Emerald Insight

Online Information Review

Guest editorial
Yair Galily Galen Clavio

Article information:

Users who downloaded this article also downloaded:

(2016),"Networked spectators: Social media conversation and moderation at the Olympic opening ceremony", Online Information Review, Vol. 40 Iss 6 pp. 746-760 http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/OIR-02-2016-0044

(2016),"Sports reporters in the Twittersphere: Challenging and breaking down traditional conceptualizations of genderlect", Online Information Review, Vol. 40 Iss 6 pp. 761-784 http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/OIR-02-2016-0040

For Authors

If you would like to write for this, or any other Emerald publication, then please use our Emerald for Authors service information about how to choose which publication to write for and submission guidelines are available for all. Please visit www.emeraldinsight.com/authors for more information.

About Emerald www.emeraldinsight.com

Emerald is a global publisher linking research and practice to the benefit of society. The company manages a portfolio of more than 290 journals and over 2,350 books and book series volumes, as well as providing an extensive range of online products and additional customer resources and services.

Emerald is both COUNTER 4 and TRANSFER compliant. The organization is a partner of the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) and also works with Portico and the LOCKSS initiative for digital archive preservation.

Guest editorial

Texting, tweeting and playing: sporting mega events in an online environment

The online environment has significantly altered the way in which many media audience members consume popular sporting events. Social media and two-way electronic communication have allowed fans, spectators, and stakeholders to achieve a remarkable level of interconnectedness and interactivity centered on sporting events and sport news. This interconnectedness has extended beyond cultural and national boundaries, turning the online sport communication environment into a global exchange of shared experiences, discussion, and participation among individuals of varying locations and backgrounds.

Prior research has demonstrated that the online environment plays a role in the mediated consumption of sport. Studies have demonstrated that sport fans engage in a variety of behaviors around and during sporting events on online media, including social and parasocial relationships with athletes (Frederick *et al.*, 2014), social sharing of information and other content (Clavio and Frederick, 2014), and information sharing and interactivity (Clavio and Walsh, 2014). Research has also shown increasing engagement in online media utilization among athletes and sport organizations, with athletes focussing on cultivating public personae (Lebel and Danylchuk, 2012; Burch *et al.*, 2014) and personal brand development (Frederick and Clavio, 2015), and organizations focussing on interaction with fans (Thompson *et al.*, 2016).

Sporting mega events are perhaps the most fascinating exemplars of this trend toward mediated global interconnected sport environments, because they provide global audiences with a shared context for both sporting competition and electronic communication. Sporting mega events held since the emergence of social media platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and Twitter into the media mainstream have demonstrated both the changing face of online sport-consuming audiences and the potential reach that such events have within the online environment.

That online environment is already immense, and continuing to grow. Facebook features 1.65 billion monthly active users, which includes over 300 million users from Europe (Zephoria, 2016). Facebook's number of monthly users exceeds the populations of every nation in the world except China. WhatsApp, a social media messaging service most popular in Europe, boasts an audience in excess of one billion people, and among some western audiences is more popular than Facebook (Rosen, 2016). With users drawn from a diverse cross-section of nations, the online environment presents a mediated communication space unique in human history.

No other regularly scheduled events on the planet bring as many members of the global community together to engage in mediated electronic communication as do sporting mega events. The 2014 World Cup in Brazil reached 3.2 billion viewers, with an estimated audience for the cup final of one billion (FIFA, 2015). Meanwhile, the 2012 Summer Olympics in London was the most-watched event in US television history, drawing nearly 220 million total viewers over its 17-day span (*AdWeek*, 2012). The online audiences and media messages generated by these events was even more impressive in number, with the 2014 World Cup audience generating over 600,000 tweets per minute,

and over 670 million tweets during the life of the tournament. The 2014 Sochi Olympics saw a majority of American television viewers using a second screen device while watching events. These and other trends have seen the online environment evolve from a sparsely used message exchange to a vibrant, rich, and deep exchange of culture, information, and interactivity.

