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Just Tweet It: Sports Teams' Communication of CSR on Twitter

David Paul Stephan
Brigham Young University

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David Paul Stephan

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Pamela Brubaker, Chair
Kristoffer Boyle
Christopher Wilson

School of Communications

Brigham Young University

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ABSTRACT

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David Paul Stephan
School of Communications, BYU
Master of Arts

The sports industry has been made distinct from traditional business for many reasons including its body of stakeholders and its position in popular media. For these reasons, corporate social responsibility (CSR) efforts and the communication of them in professional sports is known to be addressed differently. The following research has been conducted in order to learn how well professional sports teams are doing to communicate CSR to the particular stakeholders who are also their social media followers.

Sports teams' Twitter accounts were analyzed and tweets concerning CSR were identified. Findings suggested that only 3.94% of professional sports teams' tweets were related to CSR. It was also found that intrinsically, market size and on-field team performance do not affect CSR tweeting. When viewed together, however, it has been found that smaller market losing teams tweet more CSR than larger market losing teams while smaller market winning teams tweet less CSR than larger market winning teams. This finding lends insights into the strategic purposes of CSR in the professional sports industry. When small market sports teams do not have a successful season, they seem to restore their reputation via the CSR function more so than larger market teams in a similar situation do. Additionally, winning teams of the larger market tweet more CSR than smaller market winners. The conclusion is that, although relatively little CSR tweeting is done in professional sports, smaller market professional sports teams' CSR tweeting is spurred by poor performance, whereas larger market sports teams' CSR tweeting is spurred by winning.

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While sports as entertainment and activity have been praised for providing quality

entertainment, keeping youths busy and active, and teaching teamwork, self-confidence, and

work ethic, they have also been criticized for promoting hyper-masculinity, violence, racism,

discrimination, exclusion, and homophobic attitudes. Walker and Kent (2009) stated, "The

omnipresence of sport has led to the elevation of sport organizations as influential members of

the global community" (p. 746). Accordingly, the association of such negative qualities with

sports can be of potential harm to players, fans, and general society where perhaps harmful

discriminatory attitudes are cultivated. In fact, whether true or not, the perception of these

negative points' presence in sports can hurt the professional sports industry, reverberate down

negatively to local youth sports programs, and can eventually put the well-being of society at

risk.

Similarly, business has been commended for offering work and income to individuals and

families, contributing to a healthy economy, and providing access to necessary goods and

services; however, there is an opposing perspective which argues that business is tough and cruel

and seeks only growth and expansion even at the cost of employee and community well-being.

This pessimism is validated when private, for-profit organizations begin to buy out competing

organizations, dominate the market, and cause working individuals to be laid off. Broadly,

Americans believe that business has too much control in American life. They are of the opinion

that companies are more concerned with making large profits than they are about selling safe,

reliable, quality products and treating their stakeholders well (Mohr & Webb, 2005; Walker &

Kent, 2009).

Such a lack of concern on the part of businesses can be seen as a lack of social

responsibility. Any entity that overlooks the importance of its role as a good citizen in the community where it works is at risk of disappointing stakeholders and tarnishing its reputation and possibly even that of its host city (Lee & Chun, 2002). With the objective to reverse these stigmas and harness positive outlooks, business organizations have been known to make efforts in corporate social responsibility (CSR). In the sports industry, leagues and franchises have also begun to highly prioritize CSR in hopes of gaining more positive support from the communities where professional sports teams reside. Especially in sports, where the wrong to be righted is generally concerning violence, exclusion, health, and gender rights, it is more clearly noted that sports CSR, sometimes referred to as sports social responsibility (SSR), is more tightly focused on addressing these close-to-home issues. For its proximity, reach, and high visibility in the media, it has been argued that the sports industry is in the best position to make real, productive use of CSR (Smith & Westerbeek, 2007).

Relatively little empirical research has been done addressing CSR in sports specifically. A look into a professional sports organization's modes of communication will indicate that CSR has become an integral part of their business (Sheth & Babiak, 2010). Examples of CSR priority can be found in the largest organizations from all around the globe; the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) has made significant investments regarding social responsibility, as "more than 40 percent of FIFA's income goes directly towards supporting the grassroots of the game, development work, and partnerships with relief organizations" (FIFA, 2004, p. 66). NBA Commissioner David Stern has stated, "We have just two missions at the NBA. The most immediate is to be a successful league; the other is to use our strength for social responsibility" (Genzale, 2006, p. 34).

An underemphasized and often altogether ignored part of CSR as it relates to reputation

management and corporate communication is that such contact should not merely relay stories or information; rather, it should underline the results and good achieved in the community (Porter & Kramer, 2002). Walker and Kent (2009) inferred, "To properly manage consumer relationships and the reputation of the organization, they should not only adopt CSR as an integral part of their mission, but must also communicate this mission widely" (p. 763). Unfortunately, there exists little academic research within the CSR literature, especially in the branch of SSR, that focuses on its communication outside of the typical press release (Sheth & Babiak, 2010). Although research shows that consumers are positively influenced by organizations' CSR initiatives (Walker & Kent, 2009; Pomering & Dolnicar, 2009), in sports, one of teams' largest and most influential publics, the fans, are failing to receive information regarding their team's hand in the community (Walker & Kent, 2009). This would suggest that the sports industry too is failing to make CSR as strategic as it could be by not communicating CSR in a way that is easily accessed by consumers. Doing so would no doubt play a significant role in containing or reversing the harmful negative perceptions of sports' effects in society.

Banker (2015) indicated that CSR is more required by consumers now than it ever was previously. He stated that the driving force is the millennial generation and that they "will only grow in power as Baby Boomers retire" (p. 1). Given that Millennials are the most interested, active, and populous group concerned with CSR (Hower, 2015; Banker; 2015; Swinand, 2014), it is time now that this invested group become a more direct recipient of CSR communications. Since this younger generation has adopted and even created the most recent communication platforms, it is necessary that news directed to them be disseminated through their most preferred means of information learning and sharing, social media. It is suggested here that CSR be communicated robustly via social media in order for the most interested parties to be made aware

of organizations' social responsibility.

To that end, this paper explores the background and development of CSR leading up to SSR, the ways in which sports fans are affected by SSR, and ultimately, how SSR can be communicated in a way to provide better returns on the CSR investment. The research is focused on learning how much CSR professional sports teams are communicating on social media, how they frame social media posts, what kinds of CSR they post about, and whether market value or winning and losing affect their CSR communication strategy.

The paper will first review the literature of SSR, the relationship between CSR and public relations, strategic uses of CSR, its impact in society, models of CSR and SSR, reputation management, and communication and social media. The methodology section will describe the sample and the quantification of SSR in social media, specifically Twitter. The results and findings of the sports-CSR-on-Twitter study will be discussed along with what such findings mean in the world of SSR and CSR in general. Finally, limitations and suggestions for further research will be addressed.

Literature Review

The literature review will inform the study by discussing SSR, CSR and public relations, doing well by doing good, CSR and the societal structure, models of CSR and SSR, SSR and reputation management, traditional CSR communication, and social media and SSR.

Sports Social Responsibility

In relation to the business of sports which is now a large operating industry with inherent responsibilities to stakeholders, investors, sponsors, and the community, Skinner (2012) argued that now, more than ever before, "society expects that sports teams, franchises and organisations assume greater responsibility for their operation and the impact of their operations on their

community, their fans, and the physical space in which they operate" (p. 83). He mentions this branch of CSR often referred to as sports social responsibility (SSR), which derives from the increasing awareness that the business of sports does affect more of society than just the team and its fan base.

Sports have a number of unique factors that shift the nature and scope of CSR efforts. They include mass media distribution and communication power, youth appeal, positive health impacts, social interaction, and sustainability awareness (Smith & Westerbeek, 2007). Since the youth are such a central market in the business of sports, it is imperative that teams use youth-preferred communication media in their efforts to communicate with them. This would include social media where younger generations tend to gather their news and interact with their preferred subjects. In addition, CSR is most demanded currently than it ever has been in the history of sports or business altogether, and the groups that are most concerned tend to be of the Millennial generation, the generation that is famous for their seemingly dependent use of social media (Banker, 2015).

Babiak and Wolfe (2009) claim that sports CSR is unique as they identify elements of the industry that may add to the practice of SSR as well as increasing its potential impact. Specifically they discuss (1) the passion and interest the team or game generates among fans/consumers which leads to possible increased awareness of socially responsible messaging; (2) the economic structure (special government protections that professional sports leagues and teams may receive) where they suggested that "perceived and actual unique protections and support from public coffers, leads some stakeholders to have higher (or different) perceptions of the role and responsibility of professional sport teams and leagues to provide social benefit and 'give back' to the community" (p. 722); and (3) stakeholder management where "relations with

stakeholders such as the media, players, various levels of government, sponsors, suppliers, fans, and local communities, can benefit from CSR activities" (p. 723).

A number of factors have led to the rising importance of SSR (Lau, Makhanya, & Trengrouse, 2004). The "omnipresence of sport" has led to the notion that sports organizations are influential members of the global community, especially as they contribute to the community and economy by functioning as a big business. In addition, these organizations are facing consumer-stakeholders who, due to publicized recent corporate misdeeds, are increasingly aware of the social aspects of corporate policy.

While CSR is generally implemented in nearly all types of business, distinct functions, applications, and outcomes present themselves when CSR is applied to the sports industry. Walker and Kent (2009) asserted that sports-industry CSR diverts from the general context in a variety of ways:

> The sports industry possesses many attributes distinct from those found in other business segments. For example, the "star power" of the athletes, the connections sport teams have to the local communities, and the level of affect displayed by its many consumers distinguish the sports industry from most others. (p. 746)

Sports CSR tends to attract more attention from the general public near and far than does typical corporate business. Since many teams are built with celebrity athletes and because certain stakeholder groups come to see their sports team as an embodied representation of their town, communities begin to be known for their team's doings both in and out of the stadium or arena. And as seen in recent news it becomes clear that socially, much is happening off the field that can affect team and league reputation. While CSR emphasis initially dealt with issues like transparency, accountability, and employee well-being, during the past decade attention has

begun to shift towards the organizations' function in society, and the same could not be truer in the sports industry (Lau et al., 2004).

Perhaps what makes CSR in sports most distinct from CSR in other business contexts is that sports organizations can use, and more than ever before *are* using, their athletes' celebrity-status appeal to generate impact in the community and beyond, while leveraging these efforts to bolster the image of their league or team. Because of these new possibilities in reputation management and CSR, Smith and Westerbeek (2007) suggested that "the nature of sport lends itself to being uniquely positioned to influence society in general and communities in particular" (p. 48). Similarly, McGowan and Mahon (2009) claimed, "Sports franchises are arguably in the best position to serve as a facilitator of CSR throughout the world" (p. 6).

While sports teams are seemingly always engaged in socially responsible activities, the initiatives of each organization tend to vary depending on their core mission and purpose of their giving programs (Marquis, Glynn, & Davis, 2007). Husted and Allen (2009) inferred that CSR proves most significant when the initiative is closely tied to the organization's mission. They further insisted that CSR is best implemented when the initiative is within their field of work in order to see that it is properly carried out. Accordingly, sports organization CSR activities typically include athlete volunteerism, educational initiatives, philanthropic/charitable donations, community development, community initiatives, fan appreciation, health-related initiatives, and community-based environmental programs. Walker and Kent (2009) assert:

> For the most part, teams give back in a number of nonmonetary ways; however philanthropy and charitable initiatives pervade all of the organizations as well. Every organization promote[s] the philanthropic dimension of CSR through some type of charity or team-based foundation aimed at providing assistance to disadvantaged citizens.

(p. 747)

In 2004 it was approximated that 350 charities and foundations with ties to professional teams and athletes were publically known. It was estimated that where communities were the beneficiaries, $100 million was brought in annually by those organizations (Extejt, 2004).

The importance of social responsibility in sports has taken hold. In 2005 the NBA launched their social responsibility initiative called "NBA Cares" with the goal of donating $100 million to charity within five years in the areas of literacy, youth and family development, and health-related causes. As of 2015 they have raised $242 million (NBA, 2015). In addition to the NBA's league-wide initiative, many leagues in the US now mandate that their players be involved in the community. For example, the collective bargaining agreement in the NBA requires their players to make at least five individual and five team appearances at community CSR functions. Similarly, many other leagues offer awards for being a humanitarian or philanthropic example in the community, like the National Football League's (NFL) Walter Payton Man of the Year award and Major League Soccer's (MLS) Humanitarian of the Year award.

Individual players and team executives and owners also practice philanthropy of their own will. George Steinbrenner, the owner of the Yankees, for example donates some of his own earnings to many causes, such as the Silver Shield Foundation in New York and the Gold Shield Foundation in Florida (Bernard, 1998). Also, when Arthur Blank of the Atlanta Falcons took over ownership after his time as CEO of Home Depot, he saw that the team's foundation budget dramatically increased, stating, "Giving back is not part of the 'brand,' it's part of what's the right thing to do" (Bowman-Littler, 2002, p. A1).

Sports' impact on society has been present for as long as the sports themselves. They

have changed over time within their communities, but they have never ceased to play a

significant role in the lives of their many stakeholders. By now virtually all professional sports

leagues and teams in the US have committed to social responsibility. The past 60 years are full of

sports' engagement with social issues and a concern for fans and local communities. Table 1

displays some of the most significant CSR events that have taken place in professional sports as

reported by the Sports Philanthropy Project (2011):

Table 1
CSR Progress in Professional Sports

Year	Event
1953	Jimmy Fund becomes the official charity of the Boston Red Sox
1954	PGA Foundation created
1973	NFL partners with United Way; NFL Charities becomes the first league-wide foundation in professional sports; George Steinbrenner buys the New York Yankees and creates the New York Yankee Foundation, the first team foundation in MLB
1974	Women's Sports Foundation founded by Billie Jean King
1978	Minnesota Vikings create Vikings Children's Fund, first team foundation in NFL
1979	MLB partners with Cystic Fibrosis 65 Roses Club
1980	Oakland Athletics create Oakland A's Community Fund (MLB); Calgary Flames create the Flames Foundation for Life (NHL)
1981	Chicago Cubs create Cubs Care (MLB)
1986	Vancouver Canucks create the Canucks For Kids Fund, first foundation in NHL; Buffalo Bills create Buffalo Bills Youth Foundation; Green Bay Packers create Green Bay Packers Foundation (NFL)
1987	Chicago Bulls create the CharitaBulls Nonprofit Organization; Phoenix Suns create Phoenix Suns Charities, first foundations in NBA
1989	MLB program Reviving Baseball in Inner Cities (RBI)
1991	LPGA Foundation created
1992	NBA's Read to Achieve Program; The World Sports Humanitarian Hall of Fame is established
1995	US Soccer Foundation is established; NHL Diversity forms
1998	NHL and NHLPA partner to create Hockey Fights Cancer initiative
1999	Baseball Tomorrow Fund is created as a joint initiative between MLB and MLBPA
2005	NBA launches NBA Cares Program as league-wide global initiative
2008	Major League Baseball partners with Natural Resources Defense Council to "GO GREEN"
2010	St. Louis Cardinals announces opening of Cardinals Kids Cancer Center
2012	Major League Soccer commits to equality with "Don't Cross the Line" campaign

Corporate Social Responsibility and Public Relations

CSR has been operationalized by the characteristics of image building, moral rectitude, and monitoring and responding to situations and issues (Heath & Ryan, 1989). Heath and Ryan (1989) studied whether public relations helps to define CSR, and found that, while most corporations employ codes of behavior for social responsibility, issues are also perceived differently in many situations. Some companies broadly defined the term as "performing good deeds" (p. 34); others reported that creating a code of ethical conduct was an essential aspect of CSR. To further complicate the definition, some researchers believe CSR to be synonymous with corporate citizenship, sustainable development, triple bottom line, or business ethics (Carroll, 1998; Matten & Crane, 2005; van Marrewijk, 2003). While both practical and academic perceptions of CSR have failed to yield a precise and specific definition, all iterations tend to be based on the idea of doing good in the community where work is done, which tends to foster good relationships between the organization and its stakeholders.

CSR has become increasingly tied to public relations within the last 50 years for its concern with social environments and its ability and influence in creating relationships with the surrounding communities. While public relations primarily deals with the goodwill between the organization and its stakeholders, CSR is not too distantly defined by its concern for showing appreciation for the publics it works with by giving back in meaningful ways (Clark, 2000).

In many ways public relations has become known as the reiterated department of CSR and has been expected to work with that as its main goal (Griswold, 1967). Public relations has been credited with establishing the good relationship that allows for business to take place there. Arthur W. Page stated, "All business in a democratic country begins with the public's permission and exists by public approval" (Griswold, 1967, p. 13). Edward Bernays claimed, "Public

relations is the practice of social responsibility" (Grunig & Hunt, 1984, p. 47). Grunig and Hunt (1984) said, "public, or social, responsibility has become a major reason for an organization to have a public relations function" (p. 48).

Corporate social responsibility as a business principle first developed where business and capitalism boomed. The ideas of big business, profit seeking, free markets, and capitalistic society are what sparked businesses to pay tribute to the community (Friedman, 1970). CSR emerged around the turn of the twentieth century; initial intentions regarding social responsibility during the days of Henry Ford and Andrew Carnegie are difficult to confirm, but Friedman (1970) argued that somewhere along the line of wealthy businessmen donating charitably to causes of their personal will, the concept of entrepreneurial growth became clouded with perceptions that "the pursuit of profits was wicked and immoral and must be curbed and controlled by external forces" (Friedman, 1970, p. 126).

