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From Tweets to Seats: How Does Social Networking Site Use Affect Commuter University Students' Football Fandom?

Matthew J. Haught
University of Memphis

Erin Willis
University of Colorado-Boulder

Ashley Furrow
University of Memphis

David L. Morris III
University of Oregon

Karen Freberg
University of Louisville

Urban universities serving a highly commuter-student population often struggle to draw student fans to athletic events. College athletic departments want to reach this group because they might become brand ambassadors for the university and can continue to contribute to the athletics program after graduation as a non-student fan. College athletic departments have embraced social networking sites (SNS) as a means for engagement. This study surveys students at two urban commuter universities to create student fan profiles so that institutions can determine which will be the most important football SNS for users. Findings indicate four fan types that engage with college football SNS for varying reasons, but that using SNS does not predict game attendance. This study offers suggestions for how athletic departments at public urban universities can help these students to develop a sense of pride and belonging to their institution. Implications for future research about SNS and behaviors, as well as for college football marketers are discussed.

Keywords: social networking, college athletics, engagement, fandom

Collegiate athletics in the United States produced nearly \$1 billion in revenue in 2014 (Dosh, 2013). However, urban universities with largely commuter student populations struggle to draw student fans to athletic events (Hutchinson & Berg, 2015; Newbold, Mehta, & Forbus, 2011). Students who live off campus in nearby areas are defined as commuter students in comparison to traditional students who live in on campus residences (Stewart & Rue, 1983). Research suggests that commuter students possess different expectations for attending college and NCAA athletics rate among the lowest priority for these students (Hutchinson & Berg, 2015). However, commuter students may benefit the most from developing relationships with individuals on campus (Webber, Krylow, & Zhang, 2013) and with the institution itself (Newbold et al., 2011). Further, athletic events may be a way to facilitate these relationships.

Urban universities tend to enroll more diverse students than traditional private institutions (Braxton, Hirschy, & McClendon, 2004); moreover, commuter students make up 86% of the U.S. student population (Horn & Berkold, 2013), often play multiple life roles (e.g., caretaker, parent, employee/intern, volunteer), and have difficulty integrating into social support systems (Melendez, 2015). Traditional college students and commuters may be differentiated by: (1) socioeconomic differences; (2) academic differences; and, (3) outside obligations/activities (Newbold et al., 2011). Commuter students broadly range in age and represent a higher proportion of minorities than traditional students (U.S. Department of Education, 2006). Research shows that commuter students when compared to traditional students participate less in school activities, campus social events, and are less involved with peers and faculty members (Newbold et al., 2011; Webber et al., 2013), although social and academic integration is beneficial to them (Deil-Amen, 2011). Commuter students are also less likely to develop a sense of belonging to their institution (Newbold et al., 2011; Webber et al., 2013). Not surprisingly, urban universities with large commuter student populations often experience low attendance at athletic events (Jones, 2009; Melendez, 2015; Newbold et al., 2011; Price & Sen, 2003).

University communicators identified social networking sites (SNS) as a possible venue to connect with students, and to engage potential fans in school spirit. Using SNS to strengthen the relationship between students and the university may improve student engagement with the university brand (Jackson, 2013) and subsequently, feelings of belonging to the institution (Ellison, Vitak, Gray, & Lampe, 2014). Athletics are known to bring people together and create a sense of community (Warner & Dixon, 2013). Consuming sports team-related media has long been associated with building a bond with other fans and developing a powerful group identity (Phua, 2012; Spinda, Wann, & Hardin, 2015), and being up-to-date on team-related information facilitates interactions with other fans (Highfield, Harrington, & Bruns, 2013). Because social media, unlike traditional media forms like print or television, allows sports fans to talk to each other online and express their team preference, social media may increase fans' identification with their team further and their feeling of being part of a group. Specifically, social networking sites empower consumers to take active roles as both marketers and advertisers of their team or other favorite products and brands (Chu & Kim, 2011; Kim, Sung, & Kang, 2014). Facebook and Twitter have become important tools to connect brands with audiences through public relations (Lovejoy, Waters, & Saxton, 2012; Waters & Jamal, 2011) and electronic word of mouth (Chu & Kim, 2011; Pfeiffer & Zinnbauer, 2010).

This study examines the role SNS play in urban commuter student game attendance and how SNS use might be leveraged to increase feelings of school spirit. Using several scales to measure motivations and behaviors associated with sports attendance and fandom, the current study also explores the links between online fandom and offline game attendance through a survey distributed across two urban universities. Overall, this study creates commuter university student fan profiles to identify the target audience for college football SNS. Understanding the motivations for college football SNS use among urban commuter university students will help marketing managers to create effective online content and promote offline behavior.

Literature Review

Social media has become ubiquitous in today's society, and collegiate athletic departments adopted these platforms to connect with fans. Social networking sites are an obvious vehicle to communicate information directly to target publics. The Pew Internet Research Project (2014) reported 74% of American adult Internet users are active on social networking sites, with 89% of 18- to 29-year-olds being the most active. Boyd and Ellison (2007) defined social networking sites (SNS) as:

Web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system (p. 211).

Web 2.0, the user-generated, participatory web (Beers, 2008) offers channels for interactive, two-way communication for networked sociality (Ellison & boyd, 2013). Meraz (2009) characterized social media as "architected by design to readily support participation, peer-to-peer conversation, collaboration, and community" (p. 682).

