

SOCIAL MEDIA INTEGRATION: THE 2010 WORLD CUP

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Abstract

Introduction and Aim

Social media have rapidly changed the way sport enterprises communicate with consumers in the pursuit of brand building, promotion and commerce. Social media may be defined as a group of Internet-based applications, such as Facebook and Twitter, that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content (UGC) (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). Although the 2002 Korea/Japan World Cup created homepages for teams and multiple websites for the tournament, Web 2.0 (and, therefore - social media) was non-existent. During the 2006 World Cup there were opportunities for UGC and for new ways of experiencing the event on websites such as Google Video, iTunes, YouTube, and MySpace.

Web 2.0 allowed consumers to become prosumers who produced videos and pictures, blogs and forums, played games, shared files, and posted on message boards. In addition, brand managers interactively tested what consumers wanted, what advertisers were willing to buy and how best to filter the most appropriate UGC onto their websites. The 2010 World Cup, however, initiated a new era in social media integration with the involvement of social media platforms Facebook and Twitter. The aim of this paper, therefore, is to: 1) define the prosumer movement within the context of sport business; and 2) examine the integration of social media during the 2010 World Cup.

Literature Review

In 1980 the futurist Alvin Toffler first introduced the concept of "prosumers", interconnected consumers who are simultaneously producers and who can distribute and consume their own goods or services. Toffler coined the term to illustrate how new forms of information technologies could blur the lines between producers and consumers and could transform traditional consumers into very knowledgeable or professional consumers. The advent of social media is a contributing factor in naming this era the "attention age" or attention economy. This age began with the emergence of social media in the first years of the 21st century (Sullivan, 2009), and is marked by the ability of individuals to become prosumers - to create and consume information instantly and freely as well as share it on the Internet using social media. Similarly, social media is making it possible for athletes and sport organizations to directly correspond and interact with millions of fans and for sport franchises to represent themselves in virtual worlds such as Second Life where avatar players and fans can interact (Ferguson, 2009).

Methodology

A meta-analysis of salient research related to social media and the 2010 World Cup was conducted. Recurring themes and concepts were developed and investigated. Social media metrics also were gathered from secondary sources and technical reports provided by a variety of media sources. An emphasis was placed on the social media dynamics of primarily two selected social media platforms, Facebook and Twitter.

Results and Discussion

Social media statistics from the 2010 World Cup demonstrated that fans used the social media tools provided by Twitter and Facebook to their advantage, not only in their daily routines, but during actual World Cup play. Facebook took advantage of the World Cup phenomenon by providing fan prosumers with a way in which to express their emotions. Facebook integrated various applications and games whereby World Cup fans could connect with their friends online, providing them not only a connection to each other, but a connection to the event when they were not viewing a game. Applications and games on Facebook became increasingly popular as the World Cup progressed, which gave users even more incentive to visit Facebook. The website's "freemium" strategy allowed not only prosumers freedom but brands freedom to promote their products, giving the platform a particular appeal to marketers.

The 2010 World Cup was a major example of how football prosumers worldwide followed their favorite players on and off the field via the Twitter platform. Interestingly, more than 60 percent of registered Twitter accounts are outside of the U.S. and a number of those international accounts belong to popular football stars such as the Brazilian stars Kaka, Luis Fabiano and Gilberto Silva, France's Nicolas Anelka, and Spain's Andrea Iniesta. One third of the U.S. team, including captain Landon Donovan, Jozy Altidore and Oguchi Onyewu, tweeted updates during training and during the World Cup (Basilio, 2010). The 2010 World Cup showcased new ways for fans, teams, and brands such as Nike and Adidas to connect and leverage. Social media, which especially delivered on mobile platforms, will be a more important element in sport marketing and promotion in future FIFA World Cup events.

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