Not even in the earlier days of known CSR did advocates of social responsibility in business have a true definition of the principle. Originally business owners gave through charity to those in need in the community, but as needs grew larger that responsibility passed from charitable donations by business owners to corporate social responsibility as it is known today— social efforts from the business itself. This shift marked the movement from "paternalistic contributions" of charity from the wealthy to the "stewardship principle" of contemporary CSR (Post et al., 1996). "Corporations became stewards or public trustees by using their resources to affect all people in society in fundamental ways" (Clark, 2000, p. 366).

Much work was done throughout the next decades that contributed to the further developments of public relations and CSR and their relationships to business and capitalism. By the 1960s and 1970s, theory and research were more popular because "it became apparent during

this time, that social expectations of business had outstripped managers' comprehension and capabilities"—it became the common expectation that corporations had to respond to social pressures and demands (Wood, 1991, p. 383). But from there, the idea was no longer just that these entities should respond, but that they should do so in specific ways (Clark, 2000). The 1980s brought the development of modern stakeholder theory, which began to clearly define the parties not directly involved as shareholders, the stakeholder community. These were described as the groups or individuals who, although they did not participate in ownership of the organization, were affected by the actions and decisions of the company (Freeman, 1984).

With public opinion that organizations needed to serve less fortunate groups, the further development of public relations and its concern for organizations' image as perceived by the public, the two-way symmetrical model of public relations became most important (Grunig & Grunig, 1992). Through these principles the entity would not just disseminate information but would actually create a dialogue that would then allow the organization to respond to the concerns of their stakeholders (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). From this point, Kent and Taylor (1998, 2002) built upon the framework introducing their dialogic approach. Their concept involves not just managing two-way communication, but harnessing it and using it as a tool to create better organization–public relationships (OPR) through dialogue between the business and its stakeholders. "OPRs have become a focus of public relations scholarship and practice because positive, long-term relationships enable organizations to be more effective in accomplishing their goals while at the same time providing benefit to and value for stakeholders" (Brubaker & Wilson, 2015). These models, combined with corporate social responsibility, have led to other expansions in public relations, including the idea of community relations as the embodiment of grassroots social responsibility in attempts to restore, maintain, or build communities while at the

same time benefitting the company (Kruckeberg & Starck, 1988).

Doing Well by Doing Good

Over the decades, CSR's transformation from the wealthy owner's charitable donations has led to the organization's conscientious efforts to better its community and even to strategic marketing techniques. CSR is often implemented by the entity to gain a favorable view and maintain strong relationships with stakeholder groups through the economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic modes of CSR, which often prove to lead to satisfied publics and successful business (Carroll, 1979).

It has been seen that socially responsible behavior may include various activities ranging from supporting nonprofits and charities to addressing environmental and human-rights issues (Mohr & Webb, 2005). This is a result of CSR having the potential to offer strategic direction to managers who want to enhance their organization's performance and competitiveness (Brietbarth & Harris, 2008). This being the case, researchers are now moving beyond simply defining and identifying CSR activities to examining CSR's role in a broader organizational and strategic management context (Husted & Salazar, 2006; Ogden & Watson, 1999). From a business perspective and concern for the bottom line, academics and professionals have learned that CSR can provide the business—be it sports or otherwise—with the opportunity to strengthen and grow through careful implementation and strategic communication of CSR initiatives.

The majority of scholarly research has supported a positive correlation between social initiatives and the organization's financial well-being; actively conducting CSR can lead to greater profits or to greater public support that eventually bolsters profits (Burt, 1983; Margolis & Walsh, 2001; McGuire, Sundgren, & Schneeweis, 1998; Pava & Krausz, 1996; Roman, Hayibor, & Agle, 1999; Stanwick & Stanwick, 1998; Ullman, 1985). One reason may be the

broadly advocated link between social initiatives and affective, cognitive, and behavioral responses by consumers such as perceived quality, price, and consumer attributions about the company's intentions (Becker-Olsen, Cudmore, & Hill, 2006; Brown & Dacin, 1997; Creyer & Ross, 1997; Ellen, Mohr, & Webb, 2000; Folkes & Kamins, 1999; Murray & Vogel, 1997).

Klein and Dawar (2004), too, supported this idea by demonstrating that CSR emphasis proved to have a strong and direct impact on consumers' attributions, which in turn influenced brand evaluations and consumers' purchase intentions. Mohr and Webb (2005) reported similarly that within the domains of philanthropy and the environment, CSR had a positive impact on company evaluation and purchase intentions. "The presumption is that firms that actively support CSR are more reliable and therefore, their products are of higher quality" (McWilliams & Siegel, 2000, p. 605).

The findings from Sheth and Babiak's (2010) study suggest that professional sports executives approach CSR in a "community-oriented, collaborative, and strategic manner in order to achieve their ethical, philanthropic, and legal responsibilities" (p. 447). This sort of use of CSR entails that beneficiaries of the work are (1) the receiving party and (2) the well-meaning organization itself. At times this may limit the effect of CSR initiatives to just the two parties. Meaningful though the effects may be for the receiving party, efforts may go unnoticed by other stakeholders, the majority of fans and consumers. The narrow impact of a CSR initiative can only be broadened through wide communication of the event and its results. The question lies in how well the organization does to communicate those endeavors in order to reap the benefits it aims to when conducting strategic CSR.

CSR and the Societal Structure

CSR has played a meaningful role in business and public relations. It has in many ways

shaped the way business is done today and is viewed with differing opinions for its strengths and weaknesses in society as a whole. The World Business Council for Sustainable Development (2008) defined CSR as "the continuing commitment by business to behave ethically and contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce and their families as well as of the local community and society at large." Regardless of altruism or strategy with regards to CSR implementation, research suggests that corporations employing CSR further social good in their community, go beyond their own financial interests, and participate in activities that are not required by law (Carroll, 1979; Heath and Ryan, 1989; McWilliams and Siegel, 2000). While CSR is generally known for and defined by its well-meaning effects, there are differing opinions as to the value, intentions, and repercussions of the application of such social responsibility.

It has been argued repeatedly that corporations exist in their physical environments on the permission of society and it is a privilege, not a right (Griswold, 1967; Wakefield, 2010). General consensus is that organizations need to behave as good citizens by being aware and giving back to the community in some way (Starck and Kruckeberg, 2001). Clark (2000) explains the managerial process of CSR as awareness or recognition of an issue, analysis and planning, response in terms of policy development, and implementation. Additionally, a more widely recognized supplemental and essential point in that process should be the measured effort of communicating such activities to the public and stakeholders as to inform more than solely those who are directly affected by those CSR efforts.

While Starck and Kruckeberg's (2001) behavior values and Clark's (2000) managerial process are generally the way CSR was meant to be handled, ideas of organizations becoming too heavily involved in society by providing services that are altogether not related to their work

or efforts as an entity have led them to unnecessary and, as claimed by some, harmful consequences. One of the faults of corporate social responsibility is that too much public action from private organizations can hurt the economy and even the political system (Friedman, 1970). Some suggest that responsibilities for providing education, taking social stances, supporting charities, and addressing the decay of cities should never have fallen upon businesses (Grunig, 1979). They argue, "Business should be business for business" (Friedman, 1970).

Ideas of how far reaching CSR must be are disputed. As such, organizations have to choose how to implement CSR in accordance with their stakeholders' expectations. "Views of the extent to which business corporations should exercise social responsibility range from those that hold that the corporation's greatest responsibility is to make as much profit as possible for its stockholders to those that hold that the free enterprise system can survive only if corporations help to solve social problems external to the corporation" (Grunig, 1979, p. 738). Friedman (1970) said, "There is one and only one social responsibility of business—to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase its profits so long as it stays within the rules of the game, which is to say, engages in open and free competition without deception or fraud" (p. 126). His argument is that taking on responsibilities outside of issues that the organization directly affects leads to a totalitarian system and destroys free markets and capitalism. While this may be the extreme view of the extreme implementation of CSR, many researchers have gathered evidence not just about social activities' effects in the societal structure but that many stakeholders are simply not interested in the organization spending resources in ways that do not directly lead to its further development and growth (Grunig, 1979; Friedman, 1970; Roberts, 1992). Although there very well may be harmful effects from the excessive use of CSR, the ideas of creating products responsibly, not overusing resources, and being respectful of the societal

values where work is done, in the end protect the relationship of the entity with the community that they might otherwise harm through business.

In all industries, including sports, the values of a business in a given society will reflect societal expectations and ethic mores. "Sport as an important microcosm of society has witnessed a changing environment of expectations and values. In most instances the values espoused by the sport team or franchise are clearly representative of their major stakeholders—the fans—and society in general, although at times the sport team and franchise will appear to be playing 'catch up' in relation to acceptable behavior on and off the field" (Skinner, 2012, p. 74). In other well-known cases the team or organization takes a harder line than that generally taken by its society, including zero-tolerance policies towards substance abuse, violence against women, and discrimination including sexism, racism and so on.

CSR has its value and is of particular interest to consumer-stakeholders. When implemented appropriately and communicated broadly, CSR can enhance the quality of the relationship between the organizations and their key stakeholder groups. Because consumers are becoming increasingly concerned with what big companies are doing in the community, related to their work or not, even marketing strategies for many organizations go as far as to incorporate CSR and essentially exploit its appeal to segments in the market (McWilliams & Siegel, 2000).

Such implementation includes professional sports organizations using CSR to gain competitive advantage over other organizations in the market. They offer their consumers or fans and supporters greater value through better prices or greater benefits and services. They can do this in many ways, and most involve ethical or philanthropic applications of CSR to help generate positive perceptions of and support for the team or organization (Skinner, 2012). "CSR can generate long-term profits for business through positive brand perceptions, which can lead to

an increase in consumer support for particular companies" (Skinner, 2012, p. 80). Establishing a connection between the organization and the major stakeholders on an intrinsically ethical and value-based level bolsters the fans', advertisers', and corporate sponsors' loyalty and encourages that their spending power remain with the organization—positive, ethical, and philanthropic CSR can provide this.

Models of CSR and SSR

Within CSR literature and professional practice, ethics and philanthropy have been identified as two of the most prevalent forms of CSR. Carroll (1979) explained CSR in terms of a four-part model of his own design. These include the economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary (philanthropic) components which he said form the basis of CSR. The economic category includes the idea, as argued by Friedman (1962), that everyone—shareholders and the community at large—benefits when the organization is profitable. Legality is important here for the simple fact that the organization must abide by the law for the good of the public. With regard to ethics, he explained that the organization should go beyond that which is merely legal in order to be an upstanding citizen in society. The discretionary category, characterized by philanthropy or altruism, entails a voluntary attempt by organizations to address specific social issues by giving back in time or money through charitable donations or activities (Carroll, 1979).

Two decades later Carroll re-examined his own CSR model in response to changing tendencies in business as related to CSR. He noted that those who had criticized his model did not consider a firm's economic duty as part of CSR since it benefited the company itself. Carroll, however, stood by his definition, asserting that "economic viability is something business does for society although we seldom look at it in this way" (Carroll, 1999, p. 284). He went on to state that the ethical responsibilities component of CSR had grown in importance and the

discretionary principle had developed into "philanthropy."

Applying Carroll's model, sports organizations including teams, leagues, and franchises tend to adhere to the economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropy categories. Sheth and Babiak's (2010) research showed that the philanthropy category proved to yield the most CSR work in their study, with "donating funds to nonprofit organizations" and "supporting social causes" being identified as the most significant CSR-related business activities. Behind philanthropy, the next most significant categories were ethical, legal, then economic. Accordingly, in the current study the ethical and discretionary bases of Carroll's model are looked at and tested with most priority.

Carroll's (1979) four areas of social responsibility have been used in research to understand sports organization executives' priorities on CSR (Choi & Wang, 2007; Jones, 2007). In addition to these four categories of CSR, it has been suggested that in sports eight SSR themes commonly emerge: philanthropic, community, strategy, partnerships, leadership, ethics, legal, and stakeholders (Sheth & Babiak, 2010).

Philanthropy. In the philanthropic emphasis, sports teams donate funds or provide in-kind actions or items based on who or what is believed to deserve or need them. Sheth and Babiak (2010) noted:

A strategic (versus altruistic) view of this could be explained by the connection of the sport team to the community, and its reliance on fans to attend games and otherwise support the team. Thus, reaching out to a community through philanthropic efforts generates interest in a team and builds a fan base. These fans, in turn, may be more likely to follow the team and become life-long fans, which may affect purchasing decisions (442).

Philanthropy, apart from being an altruistic activity, may be perceived by the public as a strategic tool to improve an organization's image. Research shows that organizations commonly have both unselfish and tactical drive when employing philanthropy-related practices to bolster their brand image in the face of public scrutiny (Gan, 2006).

Community. While sport executives felt that philanthropy was a significant part of their team's CSR efforts, it has become apparent that a community-focused approach is another important piece of their CSR. From the strategic motive set, a focus on the community in which a sports team operates has been known to help provide the organization with a stronger and more loyal customer/fan base (Sheth & Babiak, 2010).

Historically, within the community emphasis, it has been seen that an expansion sports team or one relocating to a new city begins its campaign with CSR programs that are meant to gain an early connection with and seek approval from the host community even before ever having played a game (Kelley et al., 1999). For example, although not set to begin play until the 2017 season, MLS's newest franchise, Atlanta United FC, is already gaining local interest through CSR. In December 2015 the club issued a press release announcing their participation in the Father Christmas Cup, an annual soccer fundraiser that benefits local communities of Atlanta (ALTUTD.com). It is a strategic imperative, even before representing the city in play, that the organization focus on the local community in order to gain a favorable local reputation and to develop a loyal fan base by creating awareness for the team and its positive values from the get-go.

Strategy. Sports executive respondents of the Sheth and Babiak (2010) study stated that there was "a need to strategically use organizational funds and resources to help the community in which they operate and that CSR could be used to advance business interests" (p. 445). These

executives stated that there must be a specific reason to donate money or provide charity to a group or organization; they are not given to just anyone. In fact, from a strategic approach they first assess whether those socially responsible actions will positively impact their business as well as the community or specific group where their CSR focus might lie on that occasion (Sheth & Babiak, 2010).

In addition, these executives suggest that teams "use players as vehicles to help the community thereby using their strategic assets—financial and nonfinancial—to meet the goals of CSR" (Sheth & Babiak, 2010, p. 445). They harness the so-called star power of their celebrity athletes to reinforce the attention and significance of their CSR work. Several researchers have emphasized the role of strategic social responsibility and the benefits such actions provide to the organization itself (Bruch & Walter, 2005; Porter & Kramer, 2006).

Partnerships. Proper CSR work also leads the organization to partner with other entities to more effectively better the community. In addition, sports executives have suggested that CSR is useful in helping the team become a partner and that doing so is not only good for the community but also good for the organization as it then begins to build local connections (Sheth & Babiak, 2010). Tracey et al. (2005) asserted that CSR partnerships can have stronger and more sustainable effects: "Partnerships between corporations and community enterprises raise the possibility of corporations moving beyond philanthropic donations toward a more sustainable form of intervention involving long-term commitments to communities" (p. 328).

Leadership. CSR in sports has also been known to provide the opportunity for the organization to be a role model or leader in the community by being socially responsible. Lee and Chun (2002) emphasized that the team's attention to CSR has an economic impact in the city where it resides and that it helps to bolster the community's reputation. Since games are often

broadcast nationally and teams and players become known by more than just their home crowd, teams as well as communities can gain better standings throughout the country.

Ethics. Concerning ethics, Sheth and Babiak (2010) relay sports executives' opinions that some of the core purposes of sports organizations are "to better assist its society to function at the highest level," that teams "should set standards for behavior," and that they strive "to treat constituents with dignity and respect" (p. 446). Values and ethics seem to be fundamental to the executives of big sport businesses as there seems to be an awareness that many times the team's players are seen a role models and heroes especially to young fans.

Legal. Similar to ethical responsibility, following the law is generally only discussed when it is broken. Consequently, sports teams most likely view legal responsibility as an obligation because little choice or discretion from the organization can take place.

Stakeholders. Related to the partnership emphasis, this category concerns the stakeholders that are often thought of in conjunction with ideas of donations and service efforts: the local community organizations that are often the direct recipients of this CSR work. However, stakeholder groups also include employees, the team's players, fans, suppliers, and sponsors. Each group can be affected in different ways from a single event, and for this reason CSR initiatives become complicated. They each require a way of learning about the team's CSR even when the initiative does not directly involve them, in order for the organization to benefit from their work in the form of enhanced loyalty, identification, and purchase intentions through the increased liking and reputation that is often the result of organizations addressing the concerns of their stakeholders (Becker-Olsen, Cudmore, & Hill, 2006; Brown & Dacin,1997; Creyer & Ross, 1997; Ellen, Mohr, & Webb, 2000; Folkes & Kamins, 1999; Frombrun & Shanley, 1990; Klein & Dawar, 2004; Mohr & Webb, 2005; Murray & Vogel, 1997; Walker &

Kent, 2009).

SSR and Reputation Management

The importance and benefits of investing in a strong and positive reputation program are not to be understated. It is through a sustained positive reputation that organizations are able to gain and retain consumers, patrons, and fans. Social responsibility generates goodwill from employees, consumers, and other constituents, which then enhances the long-term profitability and viability of the firm (Fombrun & Shanley, 1990). Themes from the reputation literature have pointed out that the greater a firm's contribution to social welfare, the better its overall reputation (Fombrun & Shanley, 1990; Lewis, 2001; Rindova & Fombrun, 1999).