Social networking sites are becoming more meaningful tools for creating and strengthening relationships with consumers and fans alike (Lim, Hwang, Kim, & Biocca, 2015). The Internet provides the opportunity for engagement, giving users the ability to correspond with other users, share information, and form personal relationships (Clavio & Walsh, 2014). With SNS, there is an emphasis placed on fostering relationships with stakeholders and fans (Abeza, O'Reilly, & Reid, 2013; Billings, Qiao, Conlin, & Nie, 2015) in an attempt to create positive attitudes (Briones, Kuch, Liu, & Jin, 2011; Lovejoy et al., 2012). SNS allow collegiate athletic departments to keep fans up-to-date with the latest news and information, but also allow for fans to enjoy access to insider information that might not be reported by traditional media outlets (Kassing & Sanderson, 2010). Communication between collegiate athletic departments and fans allows relationships to be formed, which may, in turn, lead fans to identify more with the program (Frederick, Lim, Clavio, & Walsh, 2012; Wallace, Wilson, & Miloch, 2011).

Social networking sites provide platforms for fans to express parasocial interaction with athletes (Frederick et al., 2012; Kassing & Sanderson, 2010) and express their feelings of fandom (Clavio & Walsh, 2014). Fandom is a way to relate to a team or athlete, and is also a way of relating to others with the same affinity (Gray, Sandvoss, & Harrington, 2007). Consuming sports team-related media has been associated with building bonds with other fans, developing a group identity, and acquiring team-related information for engagement with other fans (Kassing & Sanderson, 2012; Schwarz, 2009; Smith, Smith, & Sanderson, 2012). Social

media allows sports fans to talk to each other online and express their team loyalty. Social media may increase fans' identification with their team and further their feelings of being part of a group (Billings et al., 2015; Clavio & Walsh, 2014; Stavros, Meng, Westberg, & Farrelly, 2014).

Consumers are not only actively participating in the persuasion process through their use of social networking sites, they are controlling the information they receive depending on their needs and preferences (Cheung, Chiu, & Lee, 2011; Goh, Hing, & Lin, 2013). Social media empowers consumers to play the role of both marketers and advertisers of their team or other favorite products and brands (Sheehan & Morrison, 2009). The Internet has allowed for the creation of electronic word-of-mouth, referred to as eWOM (Chu & Kim, 2011). Although eWOM via SNS focuses on consumer-to-consumer communication, brands and corporations started to embrace eWOM via SNS (Chu & Kim, 2011; De Vries, Gensler, & Leeflang, 2012). Social media can generate brand exposure and create opportunities to initiate emotional connections through mutually beneficial two-way communication. According to Malar et al. (2011), emotional experiences with the brand are important to increasing brand visibility and awareness among consumers. Social media can generate brand exposure and create opportunities to initiate emotional connections. eWOM via SNS directly affects Internet traffic to SNS, micro blogs, and websites (Pfeiffer & Zinnabauer, 2011). The capacity for interactivity creates unique marketing opportunities as marketers are able to harness the power of user-generated content to glean strategic insights into consumers' attitudes and behavioral intentions. They also provide consumers with a positive brand experience that creates word-of-mouth and brand ambassadors. Because of the convenience and social importance of SNS, it is imperative that communication scholars continue to explore the influence of these technologies on a variety of stakeholders.

Measurement Scales

Marketers use lifestyle surveys of to determine the values of target audiences when trying to create advertising messages targeted at them. Similarly, this research uses several scales to assess the values of potential football fans as they relate to many aspects of the game. These value measurements allow for the construction of fan personalities, and can give clues to marketers about what issues matter to users engaged in social media.

Scholars developed several scales to measure motivations and behaviors associated with sports attendance and fandom. Specifically, the Motivation Scale for Sport Online Consumption (Seo & Green, 2008), the Motivation Scale for Sport Consumption (Trail & James, 2001), scale of Sportscape Factors (Lambrecht, Kaefer, & Ramenofsky, 2009), and the Point of Attraction Index (Robinson & Trail, 2005) explored why people engage sports websites, consume sport content, attend games, and become fans of sports, respectively. As this study seeks to explore links between online fandom and offline game attendance, several scales were examined and sampled to construct a measurement for these activities.

Motivation Scale for Sport Online Consumption (MSSOC): As sports consumption and fandom developed an online component via websites, message boards, and SNS, Seo and Green (2008) developed the Motivation Scale for Sport Online Consumption to understand why people use sports websites. The scale identified 10 factors of motivation: Fanship, Interpersonal Communication, Technical Knowledge, Fan Expression, Entertainment, Economic, Pass the Time, Information, Escape, and Support. Each factor is composed of three measures, and all 10 factors were positively correlated with Web commitment. Ruyhley and Billings (2012) used the MSSOC to develop a scale to measure women's engagement in fantasy sports; they included

Entertainment, Escape, Pass the Time, and Fanship, as well as Surveillance, which corresponded to measures from Information. Later, Billings and Ruihley (2013) used Entertainment, Pass the Time, and Surveillance to measure Fanship motivations for fantasy sports consumers. The MSSOC was adapted by Witkemper, Lim, and Waldburger (2012) to examine the motivations and constraints for Twitter use among fans. Their study modified the MSSOC factors to Information Motivation, Entertainment Motivation, Pass the Time Motivation, Fanship Motivation, Economic Constraint, and Accessibility Constraint. Through Structural Equation Modeling, they found this scale to be a solid predictor of SNS activity in sports twitter usage.

