Meeting the Informational Needs of the Fantasy Sport User

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Fantasy sport is an online sport activity utilizing sport communication outlets in multiple ways. With nearly 35 million fantasy sport participants, many sport media companies such as ESPN, CBS Sports, and Yahoo! Sports have strengthened their online presence by creating and hosting fantasy sport Web sites. Fantasy sport is developed, controlled, and consumed primarily online and uses Web-based programs created by companies to host game and league-style competition. Fantasy sport utilizes player information and statistics from actual competition. Since the concept of fantasy sport is based around this type information, it utilizes several communication outlets to assist in the overall experience. Any person involved in fantasy sport can seek out information from a newspaper, magazine, radio, television, or the Web. The purpose of this study is to identify in what ways fantasy sport host sites and traditional communication outlets are meeting the informational needs of the fantasy sport user. Data were collected through the use of an open-ended questionnaire completed by fantasy sport users. The results of this study indicate a majority veering away from their fantasy sport host site and using the Web as a means to gather news, player information, statistics, and expert advice. They also use television as a way to watch, listen, or seek information from game broadcasts. Reasons for not using a particular communication outlet range from issues of access, desire to use, cost, and choice of another outlet.

Meeting the Informational Needs of the Fantasy Sport User

Newspaper, magazine, radio, television, and the Web are all communication outlets in which sport has been and currently is consumed. With constant expansion, growth, and use of the Internet, sport has taken advantage of the space available on the World Wide Web. Online audio, visual broadcasting, live scoring, message boards, team Web pages, fantasy sport, and sport media Web sites (e.g., ESPN. com and FoxSports.com) have assisted in sports' penetration into cyberspace. The Pew Internet and the American Life Project (PEW; Pew Internet and the American Life Project, 2013) report that as of May 2013, 85% of

US adults are online and surfing the Web. With this percentage of people utilizing the Web, developing and maintaining a strong online presence is important to the sport industry to attract consumers and to keep up-to-date with the latest news, scores, and highlights available.

Fantasy sport is one way an organization can broaden its Web presence. With nearly 35 million fantasy sport users (FSUs; Fantasy Sport Trade Association, 2012), it is important that sport media companies such as ESPN, CBS Sports, and Yahoo! Sports strengthen their online presence by creating and hosting fantasy sport Web sites. Fantasy sport is developed, controlled, and consumed primarily online and uses Web-based programs created by companies to host game and league-style competition. Fantasy sport uses statistics from actual competition in events from Major League Baseball (MLB), National Football League (NFL), NASCAR, National Basketball Association (NBA), and many other sport organizations. Since the concept of fantasy sport is based around statistical information, it utilizes several communication outlets to assist in the overall experience. The FSU can seek out statistical information from a newspaper, magazine, radio, television, or host Web site, but are these outlets satisfying the information-seeking FSU?

The purpose of this research is to determine if fantasy sport host sites are meeting the informational needs of the FSU and how traditional communication outlets assist with the fantasy sport experience (FSE). The scholarly implications of this study provide researchers with a base for studying areas of fantasy sport and communication. These results indicate which traditional media outlets are used most to assist in the experience of fantasy sport and if the fantasy sport host Web site is meeting the needs of the FSU. Practically, the findings of this study provide practitioners with information on consumer usage of communication outlets to assist in their FSE and in what ways these outlets are providing information to the FSU. These results can affect the programming of certain sporting events to include fantasy sport information as well as influence advertising, marketing, and promotion of fantasy sport and fantasy sport Web sites.

Conceptual Background

Uses and Gratifications

Uses and gratifications (U&G) is a media consumption theory proposing users select outlets based on satisfying a need (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1973). Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1973) state that the U&G approach "represents an attempt to explain something of the way in which

individuals use communications, among other resources in their environment, to satisfy their needs and to achieve their goals" (p. 510). Katz et al. (1973) identify five basic elements explaining U&G. The first element is the idea that the audience actively consumes and that this consumption is goal directed (McQuail, Blumler, & Brown, 1972). The second element proposes that the audience members take initiative in "linking need gratification and media choice" (Katz et al., 1973, p. 511). This element places the control on the audience member and not the outlet. The third element suggests that communication outlets compete with other sources in fulfilling needs. Options are abundant for audience members, and there are choices in determining how to fulfill a gratification need. The fourth element is the idea that the individual audience member is aware of their usage choices. Katz et al. (1973) believe that "people are sufficiently self-aware to be able to report their interests and motives in particular cases, or at least to recognize them when confronted with them in an intelligible and familiar verbal formulation" (p. 511). This assumption discards any idea, based on U&G that consumers unknowingly select to fulfill a need. The fifth and final element is that value judgments and cultural significance opinions should be withheld while "audience orientations are explored on their own terms" (p. 511). Allowing an audience to be open and to reveal reasons for their use can assist in learning from diverse backgrounds that differ from personal or cultural norms.