Increasingly, one of the reasons for teams to implement CSR is to bridge the gap between athletes and fans that has resulted from the seemingly ever-present player misconduct both on and off the field (Knecht, 2007). When players participate in illegal or otherwise frowned-upon activities, the team's reputation may be at stake (Carroll, 1979; Smart & Rechner, 2007). In these instances teams may turn to tactics of reputation management including the increase of more specified CSR to regain the trust of their publics (Sheth & Babiak, 2010). Examples of individual athletes' doings that have yielded negative reputational consequences of the team, league, or governing body have been many; some include the marijuana use of Michael Phelps, the rape accusation against Kobe Bryant, the murder trial of Aaron Hernandez, the domestic violence case of Ray Rice as well as that of Hope Solo, and the widespread use of performance-enhancing drugs by athletes such as MLB's Barry Bonds, Mark McGuire, and Alex Rodriguez. It is of specific interest to professional team owners and executives to correct these missteps since reputation is one of the most valuable intangible assets available to the company (Gibson, Gonzales & Castanon, 2006; Hall, 1992). In fact, there is a positive and linear relationship

between reputation and organizational success. While positive reputations are beneficial to the success of these individuals and organizations, negative reputations can damage and destroy them (Gibson, Gonzales & Castanon, 2006).

Along with that notion is the concept that "cultivating relationships with consumers is an important objective of reputation-building activities for many companies" (Rindova & Fombrun, 1998, p. 207). Recent research has shown that CSR activities conducted by sports teams have had a strong and positive impact on the organization's perceived reputation (Walker & Kent, 2009). It should be noted, however, that in accordance with cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957), sports fans (like most stakeholders of other organizations) will tend to look for and become more aware of positive information about elements that they endorse and may be dismissive of information or actions that contradict their existing positive feelings. For example, frequent buyers of a team's fan merchandise may seek out and focus on that organization's positive charitable actions to justify their merchandise consumption and to reinforce their fanship, while activities which contradict those positive feelings (socially irresponsible actions) will be minimized or ignored.

Cultivating a positive reputation generally reinforces fans' team identification and loyalty. When consumers perceive organizations as having a good reputation, they tend to speak favorably of them and in turn purchase their products to exhibit their affiliation with the club or team (Frombrun & Shanley, 1990). In their analysis of consumer attitudes toward CSR, Mohr et al. (2001) declared, "The relationship between beliefs and behaviors will be stronger (1) the more knowledge consumers have about CSR issues, and (2) the more important they judge these issues to be" (p. 69).

Awareness of the sports team's CSR actions seems to be the issue with regard to CSR's

effect on reputation and in turn, team-public relationships. More focus on strategically communicating CSR efforts and creating an environment where stakeholders can respond and be heard (Grunig & Hunt, 1984; Grunig & Grunig, 1992; L. A. Grunig et al., 2002; Kent and Taylor, 1998; 2002) may be a leading factor in whether teams gain a favorable public reputation. "If the team arms the consumer with information regarding CSR, these actions may facilitate positive word of mouth, thereby leading to increased levels of support for the initiatives" (Walker & Kent, 2009, p. 760).

Traditional CSR Communication

Responses to CSR are dependent upon consumers having information about the programs in order to inspire favorable support (Mohr & Webb, 2005). While many companies communicate the "good" things they are doing through newsletters and other traditional corporate communications, stakeholders tend to be wary of these for their possible self-promotion or self-censorship, making such communications "of suspect value" (Walker & Kent, 2009).

On the other hand, sports organizations are often thought highly of within their local community. Through CSR programs and social sponsorship they have the opportunity to further enhance their stature in the community. This being the case, team managers should develop communication strategies that provide details about how their organizations have helped address specific social issues which have benefited the community (Porter & Kramer, 2006). Some businesses or teams may fear that doing so could take away from their selfless service efforts or the perceptions of such, but invisibility and lack of appreciation are the results of too small of an effort in CSR communication (Morsing, Schultz, & Nielsen, 2008).

Several researchers have maintained that having a pro-social agenda means having a

powerful marketing tool that can build and shape a company's status (Fombrun & Shanley, 1990; Mohr & Webb, 2005; Mohr et al., 2001), differentiate them in the market (Amis, 2003; Barney, 1991), and lead to a company's competitive edge (Rindova & Fombrun, 1999). "Given the present findings regarding word of mouth patronage especially, this could be an opportunity to have a positive nonproduct message spread among fans" (Walker & Kent, 2009, p. 761). Sports public relations and communications managers must implement ethical CSR initiatives within their promotional strategies. By engaging in CSR-minded marketing they can reach their market and stakeholders in another way that involves positive outlooks and promotes strong relationships. Brand marketing has also been known to be used in this way as a tool for social progress that enhances consumer awareness of important social issues and that works to influence consumers in a positive way (Fan, 2005; Ind, 2003).

Researchers have examined CSR from the sports marketing perspective and have noted that many of their initiatives were designed with the intention of benefitting both the organization and the community. Specifically, cause branding and cause-related marketing are two types of such efforts. "Categorized as sponsorships, cause-related marketing involves profit-motivated giving and enables firms to contribute to nonprofit organizations while also increasing their bottom line by tying those contributions to sales" (Landreth-Grau & Garretson-Folse, 2007, p. 19). However, although it can provide positive benefits, organizations must be careful not to cross the line from corporate social responsibility into the less altruistic cause-related marketing if they intend to attract the kinds of benefits that are tied only to traditional CSR. CSR initiatives must be conceived differently than the sales motivated cause-related marketing through purposeful communication of the organization's responsible efforts in the community in order to keep salient the altruistic, overarching, and unconditional social good that the organization stands

for.

As a part of reputation management theory, McWilliams et al. (2006) noted that CSR should be considered a form of strategic investment for management—even if not directly tied to a product or production process, CSR can be viewed as a form of reputation building or maintenance (Lewis, 2001; Riahi-Belkaoui, 2001; Rindova & Fombrun, 1998; Williams & Barrett, 2000).

When evaluating an organization, many consumers, due to the lack of awareness, may not be able to appreciate the breadth of activities in which the organization may be involved, especially those within the CSR function that do not directly contribute to the organization's known products. "Companies in the sport industry such as Reebok and Nike publish annual reports (sent to the stockholder or published on their websites) on CSR and corporate sustainability, which may be viewed as a form of advertising, especially for more general types of CSR" (Walker & Kent, 2009, p. 761). While such reports may only be seen by the investing stockholder who knows to look for such information—and even then might still not be useful because of perceived information bias given its filtration through senior management—there must be a way for common consumers, fans of the team in the case of the professional sports industry, to be made aware of CSR work in the community. Therefore, it is argued that providing consumers with accurate information from team-related social media accounts such as Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram may be the most appropriate way for CSR information to be disseminated to stakeholders such as community members and fans (Howe, 2015; Walker & Kent, 2009).

Social Media and SSR

In terms of corporate communication, it is expected that corporations and sports teams be

active on social media including Facebook and Twitter, and it is generally supposed that the number of postings visible to that team's various publics is representative of the organization's concern and value of specific stories and happenings related to the team and its stakeholders. Even if the team is being highly responsible in the community, it may be irrelevant to fans that are not directly affected if they never come to know of the team's actions. "In order to benefit from CSR activities, businesses have to be more active in communicating their activities and wisely choose the targets for both their CSR activities and their communications" (Pomering & Dolnicar, 2009, p. 285). Stakeholders may notice that the organization is spending resources, time, and money in the community, but if the efforts and results are not in some way made public, those spendings may seem to be simple losses of resources especially to the stockholding public (Friedman, 1970). Communicating such attention, efforts, outcomes, and effects in the community is the keystone that allows work in social responsibility to play a real role in bolstering the reputation of the team.

In a previously conducted but related study involving a team's players' use of Twitter, Hambrick, Simmons, Greenhalgh, and Greenwell (2010) found that relatively little attention went to tweeting in what the researchers called the "promotional" category, where perhaps CSR-related tweets might belong, at only 5% of total tweets. The other category in that study that could have contained CSR tweets from the players would have been their "content" category which was dedicated to the inclusions of links of any genre that would give the follower more information (of more than 140 characters) away from Twitter. Among other themes, Hambrick et al. (2010) did find some CSR-related tweets in this category:

> Athletes used Twitter to direct readers to personal pictures, Web sites, and blogs located elsewhere on the Internet. For example, Drew Brees of the NFL used Twitter to discuss

his charitable activities with the post, "Looking for charitable projects to fund in New

Orleans area thru the Brees Dream Foundation. Send recommendations ASAP to

info@drewbrees.com." (p. 461)

While the number of CSR tweets within this category is unknown, Hambrick and company

(2010) found that this category in total constituted only 13% of the players' tweets. Given the

statistics from players of some of the teams whose tweets may have been analyzed in the current

study, it becomes clear that players are not tweeting much about CSR, and begs the question:

How much focus is the team putting on tweeting about their socially responsible efforts in the

community?

RQ1: Among teams from each league of sports in the United States, how much SSR

tweeting are professional sports teams doing?

Walker and Kent's (2009) definition of SSR lends insight into the variety of SSR work

that teams tend to do. SSR can be described as participating in or promoting charitable donations

of time, money, or service; players or staff volunteering, teaching sports, and building or

rebuilding in the community; supporting the troops; advocating healthy living, going green,

disaster relief, equality and fairness; and partnering with organizations known for their

involvement in community service. Sports organizations tend to have many options at their

disposal for SSR initiatives because of the relevance their industry has in the community.

Generally, business organizations of all kinds are recommended to focus on the kinds of CSR

that will strategically benefit the organization itself in addition to the recipients of responsible

efforts (Husted & Allen, 2009). Sports teams have more flexibility in this regard than other

business corporations do since they are so close to the community where they play and showcase

athletes who are often seen as role models by fans (Walker & Kent, 2009). Strategy for SSR implementation is up to the wisdom of the organization, but the communication of such efforts must be broad and engaging in order to serve the community and provide gains for the sports team (Corliss, 2012; Handley & Chapman, 2012; Kang, 2014; Pomering & Dolnicar, 2009; Walker & Kent, 2009).

RQ2: What kinds of SSR activities do professional sports teams publicize via Twitter?

With followers of popular teams near—and in some cases, as with the New England Patriots, exceeding—one million, it can be seen that Twitter is the source from which many fans get their real-time updates about their favorite sports teams. A statistic shows that in 2012, 83% of sports fans interacted on social media while watching sporting events on television and 63% did the same while watching the game live (Beese, 2012). Consider the following examples of sports fans on Twitter: After a Tim Tebow touchdown pass caught fans by surprise, Twitter recorded 9,420 Tebow-related tweets per second; during the "Linsanity" craze of 2012 Jeremy Lin, then of the New York Knicks, gained 550,000 followers on Twitter in just one month; Mississippi State Football had the end zone changed to include the Twitter hashtag "#HAILSTATE"; MLB all-star fan ballot-voting increased by 36% when it advertised more widely with hashtags on Twitter. Arizona Cardinals wide receiver Larry Fitzgerald used Twitter to huge success for his own philanthropic efforts during Breast Cancer awareness month. In addition to his pledged donations of $1,000 per catch and $10,000 per touchdown during the month, he also publicized that he would donate ten cents for every new Twitter follower along the way. He ended up donating $19,000 for his on-field performance and $15,000 for his Twitter pledge. Beese (2012) noted:

Box scores and game recaps can still be found in the newspaper and on TV but fans are

looking for more than that now. They want live updates, active participation, and behind-

the-scenes looks at their favorite sports teams and players. Social media has given sports

fans virtual box seats (1).

It is now necessary for sports organizations to provide key information concerning the

team through this platform. Already many organizations are employing social media as a means

for relationship building. Since so many stakeholders follow sports teams on social media, when

used properly by the organization they have the potential to provide accessibility, reach,

usability, immediacy, and permanence (Ionescu, 2013). As with traditional principles of

relationship management and public relations theory, it is necessary that authentic interaction

take place between the organization and its social media following (Brubaker & Wilson, 2015;

Grunig & Hunt, 1984; Grunig & Grunig, 1992; L. A. Grunig et al., 2002; Kent and Taylor, 1998;

2002). McCorkindale and DiStaso (2014) stated, "Engagement has never been as important as it

is today, as companies are communicating with and providing content to stakeholders to build

and maintain relationships" (p. 2). Research has shown that when such interaction takes place

through social media, there is a positive influence on organization-public relationships (Haigh,

Brubaker, & Whiteside, 2013; Men & Tsai, 2015; Ward & Sweetser, 2014). More broadly, Kent

and Taylor (2014) defined the interaction between two parties as engagement and stated that it is

one of the primary factors that contributes to dialogue, a necessary level of interaction in order to

create strong OPRs. Similarly, engagement has been declared more than interaction and more

than even "the physical manifestation of an engaged state" such as might be seen in the form of

likes, shares, and comments. Rather, engagement is a multidimensional psychological construct,

one that requires authentic dialogue and contributes to an actual relationship (Brubaker &

Wilson, 2015; Kang, 2014).

As social media usage in business communication, marketing, and relationship building becomes more commonplace, the average consumer is faced with increasing amounts of information that must be sorted through, embraced or ignored, retained or forgotten. Now, as a public relations function, it is the social media manager's challenge to communicate quality information that the stakeholder will engage with (Handley & Chapman, 2012). Research has shown that positive effects on relationship including trust, satisfaction, and control mutuality are yielded from the organization's digital communication, such as social media, when the organization does well to create messages using conversational human voice (Kelleher & Miller, 2006; Kelleher, 2009). Creating such a communicative environment allows for greater engagement and enhanced dialogue with social media–following stakeholders. Other forms of quality social media posts include those with information about the organization's CSR efforts. Haigh et al. (2013) used Kim and Rader's (2010) typology of OPR-influential message strategies to find that stakeholders who interacted with social media profiles which employed CSR messaging had more positive perceptions of OPRs and higher purchase intent than others (Thomlison, 2000).

However, it is important to note that although social media posts must be of high quality to provide engagement, quantity may actually have a counterproductive effect. Frequent posting of what the consumer might understand as promotional content on social media could infringe on stakeholder expectations of personal digital space, causing them to disengage with offending organizations (Sung & Kim, 2014). Instead, the organization must be very precise about the content it chooses to post to its followers. Although Twitter allows only 140 characters in a tweet, it also permits pictures and links to web pages including full articles to be attached and

visible in each tweet. In fact, studies show that the social media posts that gain the most attention and yield the most clicks, likes, shares, and comments are those that include photos and video (Buyer, 2014; Walter & Gioglio, 2014). A statistical analysis revealed that photos on social media received 53% more likes and 104% more comments than all-text posts (Corliss, 2012).

Since full engagement that will lead to dialogue and provide strong OPRs requires more interaction than the casual like-click, however, it is important for followers to feel compelled to take in and think about the information offered. One way of achieving this is through what has been described as a bandwagon effect, where the heuristic cues of liking and sharing become the evaluative factors that tell others whether the post is worth their attention (Kim, Brubaker, & Seo, 2015). Very much in line with diffusion of innovations theory, which Rogers (1962) argues is the process by which an innovation is disseminated by certain channels over time among individuals in a social system, the more people that the organization is able to publicly engage through social media, the more people will engage in a similar way. Especially in cases where persons of influence become engaged, more individuals will seriously consider the information because they will feel that if someone they trust or admire is interested, perhaps they should be too. Brubaker and Wilson (2015) asserted:

> This increased level of credibility improves the contents' organic reach, suggesting that building relationships is not just about what the brands can do to fuel engagement, it's also about how stakeholders interact with brands and the relationship between the brand and the post that counts. Essentially, brand content needs to be relevant or interesting enough to ignite additional engagement.

Many teams have full websites that include a section about their social efforts, and most of them have extensive programs to help their community by building, cleaning, fixing, teaching

health or sports, being green, advocating anti-discrimination initiatives, and partnering with well-known public service organizations in order to give back to the community (Walker & Kent, 2009). However, the majority of these pages are many clicks away from the team's homepage and are often hidden in a small tab that people might only go to if they know to look for news about the team's work in the community. It should be expected that if the team will spend resources and make efforts from their staff, players, and designated public relations or community relations department to conduct CSR, then it will make them visible to the general public. By tweeting effectively about SSR and providing links to full stories about the organization's concern for their community, sports teams can proactively add these stories to their followers' Twitter feeds and better draw attention to their SSR work.

RQ3: How are sports teams tweeting SSR to garner attention from fans and followers (e.g., an image, a link, both, or text only)?

Research has shown that the majority of fans appreciate that their favorite or local team goes out of its way to provide responsible service to the public (Pomering & Dolnicar, 2009; Walker & Kent, 2009). It also points out that although they appreciate the work that they know about, there are many CSR initiatives that fans are unaware of (Walker & Kent, 2009). In assessing whether the fans care about SSR, Walker and Kent (2009) reported:

Respondents generally valued the socially responsible efforts of the teams. Many noted that while they may not have been particularly aware of the variety of social initiatives the team was involved with, the activities that they could name seemingly strengthened their positive view of the organization. (p. 758)

By making these actions visible to the public through a very widely used social media platform

such as Twitter, it can be expected that fan awareness of the team's CSR work will increase.