Motivation Scale for Sport Consumption (MSSC): Trail and James (2001) developed the Motivation Scale for Sport Consumption as a way to measure the motivations for sport consumption. Their scale built on the Sport Fan Motivation Scale (Wann, 1995), the Motivations of the Sport Consumer scale (Milne & McDonald, 1999), and sport sociology literature (Sloan, 1989; Zillmann & Paulus, 1993; Zillmann, Bryant, & Sapolsky, 1989). Trail and James's research indicated nine factors in the MSSC: Achievement, Knowledge, Aesthetics, Drama, Escape, Family, Physical Attraction, Physical Skills, and Social Interaction. Trail, Fink, and Anderson (2003) found support for the construct validity of the MSSC through structural equation modeling that used it and other scales to measure sport spectator consumption intention.

Sportscape Factors (SF): In a study of sportscape factors' influence on spectator attendance and fan satisfaction at a Professional Golf Association event, Lambrecht et al. (2009) discussed how amenities at a sporting event play a role in creating a satisfying experience. Their study solicited responses of satisfaction for eight indicators of sportscape: Parking, Course accessibility, Concessions, Seating, Merchandise, Crowd control, Restrooms, and Helpfulness of employees/volunteers. Using a cluster analysis, they grouped satisfied fans and unsatisfied fans and found that certain sportscape factors serve as a make-or-break component of fan satisfaction.

Points of Attachment Index (PAI): Robinson and Trail (2002) identified seven Points of Attachment for individual fans: Player, Team, Coach, University, Community, Sport, and Level. They found variance among these based on gender and the type of sport, and that fans could have multiple PAI for a sport. Each PAI was marked by three indicators that collectively discern motivations for fanship and spectatorship. Trail, Robinson, Dick, and Gillentine (2003) expanded on this by developing a model that divided followers of a sport into spectators and fans based on PAI and the MSSC.

Research Questions: The unique scenario of consumers in this study focuses on students at two urban, commuter universities with major athletic programs. One school has high attendance at its football games, while one has low attendance. Considering the evidence of the scales used to measure motivations for fan activity, the authors posit the following research questions:

RQ1A: What are the football behaviors and motivations for urban commuter university students, based on the Motivation Scale for Sport Online Consumption, Motivation Scale for Sport Consumption, Sportscape Factors, and the Point of Attraction Index?

RQ1B: How do different types of urban commuter university students engage SNS content?

RQ2: What role do social media play in urban commuter campus student game attendance?

Method

Sampling

This study uses a two-site data sampling approach to have comparable data for analysis. University A and University B are public urban research universities with approximately 22,000 students located in separate major cities in the southeastern United States. The universities' football teams played the 2013 season at the NCAA Division I Football Bowl Subdivision (FBS) level and what were once known as Bowl Championship Series Automatic Qualifying conferences (i.e., Power Five- ACC, Big Ten, SEC, Big 12, Pac 12). The universities' students mostly live off-campus and commute to campus for classes. Additionally, the universities have highly successful men's basketball teams who regularly draw large crowds to home games. These universities were selected because they have large athletics programs, a high proportion of commuter students, and struggle to have students attend football games. The universities spent considerable effort in recruiting students to attend games and in developing fan cultures.

University A's football team is not competitive and has not earned a trip to a bowl game in five seasons (2008-2013). University A's team plays in a 60,000-seat stadium, but averaged 33,293 (56.1% capacity) in attendance in 2013 (University A, 2014). University A has pages on Facebook (191,034 likes), Twitter (37,500 followers), Instagram (12,400 followers), and YouTube (2,676 followers). Conversely, University B's football team has been highly competitive and has played in bowl games in four of the past five seasons (2008-2013). University B averaged 52,914 people (96.2% capacity) per home game in 2013 and is planning an expansion to its stadium, which currently seats 55,000 (University B, 2014), to accommodate fans from the metropolitan area. University B supports pages on Facebook (305,534 likes), Twitter (81,400 followers), Instagram (28,400 followers), and YouTube (5,756 followers).

These schools were selected because both have similar problems with student attendance, despite the quality of play at University B. Even though University B does not struggle to get fans to its games, it seeks greater student attendance to help its mostly commuter students build a sense of belonging at the university. Further, the similarities of university population, stadium size, and position in major conferences make them fair comparisons. Since the data were collected, both universities developed substantial campaigns to encourage students to attend footballs games, and the need to motivate students to attend games is ongoing.

Students were selected via a simple random sample drawn from student email addresses at both universities provided by the universities' research offices. Researchers filed requests for simple random samples of student email addresses at both universities and then sent the questionnaire to the sample. Of 5,000 possible responses, 532 completed the survey at University A, yielding a response rate of 10.6%. At University B, of a possible 3,000 responses, 332 completed the survey, for a response rate of 11.0%. Students responded to a Qualtrics questionnaire, and the online administration accounted for the low response rate, as students likely ignored the email. To increase the response rate, researchers sent three follow-up reminders to the initial email, and incentivized participation with a drawing for a gift card. The differences in responses from both schools reflects an effort to over-sample from University A. Because A's less-successful team had little interest among students this was an effort to reach more interested students.

