were also no questions in the negative, which means there were no questions to check if students were rushing through the questionnaire without reading the answers.

Since this sample size was so small and because this was not a random sample of all University of Oregon students, the results of this study cannot be generalized to all of the students at the University of Oregon. But the questionnaire could be used in further testing to see if the results found here hold true for all current students at the university.

Further Research

The questionnaire could be expanded to include questions about communal relationships and dependability. These additional questions would provide a more accurate understanding of students' relationships with Oregon Athletics. This questionnaire could also be given to a random sampling of students at the University of

Oregon to see if the results found within this pool of students are similar when the study is expanded. It would be interesting to see if there are trends in social media use across various years in school, genders or majors. Furthermore, with a larger sample size it would be possible to see if there are trends in relationship sentiment within groups of students who follow and interact with Oregon Athletics on social media and those who do not.

Best Practices

These recommendations should be used to establish a social media plan for Oregon Athletics.

- Determine who your key audiences are and segment them by demographics. Your communication strategy will be much more effective if you target specific groups of people because you can tailor posts to make them relevant to those audiences. Since you are looking for communal rather than exchange relationships, it is important to tailor these posts to each audience.

- Create specific goals for what you want to accomplish on each social platform. What results do you want to see? If you have specific goals you will be better able to create strategic content that drives your audience to action.

- Research to find which audiences are on each platform and design that strategy with those audiences in mind. General posts are not as effective as tailored posts.

Conclusion

Since this was not a scientific survey it is hard to generalize these results. Furthermore, this was not a random sample of all students at the University of Oregon; a large percentage of students from the School of Journalism and Communication and a large percentage of females completed the questionnaire. Because of this it is hard to characterize the relationship between current students at the University of Oregon and Oregon Athletics. That being said, the questionnaire results implied that students think of Oregon Athletics favorably or at least neutrally. Students indicated they have a slight sense of loyalty to Oregon Athletics. Students selected 3.88 on a scale of one-to-five, which falls in between neutral and favorable. In fact the only statement that had an average value below 2.5 was a statement about satisfaction and commitment but most statements about commitment and satisfaction ranked higher the average value ranged from 3.28-3.88 on a scale with a maximum of five. Although it is hard to generalize, the results of this study imply that Oregon Athletics has a neutral relationship with current students. The relationship appears to be an exchange relationship because students indicated they believe Oregon Athletics takes care of students who are likely to benefit the organization. However, the lack of communal questions make it difficult to make this claim. Because the vast majority of respondents did not follow Oregon Athletics on social media, it was hard to determine the impact of social media on the relationship.

Appendix

Questionnaire

Q1 What is your year in school?
- ○ Freshman (1)
- ○ Sophomore (2)
- ○ Junior (3)
- ○ Senior (4)
- ○ Graduate Student (5)

Q2 What is your major?

Q3 What is your gender?
- ○ Male (1)
- ○ Female (2)
- ○ Other (Please Specify): (3) _____

Q4 Are you active on social media? If so, what platforms do you use?
- ❑ Facebook (1)
- ❑ Twitter (2)
- ❑ Instagram (3)
- ❑ YouTube (4)
- ❑ Pinterest (5)
- ❑ Google+ (6)
- ❑ SnapChat (7)
- ❑ Other (Please Specify): (8) _____

Q5 How often do you check social media?
- ○ Never (1)
- ○ Less than Once a Month (2)
- ○ 2-3 Times A Month (3)
- ○ Once a Week (4)
- ○ 2-3 Times a Week (5)
- ○ Daily (6)
- ○ Multiple Times A Day (7)

Q6 How often do you post on social media?
- ❍ Never (1)
- ❍ Less than Once a Month (2)
- ❍ 2-3 Times a Month (3)
- ❍ Once a Week (4)
- ❍ 2-3 Times a Week (5)
- ❍ Daily (6)
- ❍ Multiple Times A Day (7)

Q7 Do you follow Oregon athletics' official account (GoDucks)?
- ❏ No (1)
- ❏ Yes, On Twitter (2)
- ❏ Yes, On Facebook (3)
- ❏ Yes, On Instagram (4)
- ❏ Yes, On Youtube (5)
- ❏ Yes, On Pinterest (6)
- ❏ Yes, On Google+ (7)

Q8 Do you follow individual sports or spirit accounts (i.e., football, QuackCave, Pit Crew)?
- ❏ No (1)
- ❏ Yes, On Twitter (2)
- ❏ Yes, On Facebook (3)
- ❏ Yes, On Instagram (4)

Q9 Why do you follow Oregon Athletics on social?
- ❏ To keep up to date on sports news (1)
- ❏ To be connected with the university (2)
- ❏ To show support for Oregon sports (3)
- ❏ Because my friends follow Oregon athletics (4)
- ❏ Access to exclusive content (5)
- ❏ Interesting or entertaining content (6)
- ❏ Other (Please Specify): (7) _____

Q10 Have you interacted with Oregon Athletics on social media?
- ❍ No (1)
- ❍ Yes (2)

Q11 Have you ever...
- ❑ Favorited or liked a post or tweet (1)
- ❑ Retweeted or shared a post or tweet (2)
- ❑ Commented or replied to a post or tweet (3)
- ❑ Tagged yourself or someone else in one of Oregon Athletics' posts (4)
- ❑ Posted directly on Oregon Athletics' wall (5)
- ❑ Other (Please Specify): (6) _____

Q12 On a scale of one to five, how much do you agree with the following statements? 0 being not at all and 5 being very much.

_____ Oregon Athletics main social media account (GoDucks) is very engaging—the account frequently interacts with its followers (1)

_____ Do you feel that Oregon Athletics values your interactions (retweets, favorites, likes, comments, replies and shares) with the brand on social media? (2)

_____ I value my interactions with Oregon Athletics. (3)

_____ Oregon Athletics treats students fairly and justly. (4)

_____ Oregon Athletics is known to be successful at the things it tries to do. (5)

_____ Oregon Athletics listens to what students have to say. (6)

_____ There is a long-lasting bond between this organization and students. (7)

_____ I am pleased with the relationship this organization has established with students. (8)

_____ Whenever Oregon Athletics gives or offers something to students, it generally expects something in return. (9)

_____ Oregon Athletics takes care of students who are likely to benefit the organization. (10)

_____ I feel students are important to Oregon Athletics. (11)

_____ Oregon Athletics believes the opinions of students are legitimate. (12)

_____ I can see that this organization wants to maintain a relationship with students. (13)

_____ I feel a sense of loyalty to Oregon Athletics. (14)

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