Heightened awareness will then augment fan appreciation, team identification, and the overall

team reputation (Becker-Olsen, Cudmore, & Hill, 2006; Brown & Dacin, 1997; Creyer & Ross,

1997; Ellen, Mohr, & Webb, 2000; Folkes & Kamins, 1999; Frombrun & Shanley, 1990; Klein

& Dawar, 2004; Mohr & Webb, 2005; Murray & Vogel, 1997; Walker & Kent, 2009).

Although many organizations and teams actively communicate with their publics through

social media and by other means, researchers have begun to categorize the types of information

they share with stakeholders. Sheth and Babiak's (2010) research showed with marginal

significance ($p = 0.092$) that sports teams with winning records tend to communicate less CSR

than teams with losing records:

> If executives use CSR for strategic purposes, a team that is successful on the playing field
>
> may not need the image-enhancing function or community relationship building that
>
> socially responsible efforts might provide—executives may feel that their performance on
>
> the field is sufficiently providing these benefits to the organization. Alternately, a losing
>
> team might want to maintain their name and brand in the community in which they
>
> operate, and may use the CSR function to do so. (p. 447)

Specifically, they found that in three leagues (MLB, NBA, and NFL), as the teams'

winning percentage increased, there appeared to be a decrease in the reporting of involvement in

CSR activities. On the other hand, an example of a team clearly trying to bolster its reputation

through CSR after losing is made by the MLS's LA Galaxy. On October 28, 2015, the defending

MLS Cup champions were knocked out of the play-offs and exited earlier than they had in any of

the previous seven seasons. Within a few days of their season-ending loss they tweeted about

their November 5th community service project, providing a link to an article explaining the

current activity as well as offering information about LA Galaxy Foundation's ongoing CSR initiative "20 For 20" and the team's previously conducted service activities. In addition, they later tweeted in a facetious reference to their failed season, "The #LAGalaxy are up for the @MLS Fair Play Award so we have that going for us which is nice" (LA Galaxy, 2015). The award recognizes teams' on-field sportsmanship, a quality which socially responsible teams try to instill as they perform sports-teaching activities in the community.

 H1: Winning teams communicate less CSR on Twitter than losing teams.

 In addition to their question of whether losing teams do and communicate more community outreach, Sheth and Babiak (2010) also questioned whether team revenues were related to CSR activity. Although left without further description or support, McGowan and Mahon (2010) hypothesized that higher-earning teams from the larger professional sports market would spend more money on CSR. In the first place, professional sports' interest in CSR is based on strategy. Specifically, the notion was that charitable endeavors and community outreach programs could help boost fan support and increase revenues. Currently, CSR in the sports industry, at its core, is implemented to improve leagues' and franchises' public relations and marketing strategies (Sports Philanthropy, 2011). Since strategic CSR is largely an investment of assets in hopes for a higher return in the form of reputation and revenue, it can be assumed, as McGowan and Mahon (2010) did, that higher-earning teams have the means to make such investments while lower-earning teams may feel the need to focus their resources elsewhere and on more immediate returns.

 H2: Teams from larger markets communicate more SSR on Twitter than teams from
  smaller markets.

H3: Higher revenue earning teams communicate more SSR on Twitter than lower

revenue earning teams.

H4: Higher valuated teams communicate more SSR on Twitter than lower valuated

teams.

Methodology

By means of content analysis, a sample of professional sports teams was examined from

five of the most mainstream team sports in the United States. Although varying in popularity,

fan-base, and market size, teams from the National Football League (NFL), Major League

Baseball (MLB), National Basketball Association (NBA), National Hockey League (NHL), and

Major League Soccer (MLS) were analyzed. This variety provided an opportunity to compare

and contrast how SSR in multiple sports leagues is being conducted and communicated to team

supporters and the public via social media.

Hambrick et al. (2010) noted that researchers have used content analysis extensively to

study communication in the sports industry in a variety of contexts such as celebrity athlete

endorsements (Jones & Schumann, 2000; Stone, Joseph, & Jones, 2003), motivations for making

financial contributions to an intercollegiate athletic fund (Gladden, Mahony, & Apostolopoulou,

2005), customer satisfaction at sporting events (Greenwell, Lee, & Naeger, 2007), and fan

interest in a sports organization's corporate social responsibility efforts (Walker & Kent, 2009).

This is only an abbreviated list, but it highlights the significance of content analysis methodology

in the study of communications in the sports industry.

Sheth and Babiak (2010) claimed that sports franchises with winning records

communicate less SSR than their losing counterparts. This relationship between level of game

play and active SSR communication has provided a valuable process by which to choose teams

for research in the current study of SSR communication via Twitter.

Sample

Using Twitter for analysis and data collection, two coders examined the official Twitter accounts for the top four and bottom four sports teams for each of the top five U.S. leagues (NFL, MLB, NBA, NHL, and MLS). Coders examined SSR content during the teams' off-seasons. Sports teams were selected based on their final standings (record of wins and losses) at the end of their 2014/2015 seasons. The winning teams in each league included the championship team, the runner-up, and the next two best performing contenders. The losing teams consisted of those left at the bottom of their league's standings or with fewest wins during the season.

Each team's off-season was defined as the three-month period beginning the day after each team's final game. These leagues run on differing in-season schedules which staggered their off-seasons; the most recent final standings with a three-month off-season period prior to coding for the current study were used. Table 2 details the teams selected for the sample, their classification (winning or losing), and their specific three-month off-season and coding period.

This study examines SSR communication during the sports teams' off-season, when the teams do not have regularly scheduled games and they are most likely to promote the team through other means. Teams are more likely to be active and available to plan and conduct SSR activities during this time period. Schedules among leagues are quite different. In-season and off-season occur during different parts of the year and each last for differing time spans. In this study, coding three months of off-season tweets allowed for the maximum equal amount of time where each team was finished with its season and not yet started on the next season.

Table 2

Off-Season Three-Month Coding Periods for Sports Teams Studied

	Winning Teams	Coding Period	Losing Teams	Coding Period
MLB				
	Kansas City Royals	11/2/15 - 2/2/16	Oakland A's	10/4/15 - 1/4/16
	New York Mets	11/2/15 - 2/2/16	Atlanta Braves	10/4/15 - 1/4/16
	Toronto Blue Jays	10/23/15 - 1/23/16	Cincinnati Reds	10/4/15 - 1/4/16
	Chicago Cubs	10/21/15 - 1/21/16	Philadelphia Phillies	10/4/15 - 1/4/16
MLS				
	Portland Timbers	12/7/15 - 3/7/16	Chicago Fire	10/26/15 - 1/26/16
	Columbus Crew	12/7/15 - 3/7/16	Colorado Rapids	10/26/15 - 1/26/16
	FC Dallas	11/30/15 - 2/29/16	Philadelphia Union	10/26/15 - 1/26/16
	New York Red Bulls	11/30/15 - 2/29/16	New York City FC	10/26/15 - 1/26/16
NBA				
	Golden St. Warriors	6/17/15 - 9/17/15	Los Angeles Lakers	4/16/15 - 7/16/15
	Cleveland Cavaliers	6/17/15 - 9/17/15	Philadelphia 76er's	4/16/15 - 7/16/15
	Atlanta Hawks	5/27/15 - 8/27/15	New York Knicks	4/16/15 - 7/16/15
	Houston Rockets	5/28/15 - 8/28/15	Minnesota Timberwolves	4/16/15 - 7/16/15
NFL				
	New England Patriots	2/2/15 - 5/2/15	Jacksonville Jaguars	12/29/14 - 3/29/15
	Seattle Seahawks	2/2/15 - 5/2/15	Oakland Raiders	12/29/14 - 3/29/15
	Green Bay Packers	1/19/15 - 4/19/15	Tennessee Titans	12/29/14 - 3/29/15
	Indianapolis Colts	1/19/15 - 4/19/15	Tampa Bay Buccaneers	12/29/14 - 3/29/15
NHL				
	Chicago Blackhawks	6/16/15 - 9/16/15	Toronto Maple Leafs	4/12/15 - 7/12/15
	Tampa Bay Lightning	6/16/15 - 9/16/15	Edmonton Oilers	4/12/15 - 7/12/15
	New York Rangers	5/30/15 - 8/30/15	Arizona Coyotes	4/12/15 - 7/12/15
	Anaheim Ducks	5/31/15 - 8/31/15	Buffalo Sabres	4/12/15 - 7/12/15

Note. Dates differ as seasons run during different times of the year and teams are eliminated at different points in their seasons. The most recent seasons and off-seasons were used in the study.

Data Collection

In order to identify each team's SSR activity, coders assessed individual team websites to learn about self-publicized information concerning SSR. Information pertinent to SSR was found under labels "Press Releases," "News," "Videos," "Photos," and "Community," which are accessed from the teams' websites' homepage. This indicated whether the teams included in the study were in fact active SSR-conducting participants.

Each subject in the study has an active Twitter account from which communications are regularly tweeted. Basic searches for each team by name provided access to their Twitter-verified, official accounts and handles. Twitter's advanced search was used, https://twitter.com/search-advanced, in order to analyze tweets from teams posted only during their designated coding period (see Table 2). It provided access to every tweet originated from the official team account within the dates of the coding period.

Intercoder Reliability

Coding for the quantitative project described was conducted by me alone, but not without the help of one other coder with whom to establish intercoder reliability. From the sample of 581 SSR tweets used in the study, tweets making up over 10% or 60 SSR tweets in the sample were chosen at random for intercoder reliability coding. Of the items coded, Cohen's Kappa was, as expected, relatively high, 0.92.

Measuring SSR

To address research question 1 and learn how many tweets from professional sports teams are related to social responsibility, SSR tweets were aggregated and compared to the total number of tweets posted by each team during the three months after the season ended (see Table 2). To answer the question, a comparison was drawn between the number of SSR tweets (SSRT)

and the total tweets (T) from each organization in each league; this determined the amount of tweets that were SSR related and provided the SSR tweet-to-total-tweet ratio (SSRT/T).

SSR work and the communication of it were operationalized according to Walker and Kent's (2009) definition of SSR activity. The operationalization of SSR for the purposes of the current study was as follows: the participation in, reporting of, or promotion of charitable donations of time, money, or service; players or staff volunteering in the community; details about teaching sports in the community, building or rebuilding in the community; supporting the troops; advocating healthy living, going green, disaster relief, equality and fairness; partnering with organizations known for their involvement in community service. Tweets that fit into this definition of SSR work were numbered among SSR tweets as called for in research question 1.

To learn specifics about the content of recognized SSR tweets (e.g., activities) sports teams communicate via Twitter, research question 2 focused on the types of SSR mentioned in SSR tweets using the operationalization of SSR activity described. In addition to Walker and Kent's (2009) definition of SSR, additional coding categories for SSR type (RQ2) and tweet body content (RQ3) were identified through a preliminary examination of tweets from the Miami Dolphins. The emergent coding of the Miami Dolphins' tweets during a one-month period offered insights into the specific types of SSR tweets to be expected from professional sports teams. Content that dealt with research question 2 included a) Past SSR: Tweets about SSR previously conducted, including gratitude towards those who may have helped; b) Present SSR: Tweets about any ongoing SSR campaigns; and c) Future SSR: Tweets about upcoming SSR events, including invitations to participate. Additional items related to research question 2 were found in tweets concerning a) responsibility mindedness: tweets that served as a tribute to a known figure, offered advice to live and act responsibly or with equality, or that were in support

of the troops; b) solo efforts: tweets about individuals within the organization being socially

responsible through service, donations, and charity; c) partnering: SSR activity in partnership

with another organization known for service or that is otherwise well known in the community

(Make-a-Wish Foundation, United Way, etc.); and d) unoriginal tweets: SSR duplicate tweets

that reiterated information previously tweeted or retweets of others' tweets concerning social

responsibility. SSR tweets from the current project were coded for the type of SSR

communicated in each tweet. SSR tweets, by definition, were able to fit into one dominant SSR

type category. The data gathered provided insight into the types of SSR most and least often

publicized on Twitter.

In addition to learning how much and what kinds of SSR are messaged via Twitter,

research question 3 addressed how sports teams are tweeting SSR to draw attention from fans

and followers, whether it be via an image, a link, both, or text only. It was answered by coding

for the number of SSR tweets that included an image, a link, both, or text only in the body of the

tweet (Buyer, 2014; Corliss, 2012; Walter & Gioglio, 2014).

For each team, its total number of SSR-related tweets were compared to the number of

SSR tweets that included an image (SSRI) to produce ratio SSRI/SSRT, a link (SSRL) to

produce ratio SSRL/SSRT, both a link and an image (SSRLI) to produce ratio SSRLI/SSRT, and

finally to those that included text only (SSRTX) to produce ratio SSRTX/SSRT. This method

was applied to learn whether teams made their SSR tweets stand out among the many tweets in

their followers' Twitter feeds by attracting more attention and creating stronger engagement and

dialogue through images and links (Corliss, 2012; Handley & Chapman, 2012).

Hypothesis 1 examined whether or not winning teams communicated less SSR than

losing teams. Researchers have suggested that sports teams with winning records communicate

less SSR than teams with losing records (Sheth & Babiak, 2010). In this study previous research was updated with the special application of social media messaging. This point of research, concerning team performance's relation to SSR messaging, was intended to explore the extent of sports teams' use of SSR in reputation management.

To answer Hypotheses 2-4, comparisons between market size, revenues, and values were used to learn whether these items affected how much SSR sports teams communicated via Twitter. The included winning and losing team subjects provided a sample of high and low revenue teams in both the larger (NFL, MLB, NBA) and the smaller (NHL, MLS) professional sports markets. The larger and smaller markets were characterized by higher and lower popularity and reach, which generally affect revenue and value. Table 3 details each subject's revenue, its value, and its ranks in revenue and value in its league. Each league's average team value is also included, indicating its market size.

Table 3
Market Sizes, Revenues, and Valuations

League, Average Team Value	Teams in Order of Standings	Revenue Rank	Revenue in Millions	Value Rank	Value in Millions
NFL, $2B		**Of 32**		**Of 32**	
	New England Patriots	2nd	$494	2nd	$3,200
	Seattle Seahawks	14th	$334	15th	$1,870
	Green Bay Packers	10th	$347	10th	$1,950
	Indianapolis Colts	18th	$321	14th	$1,880
	Jacksonville Jaguars	20th	$315	27th	$1,480
	Oakland Raiders	31st	$285	31st	$1,430
	Washington Redskins	3rd	$439	3rd	$2,850
	Tampa Bay Buccaneers	22nd	$313	24th	$1,510
MLB, $1.2B		**Of 30**		**Of 30**	
	Kansas City Royals	16th	$231	28th	$700
	New York Mets	12th	$263	7th	$1,350
	Toronto Blue Jays	20th	$227	22nd	$870
	Chicago Cubs	6th	$302	5th	$1,800
	Oakland Athletics	27th	$202	27th	$725
	Atlanta Braves	9th	$267	12th	$1,150
	Cincinnati Reds	20th	$227	20th	$885
	Philadelphia Phillies	11th	$265	10th	$1,250
NBA, $1.1B		**Of 30**		**Of 30**	
	Golden State Warriors	10th	$168	7th	$1,300
	Cleveland Cavaliers	14th	$149	15th	$915
	Atlanta Hawks	24th	$133	22nd	$825
	Houston Rockets	6th	$175	8th	$1,250
	Los Angeles Lakers	1st	$293	1st	$2,600
	Philadelphia 76ers	29th	$125	27th	$700
	New York Knicks	2nd	$278	2nd	$2,500
	Orlando Magic	19th	$143	18th	$900
NHL, $490M		**Of 30**		**Of 30**	
	Chicago Blackhawks	4th	$172	4th	$825
	Tampa Bay Lightning	25th	$97	26th	$230
	New York Rangers	1st	$217	2nd	$1,100

	Anaheim Ducks	19th	$107	18th	$365
	Toronto Maple Leafs	2nd	$190	1st	$1,300
	Edmonton Oilers	12th	$119	12th	$475
	Arizona Coyotes	30th	$80	27th	$225
	Buffalo Sabres	21st	$103	23rd	$288
MLS, $157M		**Of 20**		**Of 20**	
	Portland Timbers	3rd	$35	4th	$185
	Columbus Crew	15th	$18	16th	$112
	FC Dallas	9th	$25	9th	$148
	New York Red Bulls	11th	$22	12th	$144
	Chicago Fire	12th	$21	7th	$160
	Colorado Rapids	17th	$15	18th	$105
	Philadelphia Union	9th	$25	11th	$145
	New York City FC	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Note. Average Team Value indicates market size. NFL, MLB, and NBA make up the larger market with average team values over $1 billion. NHL and MLS make up the smaller market with average team values under $500 million. New York City FC, having begun play in 2015, have not yet made numbers available concerning their revenue and value.

Market size for the purpose of this study was based on just two classifications: larger and smaller. The larger-market teams consisted of those from NFL, MLB, and NBA whose average team values were all over $1 billion. NHL and MLS made up the smaller markets as average team values for each were significantly less than those of the other three leagues, under $500 million. In addition to simple comparisons between each team's SSR tweet percentage and market size, a two-way ANOVA was used to learn whether market size had any significant relation to sports-team SSR tweeting.

From the previously drawn values of SSR tweet-to-total-tweets for each team, those ranked high in revenue earning and value were compared to those ranked low in revenue earning and value. Correlation tests were conducted to learn whether revenue affected team SSR tweeting between leagues and between teams of the whole sample. Similar correlation tests were conducted to learn whether there existed a relationship between value and SSR tweeting in leagues or between teams of the entire sample.

For the analysis, team information was also identified. The information included teams' total number of tweets during the coding period, their coding dates, and Twitter profile information such as number of followers.