Sample Profile

Of the 864 total responses, 235 (36.1%) identified as male, 411 (63.1%) as female, and 5 (0.8%) as other/prefer not to say. The mean age of 24.4 (SD=8.28) is a slightly older average than typical 18-22 year old undergraduates; this skew is typical for urban, commuter universities, which attract nontraditional students. A majority of students, 539 (83.7%) live off campus, as is typical for commuter universities, and 105 (16.3%) live on campus. Urban commuter universities also typically have diverse student populations. Predominantly, respondents were either White/Caucasian (407; 62.5%) or Black/African-American (143; 22.0%).

Key Measures

Attendance: Respondents attended an average of 1.82 of 6 home games per season (SD=2.11). At University A, students reported attending 1.43 games per year (SD=1.85), while at University B, students reported attending 2.45 (SD=2.34).

Social media activity: Of 864 valid responses, 419 (48.5%) reported following one of University A or B's social media channels; 294 (34.0%) follow the university on Twitter, 286 follow the university on Facebook (33.1%), 162 (18.8%) follow the university on Instagram, and 53 (6.1%) follow the university on YouTube.

Data Analysis Procedure

To answer RQ1A and B, motivations were grouped through exploratory factor analysis according to established measures by the MSSOC, MSSC, SF, and PAI, as each of these contain factors that could impact social network following and game attendance. Then, using cluster analysis, grouped the motivations for attendance and activity into similar fan types. Then, to answer RQ2, multiple hierarchical regression measured the predictive power of SNS use for football game attendance.

Results

An exploratory factor analysis categorized Sportscape Factors for game attendance (n=784). The EFA produced three factors (See Table 1). The first factor comprised seven components (Broadcast on Television, Band, Cheerleaders, Energy of Crowd, Quality Opponents, Fan Involvement, and Fan Enthusiasm); it had an Eigenvalue of 4.60 and explained 24.23% of the total variance and its items agreed with a Cronbach's Alpha of .88. This factor was named Pageantry, as all components reflected the excitement of attending a college football game. The second factor included nine components (Helpfulness of Employees/Volunteers, Parking, Crowd Control, Restrooms, Free Transportation to Stadium, Stadium Accessibility, Seating, Ticket Price, and Merchandise). This factor had an Eigenvalue of 4.53 and explained 23.85% of the total variance; its items agreed with an alpha of .88. The authors named this factor Facilities, as the items reflected the creature comforts, convenience, and accessibility of game and venue features. The third factors comprised three items (Tailgating, Sale of Alcohol, and Concessions). It produced an Eigenvalue of 1.95 and explained 10.28% of the total variance; its items agreed with an alpha of .71. The authors named this factor Refreshments because it focuses on food and drink as part of the game experience.

A second EFA combined the motivations for CFB SNS use ($n=398$) drawn from the MSSOC. All items loaded onto two factors (See Table 2). Again, EFA was used because some factors from the original scale were excluded for the sake of content and brevity. The first factor comprised nine items (e.g., It provides quick and easy access to large volumes of information; I consider myself a fan; It is cool). The factor had an Eigenvalue of 4.19 and represented 34.87% of the total variance; its items agreed with an alpha of .86. This factor was named Infotainment, a portmanteau of Information and Entertainment, as items reflected both of these uses. The second factor included four measures (e.g., It is amusing; It gives me something to do to occupy my time). It had an Eigenvalue of 2.54 and explained 21.13% of the total variance; its items agreed with an alpha of .79. This factor was named Pass Time, as all measures represented use for amusement. These measures were used to indicate the ways different types of fans engage social

A third EFA grouped factors for attitudes about football, drawn from MSSC and POA ($n=712$). Again, EFA was used because some factors from the original scale were excluded for the same of content and brevity. All items loaded into a four-factor solution. The first factor included six measures (e.g., I feel a sense of pride when the “University” football team does well; I enjoy socializing with other people when I go to a “University” football game). It had an Eigenvalue of 4.51 and represented 25.05% of the total variance. Its items agreed with an alpha of .92. This factor was named University Pride, as the measures all represented pride associated with the university and its athletic teams. The second factor comprised six measures (e.g., First and foremost, I consider myself a football fan; Football is my favorite sport). It had an Eigenvalue of 3.58 and represented 19.91% of the total variance. It factors shared an alpha of .99. This factor was named Football Fan because these measures indicate fanship of the sport rather than the university. The third factor included three measures (e.g., I identify more with an individual player on the team than with the team). It had an Eigenvalue of 2.99 and represented 16.59% of the total variance; it had an alpha of .91. This factor was named Player Fan because items indicated fanship of a single player rather than the team. The fourth factor also included three measures (e.g., The football game provides an escape from my day-to-day routine). It had an Eigenvalue of 2.29 and accounted for 12.72% of the total variance; it had an alpha of .90. This factor was named Escape because its measures indicated the desire to use football as a diversion and distraction.

To answer RQ1A, what are the football behaviors and motivations for urban commuter university students, a cluster analysis grouped fans into categories; to answer RQ1B, how do different types of urban commuter university students engage SNS content, the clusters included motivations for college football social networking site use. Because 398 respondents indicated use of SNS, the cluster analysis focused on their fan type, excluding the SNS non-users from the cluster solution. Using a K-Means cluster procedure, solutions for four, five, six, and seven clusters were created. The four-cluster solution was selected because it provided the most straightforward results and categorized the same number of responses (371) as the seven-cluster solution.