The purpose of this special issue is to provide a showcase for leading scholarship surrounding sporting mega events in the online environment, with a focus on case studies and empirical research into the phenomena surrounding this emerging media space. The scholars presented in this special issue represent the front line of research in this area, exploring the diverse tapestry of audiences, communities, and perspectives that comprise online communication on a global sporting stage.

This volume, entitled "texting, tweeting and playing: sporting mega events in an online environment" introduces research from around the world focussing on the online environment and sporting mega events. The opening paper, Online Chinese discussions about the 2014 World Cup, is the first to investigate the online discussions about the World Cup in an extremely popular Chinese social media platform, Sina Weibo. Although China did not qualify for the Games, the study focusses on the role of online discussions surrounding a worldwide international event from an outsider perspective, and ascertain themes of comments both in terms of content focus and valence. The study divulge how Chinese bloggers used the online platform to express various levels of fandom and to share their perceptions about athletes and teams. Furthermore, differential content focus and valence were identified between fanship and non-fanship-based comments.

Additionally, in 2014, the following paper, Echo or organic: framing the 2014 Sochi games, perform a comparative analysis of how traditional media and social media framed the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympic Games. The researchers examined newspaper articles pertaining to the Sochi Olympics and tweets containing #SochiProblems to determine if differences or overlap existed in terms of themes and frames. Examining whether there is a convergence or divergence of content across media platforms pertaining to an international sporting event, the study also examined whether top-down and/or bottom-up framing were present. Findings demonstrated that across the two media platforms, three frames existed, including: the setting, the politics and the Games. Data analysis correspondingly revealed that both an echo chamber and organic content were present.

The succeeding investigation, Al-Jazeera sport's US Twitter followers: sport-politics nexus? analyses of the sport-ethnocentrism nexus, and examines whether the Twitter following of beIN USA (formerly Al-Jazeera Sport), indicates ethnocentrism and resistance to the Qatari-sponsored sport station or whether this outlet manages to attract fans from different backgrounds who share a love of sport, thus serving as an apolitical platform. To put the analysis in perspective, the authors compared the results with the following patterns of Al-Jazeera America news follows. The analysis revealed that whereas Al-Jazeera America Twitter followers follow significantly more liberal than conservative news outlets, highlighting conservatives' resistance to Al-Jazeera in the USA, beIN's followers were less strongly associated with a specific political orientation. Further analyses also identified that few beIN USA Twitter followers also follow Al-Jazeera America, further indicating the distance between the followers of these two outlets. Finally, an analysis of beIN's followers' retweets indicates much greater connectivity between

beIN's followers in comparison to Al-Jazeera America's followers, pointing to a more tightly connected online community that actively engages in the exchange of sport-related materials.

Two papers in this issue shed light on gender standpoints of the sporting online environment. The first, A sentiment analysis of who participates, how and why, at social media sport websites: how differently men and women write about football uses a data collection via social media website and a sentiment analysis of the collected data to ascertain how differently men and women write about football. Results show certain unexpected similarities in social media activities between male and female football fans. A comparison of the user comments from Facebook pages of the top five 2015-16 British Premier League football clubs revealed that men and women similarly express hard emotions such as anger or fear, while there is a significant difference in expressing soft emotions such as joy or sadness. The paper not only provides information about the gender-based football fandom behavior at social media websites, but also presents new theoretical perspective that contributes to an understanding of backgrounds and reasons for the gender differences in terms of emotions and their expressions. The writers argue that results should influence football marketing and organizations to develop new strategies in targeting women as growing consumers of football-related products. Correspondingly, differences in the ways men and women communicate have prompted researchers of the next paper, to coin the term "genderlect" to describe the phenomenon and area of study. Their manuscript, Sports reporters in the Twittersphere: challenging and breaking down traditional conceptualizations of Genderlect, aimed to investigates the potential for the online environment to challenge and break down traditional gender expectations and conventions. Tweets of male and female sports reporters covering the 2015 NCAA Division I men's and women's American Basketball Final Four championship games were collected, and findings suggest that people adapt their communication patterns to match the context in which they are communicating and to match the expectation of the people to whom they are communicating. The study also reveals some tenacious genderlect patterns among female sports reporters that could, in subtle ways, undermine their perceived credibility or expertise among sports media consumers compared to their male counterparts especially because some patterns like exclamation point and ellipses usage and expression of emotion are so over-represented in the female reporters' tweets. The authors suggest that, if a goal of communicating via Twitter for journalists is personal brand development then female sports reporters would be wise to be deliberate in using Twitter to break down gender barriers. This could involve adjusting genderlect patterns for the content-context. Failure to do so, according to the researchers, could serve only to reinforce traditional sports-media stereotypes and to undermine the credibility and perceived expertise female sports reporters.