Results

The results provide insights into how SSR communication is handled in the professional sports industry. In addition to quantifying sports teams' SSR messaging for the three-month off season, the data revealed the most popular types of SSR and its social media communication as well as the relationship between SSR tweeting and revenue, value, and market size. In all, 14,760 tweets were analyzed, with only 581 being identified as SSR tweets.

To answer the first research question and learn how much SSR tweeting professional

sports teams are doing, teams' tweets during the coding period were considered and those that made reference to SSR were further examined for specific content (see Table 2). An SSR-tweet-to-total-tweet ratio was determined for each team by comparing each of the teams' SSR tweets to their total tweets during their three-month off season. Totals for the entire sample showed 581 out of 14,760 tweets were SSR related; 3.94% of professional sports team tweets involved SSR. Results are shown for each team in Table 4.

Teams from MLB tweeted the most SSR as the average SSR percentage between the teams of the league was 6.26%. Only two MLB teams tweeted SSR below the average of the sample while the other six tweeted far above it. NBA proved to tweet the least SSR at 1.97% as only one of the eight teams studied tweeted very slightly above the sample's average. The number of SSR tweets from a team compared to total tweets exceeded 10% only once. MLS's Philadelphia Union tweeted 34 SSR tweets out of their 319 total (10.66%). The next closest was MLB's Philadelphia Phillies with 9.66%. However, their SSR tweets totaled only 14 as their total tweeting during the period reached only 145. NHL's Buffalo Sabres tweeted SSR 9.04% of the time as they tweeted the most during the period at 1007 total tweets; their 91 SSR tweets were by far the most numerically. Three teams, New York Rangers, Anaheim Ducks, and Chicago Fire, although they did not tweet much during the period—161, 240, and 159, respectively—did not mention SSR once during their periods. In addition, Los Angeles Lakers, Philadelphia 76ers, and Portland Timbers all tweeted below 1%. Within the average SSR tweeting of 3.94% across the sample and team averages as low as 0% and as high as 10.66%, it is noted that professional sports teams are simply not tweeting much about social responsibility.

Table 4
Sports Teams Off-Season SSR Tweet Ratios

	Team	Total Tweets	SSR Tweets	Tweets Focus
NFL				
	Seattle Seahawks (W)	280	21	7.50%
	New England Patriots (W)	405	28	6.91%
	Indianapolis Colts (W)	417	21	5.00%
	Green Bay Packers (W)	288	14	4.86%
	Tampa Bay Buccaneers (L)	352	17	4.82%
	Washington Redskins (L)	479	19	3.97%
	Oakland Raiders (L)	315	7	2.22%
	Jacksonville Jaguars (L)	460	10	2.17%
MLB				
	Philadelphia Phillies (L)	145	14	9.66%
	Cincinnati Reds (L)	342	27	7.89%
	Toronto Blue Jays (W)	141	11	7.80%
	Chicago Cubs (W)	518	38	7.34%
	Oakland Athletics (L)	137	8	5.84%
	Atlanta Braves (L)	127	6	4.72%
	Kansas City Royals (W)	290	11	3.79%
	New York Mets (W)	494	15	3.04%
NBA				
	Houston Rockets (W)	125	5	4.00%
	Atlanta Hawks (W)	580	17	2.93%
	Cleveland Cavaliers (W)	156	4	2.56%
	Golden State Warriors (W)	495	11	2.22%
	New York Knicks (L)	269	5	1.86%
	Orlando Magic (L)	267	4	1.50%
	Philadelphia 76ers (L)	525	2	0.38%
	Los Angeles Lakers (L)	307	1	0.33%
NHL				
	Buffalo Sabres (L)	1007	91	9.04%
	Toronto Maple Leafs (L)	570	26	4.56%
	Edmonton Oilers (L)	803	26	3.24%
	Chicago Blackhawks (W)	353	10	2.83%
	Tampa Bay Lightning (W)	232	5	2.16%
	Arizona Coyotes (L)	845	18	2.13%
	New York Rangers (W)	161	0	0.00%

Anaheim Ducks (W)	240	0	0.00%
MLS			
Philadelphia Union (L)	319	34	10.66%
Colorado Rapids (L)	189	15	7.94%
Columbus Crew (W)	480	17	3.54%
New York City FC (L)	232	5	2.16%
FC Dallas (W)	432	9	2.08%
New York Red Bulls (W)	439	7	1.59%
Portland Timbers (W)	385	2	0.52%
Chicago Fire (L)	159	0	0.00%

Note. The sample is grouped by league in order of largest to the smallest league. Within each league parameter, teams are order by highest to lowest SSR tweet percentage. SSR Tweet percentages refers to the SSR tweet-to-total-tweet ratio, meaning x% of the team's tweets were SSR related.

The second research question explored the kinds of SSR activities professional sports

teams publicize via Twitter. Every SSR tweet from each team, 581 in total, was analyzed for

content concerning the type of SSR conveyed in the message and the communication style of the

message. Coding for SSR tweets included each tweet's reference to SSR by means of the

categories identified by Walker and Kent (2009): charity, volunteering, teaching sports, building,

supporting the troops, healthy living and education, sustainability, equality and fairness, tributes,

disaster relief, and partnering with a charitable organization. In addition to the SSR types, tweet

communication styles were coded for, including SSR in action, talk about responsibility, solo

efforts recognized by the team, and unoriginal tweets such as duplicates and retweets from

others. Results show the teams tweeted about charity far more than any other type of SSR. This

category included tweets about the team conducting or promoting a fundraiser and donating time

or money themselves to a cause (see Figures 1 and 2). It was the most-tweeted-about type of SSR

for the teams in this study at 45.43%. The second most popular was equality and fairness,

concerned with messages about providing opportunities for groups that are often marginalized or

disenfranchised such as racial minorities, women, and the physically impaired, at 15.66% (see

Figures 3 and 4). The next-most-tweeted-about SSR type for professional sports teams at 8.61%

was the Troops category. Tweets about the troops included messages of support and gratitude for

active service men and women as well as veterans and those who have passed away since their

service; this category was especially tweeted about on and around Veteran's Day, Memorial

Day, and Independence Day (see Figures 5 and 6). The two least-tweeted-about SSR types were

Sustainability or "Go Green"-type initiatives where conservation of natural resources and

messages about protecting the environment would belong at 0.69% and Partnerships, at 0.17%,

where teams announce that they would be doing charitable work with an official partner who is

known for such work in the community (see Table 6).

Figure 1
Charity Tweet by Columbus Crew

Figure 2
Charity Tweet by the Toronto Blue Jays

Figure 3
Equality Tweet by the Toronto Maple Leafs

Figure 4
Equality Tweet by the Edmonton Oilers

Figure 5
Troops Tweet by New York City Football Club

Figure 6
Troops Tweet by the New York Knicks

When taking a closer look at the individual sports leagues and the type of SSR communication used, the data reveal that MLB tweets the most charity of all the other leagues in the U.S. The league provided 26.5% of the charity tweets observed in the study while NBA tweeted the least in this category at 5.7%. NHL tweet the most about equality, 78% in the study, and NBA again lagged at 2.2%. SSR tweets in support of the troops are most highly posted by NFL teams. NFL contributed to 40% while the NBA tweeted the least about the troops, one-tenth as much as the leader (4%) (see Table 7).

In all, NFL provided the most SSR tweets about the troops (40%) and the Health and Education category (56.8%), where SSR initiatives were related to teaching fans, especially children, the importance of eating right, being physically active, and doing well in school. MLB contributed the highest percentage of tweets to the Charity category (26.5%) and in the Tributes category (37.5%), where SSR tweets were concerned with individuals with ties to the team who had passed away or suffered a loss. NBA focused the majority of their SSR tweets on Building or Rebuilding at 34.6%, which had to do with refurbishing, building, or fixing parks and playgrounds. NHL was the highest tweeter in the Equality and Fairness category (78%) as well as in the Teaching Sports category, concerned with the team tweeting about free training in sports or other physical fitness instruction in the community, providing 45.7% of all tweets in the category. Finally, MLS contributed most to the Volunteer category which was about involvement in the type of community service that the typical community member can perform such as helping at a soup kitchen or with a park, highway, or beach cleanup, for example.

Supplemental to the SSR-type breakdown, SSR Authorship provided details concerning team SSR focus. Tweet content analysis revealed that the teams themselves were responsible for a little more than half of the SSR conducted (54.04%). Tweets within this category included

those such as the one from the Chicago Blackhawks about their annual golf outing to raise

money for charities (see Figure 7), the Golden State Warriors' tweet about refurbishing a

community basketball court in Oakland (see Figure 8), and the Houston Rockets tweeting their

event at Ronald McDonald House where they served lunch to patients and family members (see

Figure 9).

Figure 7
Chicago Blackhawks Charity Tweet

Figure 8
Golden State Warriors Rebuilding in the Community Tweet

Figure 9
Houston Rockets Community Volunteer Tweet

A large portion of SSR tweets were also about responsibility-minded "talk" without action (27.54%). These included tributes, such as an RIP message about someone from the organization or community who has passed away or other disasters (see figures 10 and 11); advice, such as to not drink and drive (see Figure 12); or simple recognitions of the importance of giving back. An example of the latter was seen in an Edmonton Oilers' tweet where they photo tagged Connor McDavid in a picture of him in a post-game interview. The text in the tweet is a quote from McDavid talking about remembering where he came from and the importance of giving back to the community so that others have the same opportunity (see Figure 13).

Figure 10
Teams' Disaster Tweets

New York City FC @NYCFC · 14 Nov 2015
Our thoughts are with the people of Paris and all those affected by last night's terrible events

101   255

Colorado Rapids @ColoradoRapids · 14 Nov 2015
Our thoughts and prayers are with you. #PrayForParis 🇫🇷

19   34

Phillies @Phillies · 13 Nov 2015
The entire Phillies organization sends our thoughts and prayers to the city of Paris tonight.

197   562

#VoteRoyals @Royals · 13 Nov 2015
We send our sincere thoughts and prayers to the people of Paris and everyone affected by today's tragedies.

506   1.6K

Figure 11
Cincinnati Reds Tribute Tweet
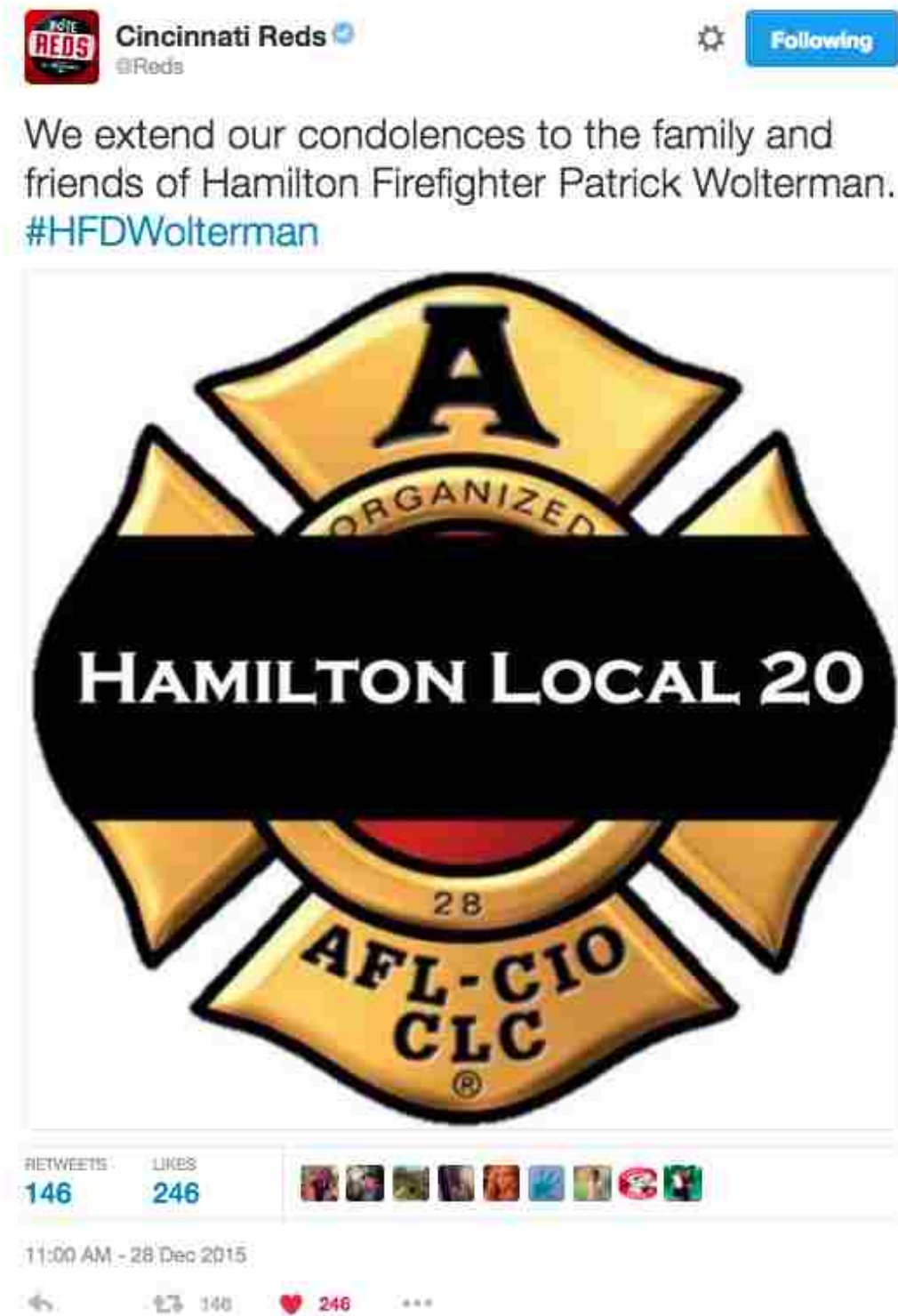
Figure 12
Orlando Magic Responsible Advice Tweet
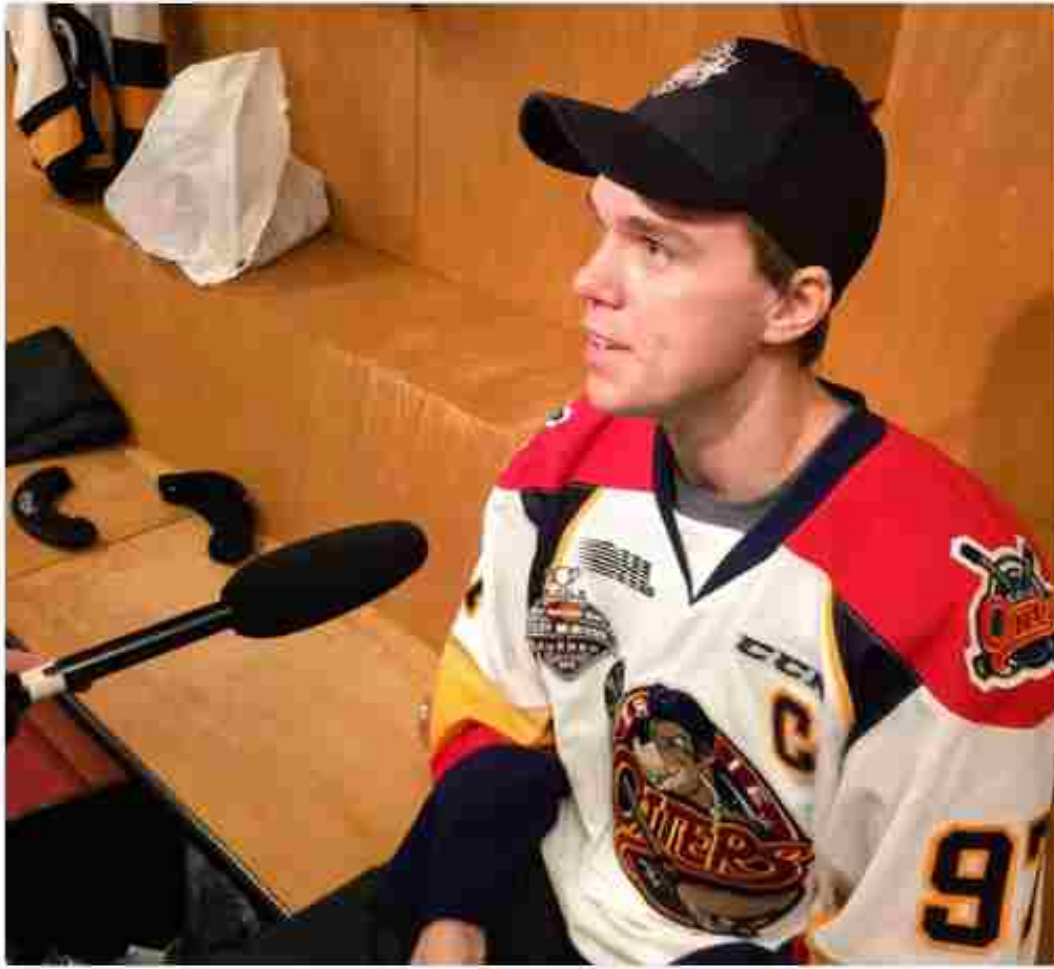
Figure 13
Edmonton Oilers Giving Back Tweet

Just less than one-fifth of the tweets (18.07%) can be attributed to individual efforts, such as the Chicago Cubs' tweet about player Anthony Rizzo raising over $200,000 with his own charity foundation (see Figure 14) or New England Patriots player Chandler Jones spending time supporting the athletes at a local Special Olympics event (see Figure 15). Retweets of other people or organizations talking about being socially responsible and duplicated tweets of things already sent out by the team made up only 0.34% of SSR tweets (see Table 5 and Figure 16).