The first cluster represented 97 responses. Regarding Sportscape Factors, it had a negative association with Facilities and strong associations with Refreshments and Spirit. Regarding SNS, it aligned with Infotainment and not Pass the Time. For attitudes about football, it most strongly associated with being a Football Fan and with University Pride. This cluster was named Proud University Fans because of the strong association with football and the university, as well as the Pageantry of the game.

The second cluster was the largest, with 104 responses. Regarding Sportscape, it scored high in Pageantry and had a negative association with Refreshments. It had little use for SNS. For attitudes about football, respondents found the sport to be an Escape and part of University Pride. However, they cared little about the sport in general or for specific players. This cluster was named Escaping Football Follower because they care about the university and the spirit of the game, but viewed football as a means of escape.

The third cluster represented 90 responses. The category scored high in all factors, but had the strongest associations with Refreshments in Sportscape, Pass the Time in SNS, and Player Fan in Football Attitudes. This factor was named Football Experience Fans because these respondents care about every aspect of Sportscape and SNS and have many uses for football.

The final factor represented 80 responses. It had the strongest association with Refreshments regarding Sportscape and demonstrated negative association with Pageantry. It had negative associations with both factors of SNS use, but showed less negative association with Pass the Time. Similarly, it had negative associations with all Football Attitudes factors, except a small positive relationship with Player Fan. This cluster was named Reluctant Football Fans because they do not enjoy the game, but want to have good food and drink while they follow a single player in the game.

ANOVA testing found significant differences in attendance rates among the four clusters ($F(3, 6)=16.83, p<.001$). Post hoc tests revealed Proud University Fans have significantly higher attendance than Football Experience Fans and Reluctant Football Fans ($p<.005, p<.001$, respectively). Similarly, Escaping Football Followers had higher attendance than Reluctant Football Fans ($p<.001$). Lastly, Football Experience Fans attended significantly more often than Reluctant Football Fans ($p<.005$). Thus, Proud University Fans and Football Experience Fans are the two groups who most often use social media to engage college football and actually attend college football games.

To answer RQ2, which asked what role social media play in urban commuter campus game attendance, a multiple hierarchical regression tested the association of the various factors, social media use, and demographic factors as predictors of game attendance for each cluster. Social Networking Site usage itself did not significantly predict game attendance. However, results indicate that the Sportscape factor Pageantry plays a strong role in predicting attendance ($B=3.714, p<.001$), as does Football Attitudes University Pride ($B=5.856, p<.001$), Escape ($B=4.198, p<.001$), and Football Fan ($B=3.735, p<.001$). So, while social media use is a key component to the fan experience for several fan types, it does not correlate with their desire to attend games. Further, a comparison of the two universities did not produce a statistically significant difference on any variable. Thus, both schools were analyzed as one response pool.

Discussion

Considering commuter students often play multiple life roles and have difficulty integrating into social systems (Newbold et al., 2011; Melendez, 2015), this study offers suggestions for how athletic departments at urban public universities can help these students to develop a sense of pride and belonging to their institution. Further, it examines some of the ways fans use social media to engage the game.

Proud University Fans. These students are most interested in Pageantry and Refreshments, meaning they want the full live sporting event experience including the pomp and circumstance of the university band, cheerleaders, and the energy of the crowd. Part of that

experience is eating, drinking, and tailgating at the game. Proud University Fans are also fans of the sport and prideful in their university and its athletic teams. These student fans are most likely to use SNS for Infotainment, meaning they want “information overload” about their university’s athletics, players and teams.

Escaping Football Follower. These students are most interested in Pageantry and are not influenced by Refreshments. These student fans have pride in the university and its athletic teams but are attending games as a means of Escape; thus, they care little about the sport itself and/or specific players on the team. The football game is a leisurely activity, a fun weekend event. Escaping Football Followers do not engage with SNS content.

Football Experience Fan. These students are most influenced by Refreshments. Instead of following the sport, these students are more likely to identify with single players rather than a team. SNS is used by these students as a Pass the Time, i.e., something to do while “bored.”

Reluctant Fan. These fans are most interested in the Refreshments and are not influenced by Pageantry. Typically, these students don’t have an interest in the sport or may be lacking university spirit but are slightly interested in a single player. Reluctant Fans are less likely to engage with SNS content geared toward sport and/or university athletic teams, but if doing so, it would be as a Pass the Time.

University marketers need to target Proud University Fans and Football Experience Fans in their social networking efforts. Thirty-four percent of the respondents follow one of University A or B Twitter accounts, followed closely by Facebook at 33.1%. These fans are interested in the entire game day experience, and want to eat and drink and boast university pride. Thus, practitioners should engage these students with messages related to Pageantry and Refreshments.