Beyond merely watching media events, the last paper in this special issue, Networked spectators: Social media conversation & moderation at the Olympic opening ceremony, proposes the term, "networked spectators" to identify how people participate in the content creation, social media moderation, and conversation using social media. It is claimed that networked spectatorship moves away from the binary of active and passive participation, and rather reflects on the multiple ways people can engage in media events, which specifically includes social media monitoring/moderation as a form of participation. The paper finds the London 2012 Olympic opening ceremony celebrates universalism and change, over nationalism and historicity. Despite the Olympics being a "networked media sport" where countries compete against each another in various

sporting events, the paper argue that the overarching narrative of the London 2012 Guest editorial opening ceremony is one that breaks down traditional barriers, while simultaneously situating the individual at the center of "networked spectatorship."

Yair Galily
IDC, Herzliya, Israel, and
Galen Clavio
Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, USA

745

References

AdWeek (2012), "NBC has the last laugh as Olympics strike gold", *AdWeek*, August 13, available at: www.adweek.com/news/television/nbc-has-last-laugh-olympics-strike-gold-142706 (accessed September 1, 2016).

Burch, L.M., Clavio, G., Eagleman, A.N., Major, L.H., Pedersen, P.M., Frederick, E.L. and Blaszka, M. (2014), "Battle of the sexes: gender analysis of professional athlete tweets", *Global Sport Business Journal*, Vol. 2 No. 2, pp. 43-62.

Clavio, G. and Frederick, E.L. (2014), "Sharing is caring: an exploration of motivations for social sharing and locational social media usage among sport fans", *Journal of Applied Sport Management*, Vol. 6 No. 2, pp. 70-90.

Clavio, G. and Walsh, P. (2014), "Dimensions of social media utilization among college sport fans", *Communication and Sport*, Vol. 2 No. 3, pp. 261-281.

FIFA.com (2015), "2014 FIFA World Cup reached 3.2 billion viewers, one billion watched final", December 16, available at: www.fifa.com/worldcup/news/y=2015/m=12/news=2014-fifa-world-cuptm-reached-3-2-billion-viewers-one-billion-watched–2745519.html (accessed September 1, 2016).

Frederick, E.L. and Clavio, G. (2015), "Blurred lines: a qualitative analysis of Twitter use among elite high school athletes", *International Journal of Sport Communication*, Vol. 8 No. 3, pp. 330-344.

Frederick, E.L., Lim, C., Clavio, G., Pedersen, P.M. and Burch, L.M. (2014), "Choosing between the one-way or two-way street: an exploration of relationship promotion by professional athletes on Twitter", *Communication & Sport*, Vol. 2 No. 1, pp. 80-99.

Lebel, K. and Danylchuk, K. (2012), "How tweet it is: a gendered analysis of professional tennis players' self-presentation on Twitter", *International Journal of Sport Communication*, Vol. 5 No. 4, pp. 461-480.

Rosen, E. (2016), "What's the future of WhatsApp?", *L2*, February 2, available at: www.l2inc.com/whats-the-future-of-whatsapp/2016/blog (accessed September 1, 2016).

Thompson, A., Martin, A.J., Gee, S. and Geurin, A.N. (2016), "Fans' perceptions of professional tennis events' social media presence: interaction, insight, and brand anthropomorphism", *Communication and Sport*, doi: 10.1177/2167479516650442.

Zephoria (2016), "The top 20 valuable Facebook statistics", *Zephoria Digital Marketing*, available at: https://zephoria.com/top-15-valuable-facebook-statistics/