Figure 14
Chicago Cubs Tweet about Anthony Rizzo's SSR

Figure 15
New England Patriots' Tweet about Chandler Jones' SSR

Table 5

The Overall Type of SSR Communication by the Sports Industry

		Percentage (Raw Scores)
SSR Type		
	Charity	45.43% (264)
	Equality, Fairness	15.66% (91)
	Troops	8.61% (50)
	Tribute	8.26% (48)
	Healthy, Education	6.37% (37)
	Teaching Sports	6.02% (35)
	Building	4.48% (26)
	Disaster	2.41% (14)
	Volunteer	1.89% (11)
	Sustainability	0.69% (4)
	Partnership	0.17% (1)
SSR Authorship		
	SSR Conducted by the Team	54.04% (314)
	Responsibility Mindedness, No Action	27.54% (160)
	SSR From Another Entity or Individual	18.07% (105)
	Unoriginal Tweet	0.34% (2)

Note. Shown in order from most to least tweeted, each SSR type was mutually exclusive. SSR Authorship contributed to measured efforts of team SSR by identifying the parties responsible for the actual SSR conducted or talked about, authorship was mutually exclusive among NFL, MLB, NBA, NHL, and MLS. Raw scores are in parentheses.

Figure 16
SSR Authorship of the Sample

SSR Authorship

- SSR Conducted by the Team
- Responsibility Mindedness, No Action
- SSR from Another Entity or Individual
- Unoriginal tweet
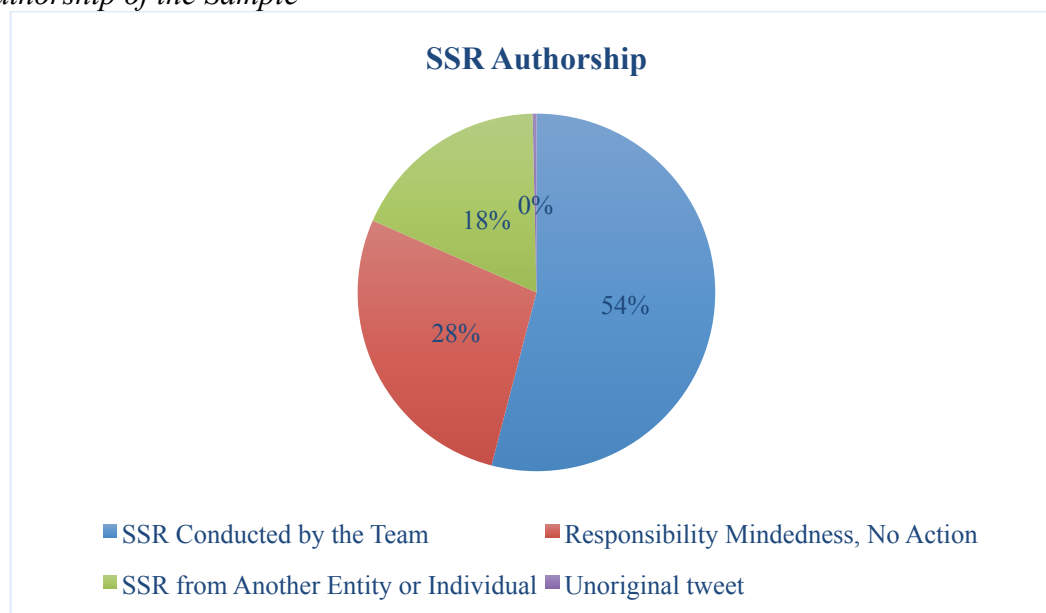
Notes. The unoriginal category (aka retweets and duplicates), nearly invisible in the graph, represents 0.34%.

Table 6
SSR Type by Sports League

	NFL	MLB	NBA	NHL	MLS
Charity	23.9% (63)	26.5% (70)	5.7% (15)	22% (58)	22% (58)
Equality, Fairness	7.7% (7)	5.5% (5)	2.2% (2)	78% (71)	6.6% (6)
Troops	40% (20)	34% (17)	4% (2)	16% (8)	6% (3)
Tribute	33.3% (16)	37.5% (18)	2.1% (1)	20.8% (10)	6.3% (3)
Health, Education	56.8% (21)	16.2% (6)	10.8% (4)	10.8% (4)	5.4% (2)
Teaching Sports	5.7% (2)	5.7% (2)	34.3% (12)	45.7% (16)	8.6% (3)
Building	15.4% (4)	7.7% (2)	34.6% (9)	19.2% (5)	23.1% (6)
Disaster	14.3% (2)	42.9% (6)	21.4% (3)	7.1% (1)	14.3% (2)
Volunteer	18.2% (2)	27.3% (3)	0% (0)	9.1% (1)	45.5% (5)
Sustainability	0% (0)	0% (0)	25% (1)	50% (2)	25% (1)
Partnership	0% (0)	100% (1)	0% (0)	0% (0)	0% (0)

Note. Percentages are shown for the concentration of each SSR type among the five leagues. Raw scores are in parentheses.

The third research question dealt with the elements included in SSR tweets to draw attention to them. It was addressed as content analysis included coding for what made up the body of SSR tweets. In addition to the tweet body's content, coding for photo tags and whether the tweet invoked a celebrity or athlete contributed to the concept of *how* SSR is tweeted about, and it supplements the attention drawn by each.

Tweets with an image constituted more than half of the sample at 53.70% of all SSR tweets (see Table 7). Tweets adding a link to the image made up 35.46%. Fewer tweets displayed text only, 6.20%, and a link with no photo, 4.65%, was tweeted the least. Additionally, only 89 of the sample's SSR tweets used photo tags (15.32%) while a larger amount, 40.96%, cited a celebrity or athlete in their post. Another attention gauge, which Corliss (2012) claims rises with the use of images in posts, is likes and shares. This study showed that tweets with an image did receive more likes and retweets, regardless of tweet content. Image and image-with-link tweets received an average of 94.96 and 65.61 retweets respectively. In other words, any SSR tweet that included an image in the body of the post averaged 80.29 retweets.

In a two-way ANOVA, tweet body was compared to likes and retweets of each tweet. Although the raw data show interesting trends between tweet body content and engagement, the test did not show statistical significance (likes: $F (3,577) = 1.73, p > .05$, retweets: $F (3,577) = 1.37, p > .05$). As tweet body was tested with likes the following was found for each tweet body type: image ($M = 233.53, SD = 586.87$), link ($M = 67.7, SD = 94.42$), link and image ($M = 162.16, SD = 247.22$), text ($M = 217.33, SD = 391.75$). Tested with retweets, tweet body types showed: image ($M = 94.96, SD = 273.28$), link ($M = 28.96, SD = 33.02$), link and image ($M = 65.61, SD = 106.42$), text ($M = 92.25, SD = 42.99$).

Individual league breakdown of tweet body showed that some leagues habitually tweet

with certain content in the body (see Table 8). NHL showed highest concentration of image

tweets: 33% of the image tweets found in the sample of tweets came from the NHL. NBA used

the fewest image tweets, contributing only 9.6%. Teams from the NFL tweeted the most link-

and-image tweets at 35.4% while NBA teams tweeted the least in the category, too, at 8.7%.

NHL teams were again the leaders of the text-only tweets; they posted 50% of the text-only

tweets in the study. NBA was the only league whose teams did not tweet a single text-only tweet

(0%). Finally, NHL tweeted the most link-only tweets, 59.3%, while the NBA and MLB tweeted

the least in that category with only 3.7% each.

Table 7

SSR Tweet Body Content, Photo Tags, and Mention of a Celebrity or Athlete

		Percentages (Tweets)
Tweet Body		
	Image	53.7% (312)
	Link & Image	35.46% (206)
	Text Only	6.2% (36)
	Link	4.65% (27)
Photo Tags		
	No	84.68% (492)
	Yes	15.32% (89)
Invoking Celebrity/Athlete		
	No	59.04% (343)
	Yes	40.96% (238)

 Note. In addition to the content of the tweet body (image, link, text), the use of photo tags and invoking a celebrity or athlete are displayed here as these all indicate *how* SSR is tweeted. Raw scores are in parentheses.

Table 8

Tweet Body Contents by Sports Leagues

	NFL	MLB	NBA	NHL	MLS
Image	17.6% (55)	25.3% (79)	9.6% (30)	33% (103)	14.4% (45)
Link & Image	35.4% (73)	20.4% (42)	8.7% (18)	18.9% (39)	16.5% (34)
Text Only	13.9% (5)	22.2% (8)	0% (0)	50% (18)	13.9% (5)
Link	14.8% (4)	3.7% (1)	3.7% (1)	59.3% (16)	18.5% (5)

Note. Percentages are shown for the concentration of each tweet body content between the five leagues. Raw scores are in parentheses.

A two-way ANOVA was used to explore if there was a difference in sports teams ranked as either a winning or losing team during the 2014/15 season (H1) and the sports teams' market size (large or small; H2) on the amount of SSR communication during the time period studied. H1 assumes that winning teams will communicate more SSR than losing teams. Research by Sheth and Babiak (2010) suggest the better a team performs, the less SSR they will communicate in comparison to their losing counterparts. The second hypothesis suggests teams from larger markets would communicate more SSR than teams from smaller markets. Market size, as mentioned previously, took into account the teams' winning or losing records to denote results in correspondence with team performance.

The data revealed an interaction between the two variables, $F(1, 36) = 8.27$, $p < .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .19$, but no main effects for either (winning/losing teams: $F(1, 36) = 2.37$, $p > .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .06$; large/small market: $F(1, 36) = .52$, $p > .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .01$). The results, as illustrated in Figure 17, suggest losing sports teams ($M = 16.80$, $SD = 20.06$) post more SSR messages when they are in smaller markets ($M = 26.88$, $SD = 28.25$) than teams in larger markets ($M = 10.08$, $SD = 8.01$). Winning teams in smaller markets ($M = 6.25$, $SD = 5.80$) post fewer SSR messages than teams in larger markets ($M = 16.33$, $SD = 9.64$).

Figure 17
SSR Communication by Winning/Losing Teams in Smaller/Larger Markets

MEANS OF TOTAL SSR TWEETS

◆— Winning   ■— Losing

16.33

10.08

26.88

6.25

LARGER MARKET   SMALLER MARKET
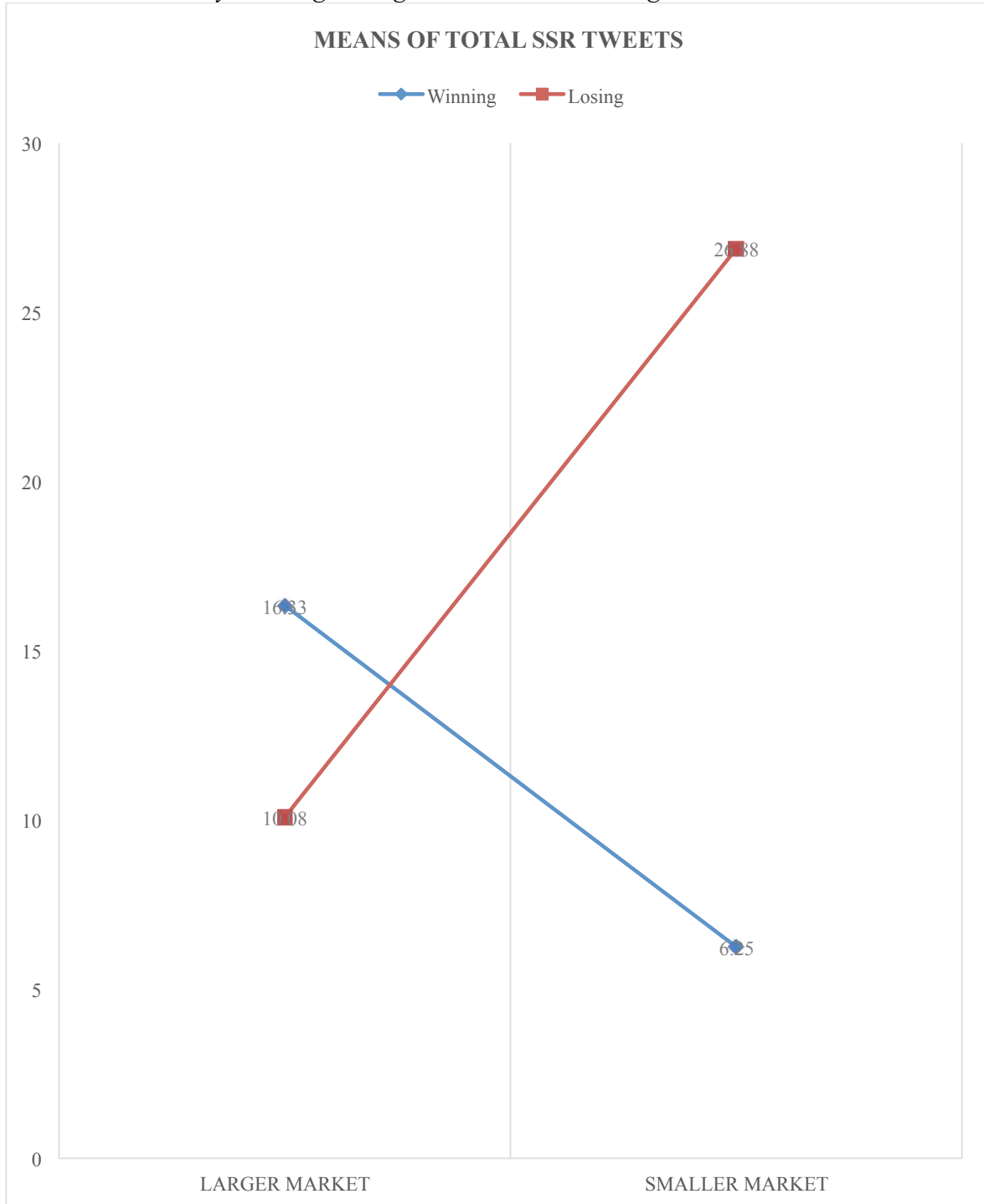
Note. Mean scores are represented.

When comparing team performance of those in the smaller markets and SSR

communication, the data shows a clear difference between winning and losing teams, with losing teams providing more SSR tweeting than winning teams. Within this market the data is opposite of the proposed hypothesis. In addition to the data highlighted in Figure 17, Figure 18 showcases each individual winning and losing team within the small market. Unless Philadelphia Union, Buffalo Sabres, and Colorado Rapids are all outliers, this does well to highlight the differences between the winning and losing teams within this market. Within the larger market, only the winning teams within the NFL and NBA tweeted more than losing teams, while the losing teams in MLB tweeted more than the winning teams (see Table 9).

Figure 18
Smaller-Market Losing Teams' and Winning Teams' SSR Tweet Percentages

SSR TWEET PERCENTAGES IN SMALLER MARKET TEAMS

Team	Percentage	League
Philadelphia Union	10.66%	MLS
Buffalo Sabres	9.04%	NHL
Colorado Rapids	7.94%	MLS
Toronto Maple Leafs	4.56%	NHL
Edmonton Oilers	3.24%	NHL
New York City FC	2.16%	MLS
Arizona Coyotes	2.13%	NHL
Chicago Fire	0.00%	MLS
Columbus Crew	3.54%	MLS
Chicago Blackhawks	2.83%	NHL
Tampa Bay Lightning	2.16%	NHL
FC Dallas	2.08%	MLS
New York Red Bulls	1.59%	MLS
Portland Timbers	0.52%	MLS
New York Rangers	0.00%	NHL
Anaheim Ducks	0.00%	NHL

Note. Small-market teams from NHL and MLS are divided with losing teams (8) on the left and winning teams (8) following on the right. The two groups are ordered left to right from the highest SSRT percentage to the lowest. Each team's league is also indicated at the bottom of the figure.

Table 9
The Impact of Sports Team Performance on SSR Tweeting

Grouping		Total Tweets	SSR Tweets	SSR Tweet Focus
Sample				
	Winning Teams	6911	246	3.56%
	Losing Teams	7849	334	4.26%
Larger Markets				
NFL				
	Winning Teams	1390	84	6.04%
	Losing Teams	1606	53	3.30%
MLB				
	Winning Teams	1443	75	5.20%
	Losing Teams	751	54	7.19%
NBA				
	Winning Team	1356	37	2.73%
	Losing Team	1368	12	0.88%
Smaller Markets				
NHL				
	Winning Team	986	15	1.52%
	Losing Team	3225	161	4.99%
MLS				
	Winning Team	1736	35	2.02%
	Losing Team	899	54	6.01%

Note. "Grouping" refers to the group of team data that are shown side by side: teams from the entire sample and teams of each league. Leagues are shown in order of largest market to smallest market size. Market size was determined by value and revenue information found in the most recent Forbes team valuations. Winning or losing records teams were determined by team standings at the end of the 2014/15 season.

Among the leagues, a few patterns were recognized relating to performance and market size. Of large market leagues, all NFL winning teams tweeted more SSR than their losing counterparts. MLB teams were quite mixed on SSR tweet percentages, but the league's highest SSR tweeting team came from the losing group. NBA, the smallest of the large-market leagues, but still much larger than the small-market leagues, tweeted less SSR than any other league of the study. Of the smaller market leagues, winning NHL teams tweeted less SSR than the losing teams of the league did, as two winning teams did not tweet any SSR at all. For MLS, although one team of the losing group did not tweet any SSR, the losing teams still tweeted more SSR than the MLS winning teams. The highest SSR-tweeting team of the study came from the losing group of MLS, the Philadelphia Union (10.66%) (see Table 10).