Student attendance is low at both urban universities, and thus students are not experiencing what Proud University Fans enjoy most about attending the game – the game day experience. Public relations practitioners should seek to communicate factors that influence Pageantry, such as fan enthusiasm and fan involvement. Creating a game day experience both in person and virtually is important to engagement and message strategies that need to be considered to reach these audiences more effectively. SNS should be used to create hype and excitement about attending the game. For instance, the video function of Instagram allows for a 15-second video to be shared with followers. University athletic departments could share Instagram videos throughout the game. Similarly, Billings et al. (2015) found that many collegiate athletic departments are already using Snapchat to communicate and increase game day excitement to fans. Social media has been found to facilitate fandom (Clavio & Walsh, 2014), and through fandom - fans develop a bond with the university and sport (Ellison et al., 2014; Jackson, 2013). Subsequently, by engaging with collegiate athletic departments and other fans, an online community forum can translate offline (Smith et al., 2012; Stavros et al., 2014). The results of the current study build on that notion and provide messaging strategies for reaching commuter students of urban universities. By engaging urban commuter students by fan type, collegiate athletic departments can help increase students’ positive feelings for the athletic team and university.

Cross-platform campaigns could offer incentives for participation among students; for example, unique gameday hashtags that encourage user-generated content. Smith et al. (2012) found sports fans engage with content through user-generated hashtags. SNS should be used to communicate the “gameday experience” with real-time snapshots of students involved with Pageantry and Refreshments. These messages could motivate Escaping Football Follower and Reluctant Fan types to attend the game. Specific hashtags should be initiated and consistently

encouraged among fans; for instance, hashtag contests for fans who contribute gameday content. However, messages should not only be used during the game, but such messages should be incorporated, reinforced and sustained before the season starts so students are familiar with specific SNS accounts. Additionally, student fans should be encouraged to engage with other fans. Using this strategy, audiences will see the opportunities and networking benefits SNS provides, thus creating an overall community with the entire university, ultimately building on the University Pride and Escape, both key factors for overall fan engagement.

In the current study, Escaping Football Follower was the largest fan type, followed by Proud University Fans, Football Experience Fans, and Reluctant Football Fans. The Escaping Football Follower fan type should be targeted for increased SNS use among athletic and university accounts. Here, practitioners should leverage the students' university pride and spirit of the game to entice more SNS use, which would build overall school spirit. For urban commuter students specifically, engagement with the university is critical to their scholastic success (Deil-Amen, 2011), and collegiate athletic departments could perhaps play a large role in student retention by increasing feelings of school spirit and university pride. University communication departments should work strategically with athletic departments to create campaigns aimed at urban commuter students, regardless of fan type. Communication professionals on college campuses must work together in order for messaging to be effective, and thus use athletics as a means of growing University Pride, which could grow social media use, and ultimately engagement.

Two of the fan types, e.g., Football Experience Fans, Reluctant Fans, expressed interest in single players rather than the team as a whole. SNS should leverage this as a communication strategy. These fans want information about individual athletes, seemingly to form a bond with their peers. SNS content related to individual athletes could bridge students with the university and generate social capital. University student athletes should be encouraged to use SNS to engage fans; however, this can be tricky. Many university athletic departments have a SNS policy and guidelines that athletes must sign (Santus, 2014), and coaches at some universities have banned player SNS use (Paulson, 2012). Misuse of SNS by student athletes is often the cause of the ban (Doyel, 2011); however, if student athletes were taught how to use SNS appropriately and to motivate their peers to attend games, game day attendance might increase for some. Encouraging student athletes to share their perspectives of Pageantry via SNS could motivate Football Experience Fans and Reluctant Fans to attend more games. For example, student athletes might be encouraged to tweet about their game day ritual(s) or superstitions in preparation for game day. Some collegiate athletic departments include players on main athletic department accounts, like Snapchat (Billings et al., 2015) and Instagram. Students may engage with university athletic department accounts, individual players, other fans, sports journalists, etc. on SNS, creating a sense of community that generates social capital (Phua, 2012). Urban universities should take advantage of the opportunity SNS provides for creating a local network that supports university efforts toward retaining students.

While one might think college football SNS use would predict game attendance, the finding here that indicates otherwise is consistent with emerging understanding about online activity versus offline behaviors. Lewis, Gray, and Meierhenrich (2014) found an inverse relationship between broad online social movement mobilization and deep participation. Thus, more work is needed to determine the effects of SNS use on fandom. In the interim, however, sports communication professionals have the opportunity to engage with fans in order to facilitate relationships and further brand loyalty. University communication strategies should be

communicated across departments in order to effectively communicate with the target audience of urban commuter students. Additionally, communication professionals should take advantage of the two-way communication features of social media and listen to urban commuter students' desires regarding athletic and university events. These moves will build University Pride and position football as a means for Escape, which ultimately could lead to game attendance.

Limitations and Future Research

This study has several limitations. First, use of partial scales limited the factors used in the study. Second, both University A and B are located in the southeastern United States; use of a university in different region would allow for a comparison. The fact that University A had an unsuccessful team and University B had a successful team also accounts for some limitation; students and fans generally are more supportive of successful teams. Although the universities are quite similar in many aspects, the difference in quality of play is evident. Lastly, the nature of college football indicates the current enthusiasm surrounding a team; University A had little excitement during the season, while University B had a successful year.

Future scholars have several directions for follow-up research. First, scholars should consider motivations for SNS use and game attendance at residential campuses. Comparing how traditional students use social media in comparison to urban commuter students might be interesting in regard to athletic event attendance. Further, such research should explore how SNS by universities and athletic departments might work together in strategically communicating consistent messages to students. Recent research demonstrates that SNS facilitates community building and bonds (Kassing & Sanderson, 2012), but more research should examine the connection between SNS engagement and retention. A comparison of traditional and commuter student populations might be insightful. With all of the university options available to students, research should explore how SNS could help with recruitment, retention and graduation through strategic messaging of athletic events.