Table 10
Market Size and SSR Tweeting, Full Team Data

		Team	Total Tweets	SSR Tweets	Tweets Focus
Large Market					
NFL					
	Winning Teams				
		New England Patriots	405	28	6.91%
		Seattle Seahawks	280	21	7.50%
		Green Bay Packers	288	14	4.86%
		Indianapolis Colts	417	21	5.00%
	Losing Teams				
		Jacksonville Jaguars	460	10	2.17%
		Oakland Raiders	315	7	2.22%
		Washington Redskins	479	19	3.97%
		Tampa Bay Buccaneers	352	17	4.82%
MLB					
	Winning Teams				
		Kansas City Royals	290	11	3.79%
		New York Mets	494	15	3.04%
		Toronto Blue Jays	141	11	7.80%
		Chicago Cubs	518	38	7.34%
	Losing Teams				
		Oakland Athletics	137	8	5.84%
		Atlanta Braves	127	6	4.72%
		Cincinnati Reds	342	27	7.89%
		Philadelphia Phillies	145	14	9.66%
NBA					
	Winning Teams				
		Golden State Warriors	495	11	2.22%
		Cleveland Cavaliers	156	4	2.56%
		Atlanta Hawks	580	17	2.93%
		Houston Rockets	125	5	4.00%
	Losing Teams				
		Los Angeles Lakers	307	1	0.33%
		Philadelphia 76ers	525	2	0.38%
		New York Knicks	269	5	1.86%
		Orlando Magic	267	4	1.50%
Small Market					

NHL				
	Winning Teams			
		Chicago Blackhawks	353	10	2.83%
		Tampa Bay Lightning	232	5	2.16%
		New York Rangers	161	0	0.00%
		Anaheim Ducks	240	0	0.00%
	Losing Teams			
		Toronto Maple Leafs	570	26	4.56%
		Edmonton Oilers	803	26	3.24%
		Arizona Coyotes	845	18	2.13%
		Buffalo Sabres	1007	91	9.04%
MLS				
	Winning Teams			
		Portland Timbers	385	2	0.52%
		Columbus Crew	480	17	3.54%
		FC Dallas	432	9	2.08%
		New York Red Bulls	439	7	1.59%
	Losing Teams			
		Chicago Fire	159	0	0.00%
		Colorado Rapids	189	15	7.94%
		Philadelphia Union	319	34	10.66%
		New York City FC	232	5	2.16%

Note. This comprehensive chart shows tweets to SSR tweet and tweet percentages for all the groupings; the sample as a whole, market sizes, leagues, teams, and winning and losing.

The third hypothesis was concerned with revenue earned and the number of times teams tweeted SSR. It supposes that higher-revenue-earning teams would tweet more SSR than lower revenue earners. A one-way ANOVA was conducted to learn if there was a relationship between high, medium, and low revenue ranked teams in the sample and the number of SSR tweets posted by professional sports teams. The data supported hypotheses 3 revealing that there existed a significant difference between the level of revenue within the sample and the amount of SSR tweeting, $F(2, 578) = 115.88, p < .001$. A Tukey post hoc test indicated that the high revenue earning teams, ($n = 226, M = 49.18 (35.23)$, tweeted much more SSR than the medium ($n = 163$, $M = 16.72, SD = 7.84$), and low revenue earning sports teams ($n = 192, M = 21.83, SD =10.27$). Table 11 shows the biggest large-market teams at the top of the revenue rankings in the sample as they brought in most revenue, while all small-market teams are seen in the bottom half of the rankings with NHL behind the majority of larger-market teams and MLS teams all grouped together at the bottom. In correspondence to these rankings, SSR tweeting seemed to follow suit.

In support of the test, Table 11 appears to indicate that the highest SSR tweeting teams are on the high end of revenue earnings while the mid-earning teams tweeted the least SSR than high-revenue teams and low-revenue teams. Previous results showed NBA tweeting the least SSR in other categories, and that trend continues as NBA, the lowest-earning league of the larger market in this study, tweeted less than NFL and MLB teams (larger market) and also less than MLS and NHL teams (smaller market).

Table 11

Revenue Ranks and SSR Tweeting

League	Team	Revenue Rank (Within Sample)	Revenue Rank (Within League)	SSRT Ratio
NFL	New England Patriots	1	2	6.91% (28)
NFL	Washington Redskins	2	3	3.97% (19)
NFL	Green Bay Packers	3	10	4.86% (14)
NFL	Seattle Seahawks	4	14	7.5% (21)
NFL	Indianapolis Colts	5	18	5% (21)
NFL	Jacksonville Jaguars	6	20	2.17% (10)
NFL	Tampa Bay Buccaneers	7	22	4.82% (17)
MLB	Chicago Cubs	8	6	7.34% (38)
NBA	Los Angeles Lakers	9	1	0.33% (1)
NFL	Oakland Raiders	10	31	2.22% (7)
NBA	New York Knicks	11	2	1.86% (5)
MLB	Atlanta Braves	12	9	4.72% (6)
MLB	Philadelphia Phillies	13	11	9.66% (14)
MLB	New York Mets	14	12	3.04% (15)
MLB	Kansas City Royals	15	16	3.79% (11)
MLB	Toronto Blue Jays	17	20	7.8% (11)
MLB	Cincinnati Reds	17	20	7.89% (27)
NHL	New York Rangers	18	1	0% (0)
MLB	Oakland Athletics	19	27	5.84% (8)
NHL	Toronto Maple Leafs	20	2	4.56% (26)
NBA	Houston Rockets	21	6	4% (5)
NHL	Chicago Blackhawks	22	4	2.83% (10)
NBA	Golden State Warriors	23	10	2.22% (11)
NBA	Cleveland Cavaliers	24	14	2.56% (4)
NBA	Orlando Magic	25	19	1.5% (4)
NBA	Atlanta Hawks	26	24	2.93% (17)
NBA	Philadelphia 76ers	27	29	0.38% (2)
NHL	Edmonton Oilers	28	12	3.24% (26)
NHL	Anaheim Ducks	29	19	0% (0)
NHL	Buffalo Sabres	30	21	9.04% (91)
NHL	Tampa Bay Lightning	31	25	2.16% (5)
NHL	Arizona Coyotes	32	30	2.13% (18)
MLS	Portland Timbers	34	3	0.52% (2)
MLS	FC Dallas	34	9	2.08% (9)
MLS	Philadelphia Union	35	9	10.66% (34)

MLS	New York Red Bulls	36	11	1.59% (7)
MLS	Chicago Fire	37	12	0% (0)
MLS	Columbus Crew	38	15	3.54% (17)
MLS	Colorado Rapids	39	17	7.94% (15)
MLS	New York City FC	n/a	n/a	2.16% (5)

Note. All the teams of the study are shown in the table in order of highest to lowest revenue rankings as reported by Forbes (2015). Revenue rankings, referring to the team revenue in relation to the revenues of other teams in the study, within each team's league are also shown. A lower-numbered ranking indicates higher revenue. NFL teams are ranked out of the 32 teams in their league; MLB, 30; NBA, 30; NHL, 30; MLS, 20. Raw scores are in parentheses.

The fourth hypothesis suggested that teams of higher value would communicate more SSR. Value rankings, as found in the most recent Forbes valuations for the teams of the sample, differed only slightly from the revenue rankings previously reported. An independent sample t-test was conducted to learn whether there was a difference between high and low value ranking and the sports teams' SSR tweeting. The data revealed a significant difference for value within the sample and the number of SSR tweets (t (579) = -9.24, $p < .001$). Supporting McGowan and Mahon's (2010) hypothesis, sports teams with low values, ($n = 267$) $M = 20.42$, $SD = 9.81$, tweeted SSR significantly less than the higher valued teams, half as much in fact ($n = 314$) M = 40.07, $SD = 33.54$.

Table 12 shows the teams' value rankings and how much they tweet about SSR as they compare team to team. Specifically, the same subtle trend is present between tables 11 and 12 that the highest- and lowest-valued teams tweeted more SSR than the mid-valued teams. Accordingly, NBA teams, known in this study for their market size, revenue, and also value lower than that of the other two large market leagues but higher than the small market leagues, seem to tweet SSR less than the other teams with more polarized team values.

Table 12
Value Ranks and SSR Tweeting

League	Team	Value Rank (Sample)	Value Rank (League)	SSR Tweet Percentage
NFL	New England Patriots	1	2	6.91% (28)
NFL	Washington Redskins	2	3	3.97% (19)
NBA	Los Angeles Lakers	3	1	0.33% (1)
NBA	New York Knicks	4	2	1.86% (5)
NFL	Green Bay Packers	5	10	4.86% (14)
NFL	Indianapolis Colts	6	14	5% (21)
NFL	Seattle Seahawks	7	15	7.5% (21)
MLB	Chicago Cubs	8	5	7.34% (38)
NFL	Tampa Bay Buccaneers	9	24	4.82% (17)
NFL	Jacksonville Jaguars	10	27	2.17% (10)
NFL	Oakland Raiders	11	31	2.22% (7)
MLB	New York Mets	12	7	3.04% (15)
NBA	Golden State Warriors	13	7	2.22% (11)
NHL	Toronto Maple Leafs	14	1	4.56% (26)
MLB	Philadelphia Phillies	15	10	9.66% (14)
NBA	Houston Rockets	16	8	4% (5)
MLB	Atlanta Braves	17	12	4.72% (6)
NHL	New York Rangers	18	2	0% (0)
NBA	Cleveland Cavaliers	19	15	2.56% (4)
NBA	Orlando Magic	20	18	1.5% (4)
MLB	Cincinnati Reds	21	20	7.89% (27)
MLB	Toronto Blue Jays	22	22	7.8% (11)
NBA	Atlanta Hawks	23	22	2.93% (17)
NHL	Chicago Blackhawks	24	4	2.83% (10)
MLB	Oakland Athletics	25	27	5.84% (8)
MLB	Kansas City Royals	26	28	3.79% (11)
NBA	Philadelphia 76ers	27	27	0.38% (2)
NHL	Edmonton Oilers	28	12	3.24% (26)
NHL	Anaheim Ducks	29	18	0% (0)
NHL	Buffalo Sabres	30	23	9.04% (91)
NHL	Tampa Bay Lightning	31	26	2.16% (5)
NHL	Arizona Coyotes	32	27	2.13% (18)
MLS	Portland Timbers	33	4	0.52% (2)
MLS	Chicago Fire	34	7	0% (0)

MLS	FC Dallas	35	9	2.08% (9)
MLS	Philadelphia Union	36	11	10.66% (34)
MLS	New York Red Bulls	37	12	1.59% (7)
MLS	Columbus Crew	38	16	3.54% (17)
MLS	Colorado Rapids	39	18	7.94% (15)
MLS	New York City FC	n/a	n/a	2.16% (5)

Note. All the teams of the study are shown in the table in order of highest to lowest value rankings as reported by Forbes (2015). A lower-numbered ranking indicates higher value. Value rankings, referring to the team values in relation to other teams on the study, within each team's league are also shown. NFL teams are ranked out of the 32 teams in their league; MLB, 30; NBA, 30; NHL, 30; MLS, 20.

Table 13 shows revenue and value rankings for each team side by side. It orders teams from highest to lowest SSR tweet percentage. The highest SSR tweeting team, Philadelphia Union (10.66%) of MLS, is shown on top, and teams from all other leagues are present except for NBA teams until the Houston Rockets' 4.00% SSR tweeting appears after fifteen other teams of the study. Most leagues' teams are spread out pretty evenly throughout the table, but NBA teams are grouped relatively tightly in the middle of the chart between spots 16 and 37. Figure 19 illustrates this as the teams in the center of the graph have lower revenues and values. Besides the outlier Columbus Crew, which tweeted an average amount (3.54%) but have a much lower revenue and value than other teams in that part of the graph, the teams near the center show more mid-level revenue and value than the teams toward the high and low ends of SSR tweet rankings. Additionally, the side-by-side also shows that value and revenue rankings for the teams in the study were quite similar relative to the rest of the sample. It shows higher and lower numbers, polarized rankings, at the top and bottom of the table while the most median numbers between one and forty are most present in the middle of the table.

Table 13

SSR Tweeting and Revenue and Value Ranks

League	Team	SSR Tweets Focus	Revenue Rank (Sample)	Value Rank (Sample)
MLS	Philadelphia Union	10.66% (34)	35	36
MLB	Philadelphia Phillies	9.66% (14)	13	15
NHL	Buffalo Sabres	9.04% (91)	30	30
MLS	Colorado Rapids	7.94% (15)	39	39
MLB	Cincinnati Reds	7.89% (27)	17	21
MLB	Toronto Blue Jays	7.8% (11)	17	22
NFL	Seattle Seahawks	7.5% (21)	4	7
MLB	Chicago Cubs	7.34% (38)	8	8
NFL	New England Patriots	6.91% (28)	1	1
MLB	Oakland Athletics	5.84% (8)	19	25
NFL	Indianapolis Colts	5% (21)	5	6
NFL	Green Bay Packers	4.86% (14)	3	5
NFL	Tampa Bay Buccaneers	4.82% (17)	7	9
MLB	Atlanta Braves	4.72% (6)	12	17
NHL	Toronto Maple Leafs	4.56% (26)	20	14
NBA	Houston Rockets	4% (5)	21	16
NFL	Washington Redskins	3.97% (19)	2	2
MLB	Kansas City Royals	3.79% (11)	15	26
MLS	Columbus Crew	3.54% (17)	38	38
NHL	Edmonton Oilers	3.24% (26)	28	28
MLB	New York Mets	3.04% (15)	14	12
NBA	Atlanta Hawks	2.93% (17)	26	23
NHL	Chicago Blackhawks	2.83% (10)	22	24
NBA	Cleveland Cavaliers	2.56% (4)	24	19
NFL	Oakland Raiders	2.22% (7)	10	11
NBA	Golden State Warriors	2.22% (11)	23	13
NFL	Jacksonville Jaguars	2.17% (10)	6	10
NHL	Tampa Bay Lightning	2.16% (5)	31	31
MLS	New York City FC	2.16% (5)	n/a	n/a
NHL	Arizona Coyotes	2.13% (18)	32	32
MLS	FC Dallas	2.08% (9)	34	35
NBA	New York Knicks	1.86% (5)	11	4
MLS	New York Red Bulls	1.59% (7)	36	37
NBA	Orlando Magic	1.5% (4)	25	20

MLS	Portland Timbers	0.52% (2)	34	33
NBA	Philadelphia 76ers	0.38% (2)	27	27
NBA	Los Angeles Lakers	0.33% (1)	9	3
NHL	New York Rangers	0% (0)	18	18
NHL	Anaheim Ducks	0% (0)	29	29
MLS	Chicago Fire	0% (0)	37	34

Note. Teams are placed in order of highest SSR tweet ratio. Revenue and value rankings, where revenue and value are compared and ordered from high to low in relation to the other teams of the study within the entire sample, are also included. Lower-numbered ranking indicates higher revenue or value.

Figure 19
SSR Tweeting and Money Earning by Sports Team
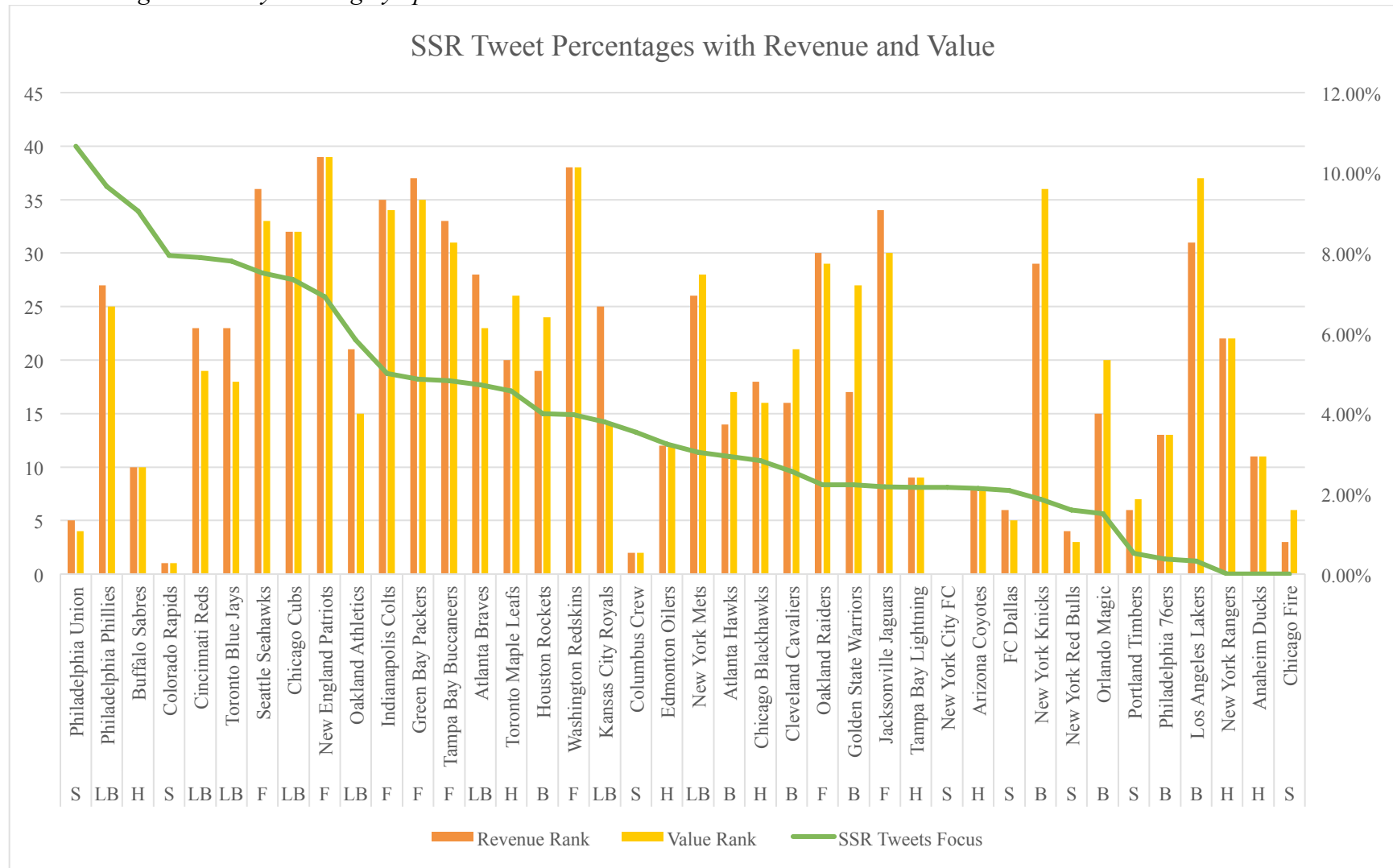
Note. Teams are ranked in order of most SSR tweeting to least from left to right while both revenue and value are indicated side by side. Leagues are indicated along the bottom abbreviated as F, LB, B, H, and S for NFL, MLB, NBA, NHL, and MLS, respectively.

Discussion

The purpose of this study is to learn how much SSR tweeting sports teams do, what they tweet about, how they tweet about it, and whether market size, values, and revenues influence professional sports team SSR tweeting. Results show that of the sports teams in this study less than 4% of their communication efforts on Twitter are being directed toward the SSR function. Answers to RQ1 indicated that 3.94% of tweets from forty teams sampled over three months were related to social responsibility. Pomering and Dolnicar's (2009) advice that organizations must actively communicate CSR in order to enjoy its benefits suggests that sports teams are not taking full advantage of their SSR work. Essentially, by communicating it so little, they are missing out on the benefits (Pomering & Dolnicar, 2009; Walker & Kent, 2009; Handley & Chapman, 2012; Corliss, 2012; Kang, 2014).

Findings from RQ2 detailed the types of SSR that sports teams most commonly tweet about. The most widely communicated was charitable contribution of time or money. In many cases team representatives participated in events that were meant to benefit a cause by raising awareness or funds, such as the Cincinnati Reds sending out Michael Lorenzen to visit local schools or talk with participants in sports development programs. In other instances, teams ran charitable donations for a cause such as the New York Mets' Christmas coat drive and the Philadelphia Union's Christmas toy drive.

Equality and fairness was the second-most tweeted type. It included any tweet that relayed the idea of fairness in any way especially to groups who are generally marginalized. Examples included the Tampa Bay Buccaneers' "Moms Football Safety Clinic" meant to get mothers involved in football by teaching them safety and health that they could relate to their sports-playing children. The Buffalo Sabres contributed most greatly to this category as many of

their 91 SSR tweets referred to the Special Olympic–affiliated sledge hockey tournament that took place during their off-season.

Each SSR type came with many examples, but no category was as well represented as Charity, which comprised nearly half of the tweets. One of the more surprising SSR tweet types to yield few tweets was Sustainability. The San Jose Earthquakes mentioned their green initiative by covering city buses with the image of their star Chris Wondolowski and the message to discard trash appropriately. Another example in MLS concerning sustainability came from the Portland Timbers, in one of their two SSR tweets, in which they tweeted a photo about recycling their turf for another phase of play. Generally, however, the "going green" idea was surprisingly rarely mentioned by sports teams.

In addition to tweet types, authorship, or who should be credited for the SSR mentioned in their tweet, was coded for. The majority of SSR tweets, about 54%, credited the team's effort and work to the SSR being tweeted about. This finding suggests that only a little more than half of teams' SSR tweets are in reference to their own SSR work. The rest of their SSR tweeting efforts are either just talking about social responsibility without actually doing SSR work (27.54%), tweets about another entity's work in the community (18.07%), or retweeted SSR (0.34%).

The *how* element of SSR tweeting is represented by RQ3, which looked specifically at the content composition of the tweet itself including images, links, both, or just text alone. Of the four mutually exclusive categories, image tweeting, at 53.70%, was the most common form of SSR messaging via Twitter. Image tweets that included a clickable link made up an additional 35.46%. Text-only tweets and text with a link made up only 6.20% and 4.65% of the SSR tweets respectively. This suggests that although sports teams tweet SSR relatively little (3.94% of all

tweets) the large majority of those tweets include an image (89.16%), which has been known to provide social media posts with much more attention-attracting power (Buyer, 2014; Walter & Gioglio, 2014).

As mentioned, likes and retweets are indicators of attention and engagement (Corliss, 2012). The fact that image and image/link tweets received more likes and shares than tweets with no image supported the idea that these were engaged with more often. Image SSR tweets received the most retweets while text-only tweets were retweeted second most. What text-only tweets lacked in visual attention-drawing ability they apparently made up for with salience; the most typical text-only SSR tweets were tributes to individuals or were concerned with disaster relief. Although each was relatively rarely tweeted, they tended to gain many retweets because people identified with or otherwise supported the cause.

Similar reasoning was seen behind the results of likes in correlation with tweet body. Image tweets gathered the most likes (mean 233.53), followed by text tweets (217.33), and then tweets with an image and link (162.16). Link tweets were way behind, averaging only 67.7 likes. As for gaining retweets and likes, it would have been interesting to see the most salient, intrinsically attention-drawing content—tributes and disaster relief—more frequently tweeted in the fashion of most visually attractive tweets using images. Research suggests that follower engagement with such retweets would have significantly increased (Buyer, 2014; Walter & Gioglio, 2014; Corliss, 2012).

Additional SSR tweet methods concerning attention were seen by whether the team mentioned a famous athlete or celebrity in their SSR tweets, in hopes of granting the tweet more attention, and whether people in photos were tagged, providing an additional interactive element to SSR tweets. Less than half of SSR tweets mention a celebrity (41%), and only 15% used

photo tagging. If the team is to inform their body of followers with the most breadth possible, it would be best for the organization to exhaust all resources. Since most tweets included a photo and many of those contained images of people, tagging them may have improved the reach of the tweet and more widely announced the SSR work. Similarly, tagging involving such people with either the "@ tag" or a photo tag (if they appear in the image) would have increased credibility and perhaps true engagement as mentioned by Brubaker and Wilson (2015).

Sheth and Babiak's (2010) claim that winning teams communicate less SSR than losing teams was only marginally supported in this study. As depicted in Table 10, of the whole sample, losing teams did tweet more SSR than winning teams, but the difference was slim at 4.26% to 3.56%. The notion was that winning teams' reputation would not need the bolstering that SSR typically provides organizations because fans and other stakeholders would already be pleased with the team for winning and the effects caused by a good on-field record.

The idea was left unsupported for teams of the larger market, but for those of the smaller market, team performance more positively addressed Sheth and Babiak's (2010) assertion. Of the smaller-market teams (NHL and MLS), winning teams more significantly tweeted less SSR than losing teams at 1.84% to 5.21%. Perhaps within the smaller market where teams have less history among fans and followers to influence their perception of the team, winning teams and losing teams follow the more elementary ideas of winning to improve reputation *or* positively affecting the community to do the same. Figure 18 showed the most SSR-tweeting teams compared to the least SSR-tweeting teams within the smaller market divided into losing- and winning-team groups.

The results of the two-way ANOVA provided a statistical indication that losing sports teams tweeted more SSR when they were from the smaller markets than losing teams from the

larger markets did, while winning teams in smaller markets posted fewer SSR messages than the

winners from larger markets. This would mean that teams of NHL and MLS who have done well

during the course of their season such as the Chicago Blackhawks and Portland Timbers feel less

compelled to tweet about SSR than NFL, MLB, or NBA winners like the New England Patriots,

Kansas City Royals, and Golden States Warriors. On the other hand, NHL and MLS losers like

the Edmonton Oiler and Philadelphia Union focus efforts more robustly on SSR communication

than NFL, MLB, and NBA losers such as the Tennessee Titans, Atlanta Braves, and Philadelphia

76ers. This finding partially supports Sheth and Babiak's (2010) claim that winning teams

communicate less SSR than losing teams. Specific to this study, it is found that this concept is

true when larger and smaller markets are compared. McGowan and Mahon (2010) hypothesized

that larger-market sports teams would communicate more SSR than teams from the smaller

market but that assertion, too, is only partially supported here.

McGowan and Mahon's (2010) research suggests higher-earning teams communicate

more SSR than lower earning teams. For the purposes of this study, earnings were defined by

two criteria: revenue and value. Testing the hypothesis that higher revenue earners and higher-

valued teams would tweet more SSR, data concerning the criteria were found in sports team

valuations at Forbes.com (Forbes, 2015). A one-way ANOVA provided evidence that in fact

higher revenue earning teams do tweet more SSR than medium and lower revenue earners as the

high earners tweeted at an average of 49.18 while medium and low earners tweeted at 16.72 and

21.83, respectively. In addition, the hypothesis that higher valued teams would tweet more SSR

was also supported as an independent sample t-test indicated that higher valued teams averaged

40.07 tweets while lower valued teams average only 20.42.

The New England Patriots brought in the most revenue and tweeted SSR above the

average of the sample. The Colorado Rapids earned the least revenue and tweeted SSR above the average as well. Although SSR tweet ratios were quite scattered compared to revenue rankings, there seems to be a slight dip in SSR tweeting in the center of the graph. This perhaps plays into what McGowan and Mahon (2010) hypothesized, that winning teams invest more in SSR. On the other end of the revenue rankings, Sheth and Babiak's (2010) point might be represented, that losing teams would bolster their reputation by means of SSR communication. In the center of the graph, mid-level revenue earning teams perhaps either do not have the money or do not feel especially compelled to invest in SSR as a reputation management strategy.

The findings suggest that sports team strategists should focus more on communicating SSR often so as to better engage with fans, followers, and stakeholders. If the team is conscious and active in community outreach but does not responsibly publicize such information, they are limiting the strategic benefits of their SSR efforts. If done appropriately, sports teams can spread the word about their dedication to SSR via social media without seeming self-serving to audiences. While there is a fine line between altruistic and selfish CSR, truly invested organizations can communicate it openly and still reap the rewards of being a good community member, in fact they must communicate CSR in order to enjoy its benefits.

The tests showed that fans engage with SSR type tweets even when they do not involve the team actually doing SSR. In fact, fans seem to appreciate SSR tweets that are even explicitly carried out by individuals or entities other than the sports team itself. It seems that so long as teams indicate their support for community outreach and service, fans attribute positive characteristics and values to the team. Although there is a line not to be crossed, and sincerity is important, this finding gives social media managers in the sports industry and beyond something to work with. If the organization is unable to perform CSR during certain periods, content

analysis indicates that expressing appreciation for others' good deeds reflects well on the organization talking about it. By strategically messaging about CSR, in principle or practice, organizations can improve their relationships with their publics.

In order to maximize audience engagement with these messages, the study shows that CSR communications are most highly appreciated when they follow certain patterns. First of all, any CSR campaign or message is better for the organization and the community when it is closely related to the organization's message, lies within the the organization's area of expertise, and is communicated broadly and carefully. If sports teams and other organizations are able to tie CSR communications to the organization's purpose and practice, they will be better engaged with and more advantageous to the organization and to the community it serves. In other words, when organizations are planning CSR campaigns, they should be related to their work; and additionally, when social media personnel are sharing others' CSR, it too will be better engaged with if it is easily related to the organization's mission and expertise. Statistical tests also indicated that the manner in which CSR is tweeted about is an important contributor to the tweet's success. When CSR tweets include images and make mention of things that are timely and most important to the public being addressed, engagement in the form of likes and retweets rises. While CSR communicators should keep these things in mind when posting about CSR or SSR, the most important thing is that businesses and sports teams simply show their interest in social responsibility by communicating it broadly and frequently via social media in order to engage the audiences that might not learn of the organization's CSR via traditional communications.

Conclusion

From the community little league level to the world-renown professional level, sports

have been received with mixed feelings for the good or harm they can do. While some negative

aspects to sports deter parents from allowing their children to participate in organized

competitive sports, many individuals prefer to not support professional sports for social

responsibility reasons. While it is true that sports done wrong can negatively affect the

community that watches or participates, it has been argued that from sports' position, especially

those which attract attention around the globe, they can achieve more social good than many

other industries are capable of (Smith & Westerbeek, 2007).

It has been learned in this study that although professional sports teams may be actively

conducting SSR, many times they fail to communicate it in the way that the most interested

parties would receive and engage with the information. Banks (2016) asserts that Millennials

have the most vested interest in seeing organizations act responsibly. This group is known for

social media usage as a primary form of information learning and sharing. Even if sports teams

do well to announce SSR via traditional newsletters or press releases, there is a good chance that

important stakeholders will still not be made aware of such SSR efforts.

SSR, although capable of sincere altruism, is most commonly used as a reputation and

relationship management strategy. In cases where time and resources are spent on SSR by the

sports organization but which are not made known to stakeholders such as community members,

fans, and others who might monitor the organization's social footprint, it becomes clear that

sports teams must share their social responsibility in strategic ways including the well-informed

use of social media.

This study has aimed to learn how well sports organizations are doing at communicating

SSR via Twitter. Results have shown that on average, sports teams in the US are only focusing

3.94% of their tweets on the SSR function. As a whole it can be said that the sports industry

shares very little about social responsibility with stakeholder social media followers. Fortunately, of the SSR that teams do share via Twitter, most of it is done in a format that would attract the attention of followers as they scroll through their Twitter feeds; 89% of SSR tweets included an image and most of the remaining 11% used other interactive elements such as photo tags and clickable links. In terms of popular SSR types, the category of SSR most tweeted about was team-endorsed charity and community service, while sustainability was much less popular on Twitter. Additionally, only a little more than half of sports team SSR tweets were about teams' actual SSR work as many other messages posted were plain talk with no action or mere mentions of other organizations' and individuals' SSR work.

Although, it was learned that team value and revenue earnings did affect SSR tweeting as higher valued and higher revenue earning teams tweeted more SSR, there seemed to be an additional trend that the biggest and smallest teams tweeted more SSR while mid-level teams tweeted less. The most significant finding in this study, however, was that smaller-market losing teams tweet more SSR than larger-market losing teams and that smaller-market winning teams tweet less SSR than larger-market winning teams. This finding partially supports the claims and hypotheses of previous research on SSR communications (Sheth & Babiak, 2010; McGowan & Mahon, 2010). McGowan and Mahon (2010) assumed more straightforwardly that teams with more money (i.e., larger-market teams) would invest more in SSR and its communication while Sheth and Babiak (2010) claimed that losing teams would share more information about SSR. While these hypotheses are somewhat conflicting, as higher-earning teams are generally not losing teams, it was expected in this study that there would be a group of higher-earning but losing teams, perhaps with legacy propelling their popularity and earnings, that would be tweeting the most SSR or that one hypothesis would prevail over the other. Instead, findings

showed each hypothesis to be partially true when looked at together as smaller-market winning teams tweeted less SSR than larger-market winning teams and smaller-market losing teams tweeted more SSR than larger-market losing teams. It appears that both the in-season standings and market sizes affect the amount of SSR tweeting by professional sports teams. The finding suggests that teams from the most popular leagues tweet more SSR as a celebration or expression of gratitude after a successful season whereas teams from the less popular leagues probably tweet SSR for reputation management purposes after an unsuccessful season.

Limitations and Future Research

This study, although quite telling as for results of the 2014/2015 seasons in professional sports in the United States, is only a relatively small snapshot of sports over longer time periods. Feasibilities constrained team and units of analysis to relatively few, especially as only 3.94% of the initial units of analysis (14,760) were SSR tweets usable for the SSR tweet–specific analysis. The sample of 581 SSR tweets is relatively small, and more insight could have been drawn from having more SSR tweets to work with. In this sense, analyzing tweets from more than the forty teams used in this study or during a longer period of time would have provided more units to analyze. Future studies with a similar purpose should consider studying more or all teams from these leagues during the three-month off-season or the same teams during an entire calendar year since the concentration of SSR tweets is so low.

Related studies could address fewer sports leagues or even just one, draw a direct comparison between fewer teams of differing market sizes, or be more specific to winning and losing teams. Other studies could use the methods applied here on different popular social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat. In addition, as this study is limited to North American sports leagues and teams, it could be modified to learn how sports teams from

other countries are doing in communicating SSR via new mass media popular to those regions.

Lastly, as this study is based on announcing more SSR to incur higher strategic benefits in terms of reputation and relationship management, the law of diminishing returns should be addressed. There is a body of literature specific to how much CSR communication is too much. Researchers suggest that there is a threshold, a sweet spot, to communicating CSR that is most strategic while passing that threshold negatively affects the strategic benefits of CSR messaging. Such literature, although not addressed here because the SSR communication via Twitter in this study is no doubt lower than any CSR communication maximum at only 3.94%, would more fully inform future research about quantified CSR or SSR messaging.

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