Second, research is needed to build the bridge between SNS use and offline behavior. It is not enough that students and fans engage with collegiate athletic departments online. Although SNS may create brand awareness and cultivate brand loyalty (Abeza et al., 2013; Clavio & Walsh, 2015), more research must investigate how to translate engagement to attendance. Scholars should examine the types of messages that garner the most engagement among varying fan types outlined in this study. Sporting events may be used by university communicators to foster school spirit and pride amongst commuter students through SNS engagement. Finally, longitudinal work is needed to explore the social media efforts of successful and unsuccessful teams, commuter universities with high student engagement and low student engagement, and the impact of offline team promotions on online engagement and student attendance.

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Table 1

Factor Analysis of Sportscape Factors

| | Mean | S.D. | Pageantry | Facilities | Refreshments |
|-------------------------------------|------|------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| Factor 1: Pageantry | | | | | |
| Broadcast on Television | 2.99 | 1.46 | 0.63 | 0.22 | 0.16 |
| Band | 3.09 | 1.42 | 0.61 | 0.41 | -0.04 |
| Cheerleaders | 2.96 | 1.43 | 0.64 | 0.25 | 0.05 |
| Energy of Crowd | 3.87 | 1.29 | 0.86 | 0.18 | 0.13 |
| Quality Opponents | 3.69 | 1.27 | 0.67 | 0.17 | 0.26 |
| Fan Involvement | 3.77 | 1.31 | 0.84 | 0.18 | 0.18 |
| Fan enthusiasm | 3.85 | 1.29 | 0.76 | 0.21 | 0.25 |
| Factor 2: Facilities | | | | | |
| Helpfulness of Employees/Volunteers | 3.37 | 1.34 | 0.39 | 0.67 | 0.10 |
| Parking | 3.33 | 1.45 | 0.07 | 0.69 | 0.09 |
| Crowd Control | 3.10 | 1.43 | 0.23 | 0.72 | -0.10 |
| Restrooms | 3.68 | 1.35 | 0.28 | 0.74 | 0.15 |
| Free transportation to stadium | 2.65 | 1.55 | 0.08 | 0.60 | 0.06 |
| Stadium Accessibility | 3.31 | 1.37 | 0.20 | 0.70 | 0.18 |
| Seating | 3.74 | 1.26 | 0.35 | 0.61 | 0.35 |
| Ticket price | 3.63 | 1.46 | 0.23 | 0.65 | 0.11 |
| Merchandise | 2.40 | 1.31 | 0.41 | 0.47 | 0.17 |
| Factor 3: Refreshments | | | | | |
| Tailgating | 3.13 | 1.47 | 0.42 | 0.13 | 0.68 |
| Sale of alcohol | 2.38 | 1.51 | 0.09 | 0.06 | 0.87 |
| Concessions | 3.08 | 1.35 | 0.29 | 0.48 | 0.54 |
| Eigenvalue | | | 4.60 | 4.53 | 1.95 |
| % Variance Explained | | | 24.23 | 23.85 | 10.28 |
| Cronbach's Alpha | | | 0.88 | 0.88 | 0.71 |

NOTES: Factor loadings with Varimax Rotation in 5 iterations. Measures reflect Likert scale responses for agreement. N=784.

Table 2

Factor Analysis of Motivations for CFB SNS use

| | Mean | S.D. | Infotainment | Pass the time |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|--------------|---------------|
| Factor 1: Infotainment | | | | |
| It provides quick and easy access to large volumes of athlete information. | 5.42 | 1.38 | 0.71 | 0.16 |
| I follow because I consider myself a fan. | 5.57 | 1.34 | 0.68 | 0.11 |
| I follow because I am a huge fan of football in general. | 4.65 | 1.81 | 0.58 | 0.18 |
| I consider myself to be a big fan of my favorite athlete. | 4.28 | 1.73 | 0.64 | 0.30 |
| I am able to obtain a wide range of information. | 5.33 | 1.31 | 0.80 | 0.12 |
| I can learn about things happening in the athletic world. | 5.54 | 1.21 | 0.67 | 0.16 |
| It is exciting. | 5.07 | 1.36 | 0.75 | 0.27 |
| It is cool. | 4.94 | 1.38 | 0.67 | 0.28 |
| Factor 2: Pass Time | | | | |
| It is amusing. | 4.89 | 1.46 | 0.47 | 0.55 |
| It gives me something to do to occupy my time. | 4.64 | 1.52 | 0.13 | 0.86 |
| It passes the time away, particularly when I'm bored. | 4.38 | 1.61 | 0.11 | 0.88 |
| I follow during my free time. | 5.08 | 1.32 | 0.38 | 0.61 |
| Eigenvalue | | | 4.19 | 2.54 |
| % Variance Explained | | | 34.87 | 21.13 |
| Cronbach's Alpha | | | 0.86 | 0.79 |

NOTES: Factor loadings with Varimax Rotation in 5 iterations. Measures reflect Likert scale responses for agreement. N=398.

Table 3

Factor Analysis of attitudes about football

| | Mean | S.D. | University Pride | Football Fan | Player Fan | Escape |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|---------------------|-----------------|---------------|--------|
| Factor 1: University Pride | | | | | | |
| I feel a personal sense of achievement when the “University” football team does well. | 4.61 | 1.86 | 0.75 | 0.19 | 0.17 | 0.23 |
| I feel like I have won when the “University” football team wins. | 4.59 | 1.93 | 0.79 | 0.18 | 0.14 | 0.20 |
| I feel proud when the “University” football team plays well. | 5.28 | 1.69 | 0.79 | 0.13 | 0.04 | 0.16 |
| I enjoy interaction with other people at a “University” football game. | 5.02 | 1.65 | 0.84 | 0.17 | 0.07 | 0.18 |
| I enjoy talking with other people when I go to a “University” football game. | 4.93 | 1.67 | 0.84 | 0.19 | 0.07 | 0.14 |
| I enjoy socializing with other people when I go to a “University” football game. | 5.08 | 1.61 | 0.86 | 0.16 | 0.07 | 0.12 |
| Factor 2: Football Fan | | | | | | |
| First and foremost, I consider myself a football fan. | 4.14 | 2.05 | 0.23 | 0.81 | 0.08 | 0.20 |
| Football is my favorite sport. | 3.66 | 2.11 | 0.06 | 0.79 | 0.08 | 0.24 |
| I am a football fan of all levels (e.g., high school, college, professional). | 4.25 | 1.98 | 0.19 | 0.78 | 0.16 | 0.22 |
| I am a fan of collegiate football regardless of who is playing. | 3.87 | 1.87 | 0.23 | 0.76 | 0.21 | 0.15 |
| I don’t identify with one specific college football team, but collegiate football in general. | 3.34 | 1.79 | 0.20 | 0.49 | 0.53 | 0.02 |

| | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|-------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| I consider myself a fan of collegiate football, and not just one specific team. | 3.72 | 1.89 | 0.24 | 0.64 | 0.38 | 0.06 |
| Factor 3: Player Fan | | | | | | |
| I identify more with an individual player on the team than with the team. | 3.03 | 1.77 | 0.09 | 0.14 | 0.87 | 0.22 |
| I am a big fan of a specific player more than I am a fan of the team. | 2.91 | 1.70 | 0.09 | 0.18 | 0.88 | 0.17 |
| I consider myself a fan of certain players rather than a fan of the team. | 2.93 | 1.66 | 0.08 | 0.16 | 0.87 | 0.14 |
| Factor 4: Escape | | | | | | |
| The football game provides an escape from my day-to-day routine. | 4.07 | 1.90 | 0.33 | 0.30 | 0.19 | 0.79 |
| The football game provides a distraction from my everyday activities. | 4.00 | 1.87 | 0.29 | 0.22 | 0.21 | 0.79 |
| The football game provides a diversion from “life’s little problems” for me. | 3.95 | 1.84 | 0.30 | 0.29 | 0.22 | 0.77 |
| Eigenvalue | | | 4.51 | 3.58 | 2.99 | 2.29 |
| % Variance Explained | | | 25.05 | 19.91 | 16.59 | 12.72 |
| Cronbach’s Alpha | | | 0.92 | 0.99 | 0.91 | 0.90 |

NOTES: Factor loadings with Varimax Rotation in 5 iterations. Measures reflect Likert scale responses for agreement. N=712.

Table 4

4 Cluster Solution

| | Proud University Fans | University Football Followers | Football Experience Fans | Reluctant Football Fans |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Sportscape | | | | |
| Facilities | -0.637 | 0.133 | 0.451 | -0.042 |
| Refreshments | 0.504 | -0.770 | 0.759 | 0.027 |
| Pageantry | 0.618 | 0.647 | 0.329 | -0.878 |
| CFB SNS | | | | |
| Infotainment | 0.479 | 0.088 | 0.399 | -1.122 |
| Pass the time | -0.470 | 0.025 | 0.579 | -0.171 |
| Football attitudes | | | | |
| Escape | 0.011 | 0.346 | 0.387 | -0.132 |
| Football Fan | 0.774 | -0.554 | 0.402 | -0.131 |
| Player Fan | -0.822 | -0.068 | 1.096 | 0.018 |
| University Pride | 0.643 | 0.493 | 0.409 | -0.179 |
| Total N | 97 | 104 | 90 | 80 |
| Mean Attendance | 3.53 | 2.63 | 2.44 | 1.36 |
| SD Attendance | 2.11 | 2.27 | 2.08 | 1.58 |

NOTES: N=371.

Table 5

Predictors of Game Attendance

| Predictor | R² Change | Beta |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------|
| Block 1: Demographics | 0.01 | |
| Residence | | -3.766*** |
| Gender | | -1.33 |
| Age | | -1.964* |
| Block 2: Sportscape Factors | 0.24 | |
| Pageantry | | 3.714*** |
| Facilities | | -5.632*** |
| Block 3: SNS | 0.03 | |
| Infotainment | | 1.03 |
| Block 4: Football Attitudes | 0.08 | |
| University Pride | | 5.856*** |
| Escape | | 4.198*** |
| Football Fan | | 3.735*** |
| Total R² | 0.36 | |
| n | 712 | |

NOTES: Beta weights represent standardized beta coefficients.