U&G research evolves in a similar way to cultural and technological progress. Early technology research utilizing this framework examined radio music (Suchman, 1942; Towers, 1987), daytime radio serials (Herzog, 1944), children's interest in comic books (Wolfe & Fiske, 1949), and functions of newspaper readings (Berelson, 1949). As technology and culture progressed, this theoretical framework continued to guide research focusing on television (Palmgreen & Rayburn, 1979; Schmitt, Woolf, & Anderson, 2003) and Internet use (Ebersole, 2000; Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000). An advancement resulting in increased capabilities provided by the Internet and Web programs brings sport, technology, and information to the forefront with one interactive activity. Fantasy sport is another technological advancement that has been viewed through the U&G lens. Farquhar and Meeds (2007) utilized this framework to examine types of FSUs and their motivations. Citing Ruggiero (2000) and Rogers (1986), Farquhar and Meeds justify U&G for their research based on the Internet's interactivity, demassification (individualistic nature of fantasy sport participation), and asynchroneity (ability to participate on one's own time). In further exami-

nations of the motives of FSUs, Spinda and Haridakis (2008) and Ruihley and Hardin (2011a) utilized this framework to examine participation in the activity. In addition, Ruihley and Hardin (2011b) utilized this conceptual framework to understand more about message-board use in the fantasy sport experience. Drawing from prior U&G research, the authors were able to gather and test motives to examine FSUs' participation.

Use of Traditional Communication Outlets

The immense use of communication outlets in American society is illustrated in a study conducted by PEW. In an examination of Internet use, PEW (2013) revealed that 85% of American adults are online and for a variety of reasons. Some of the reasons consisted of sending or receiving e-mail, searching out specific information, seeking out driving directions or maps, and looking up information on a hobby or interest. In an article focusing on Nielsen television ratings, *The New York Times* (Stelter, 2012) reported that viewers watched an average of 153 hours and 19 minutes of television in each of the last three months of 2012—a decrease of 46 minutes from the same three months in 2010. While this average is a decrease from the prior year, it should be noted that it is an increase over three years prior (Nielsen, 2008), where Americans averaged 142 hours of television per month.

One indicator of magazine use is circulation size. In an examination of verified and paid subscription circulation as of December of 2012, the Alliance for Audited Media (2012) reports 81 magazine titles as having more than one million subscribers. Some of the most popular magazines are listed as follows: *Game Informer Insider* (7,864,326 subscribers), *Better Homes and Gardens* (7,621,456 subscribers), *Reader's Digest* (5,527,183 subscribers), and *National Geographic* (4,125,152 subscribers). The top sport magazines are *Sports Illustrated* (ranked number 14 with 3,174,888 subscribers) and *ESPN The Magazine* (ranked number 25 with 2,142,937 subscribers). In the same Alliance for Audited Media (2012) report, figures were given examining the trend in digital readership. The report states that in the second half of 2012, "289 magazines reported more than 7.9 million digital replica editions (paid, verified and analyzed nonpaid) or 2.4% of the total industry average circulation" (para. 2). This number doubled from estimates in the prior year.

In two of the most traditional communication outlets—radio and newspaper—consumption is not as bad as many believe. PEW (Santhanam, Mitchell, & Rosenstiel, 2012) reports that local AM/FM radio was used by

93% of Americans in 2011, an increase of 1% from 2009 and 2010. In addition, online radio has jumped tremendously from 2001 (28% use) to 2011 (56% use). Whereas newspaper circulation has remained relatively consistent over the past three decades, advertising revenue has not. This is where newspapers are hurting. PEW (Edmonds, Guskin, & Mitchell, 2012) reports print advertising revenue has been cut in half from the years 2003 to 2011 (with online advertising revenue doubling in that same time period).

One way that communication outlets are utilized is through the coverage and participation of sport and sport-related activities. In a study focusing on sport, media, and culture, Bernstein and Blain (2002) explain how sport publications have become so entrenched in media culture that it is "often difficult to discuss sport in modern society without acknowledging its relationship with the media" (p. 3). Pederson, Miloch, and Laucella (2007) identify sport media as including three major segments. The first segment is the sport publishing and print communication. This segment includes magazines, books, and newspaper coverage of sport. The second segment includes radio and television sport broadcasting, sport film (movies), and photography. This segment is associated with electronic and visual sport communication. The final segment, new sport media, includes "the most cutting-edge components and activities" (p. 89). This segment includes mainly aspects related to the Internet and the Web. Assisting in the creation of this segment is the accessibility, speed, and the capabilities available online. Message boards, blogs, consumer-generated and user-generated media, and many other online sport activities make up this new sport media.

Fantasy Sport

Fantasy sport is an activity falling into the realm of new sport media. With its dependence on technology, the growth of fantasy sport can be directly linked to the accessibility of information through the Web. Vichot (2009) claims that "the Internet boom of the late 90s . . . provided a new model for fantasy sports, since the barrier to entry was much lower" (p. 16). The Web provided the needed platform for fantasy sport, and many organizations took advantage and quickly began creating or purchasing Web sites hosting fantasy sport. In the 1990s, fantasy baseball assisted in fantasy sport growth because of "baseball's fascination with statistics" and also because many statistics experts came to the forefront of the sport world in this time frame (Vichot, 2009, p. 11). In 2003 the Fantasy Sport Trade Association (FSTA) estimated participation at nearly 15 million FSUS ("Fantasy

Sport Industry Grows," 2008; Farquhar & Meeds, 2007; Hu, 2003). The fantasy sport industry then saw rapid growth among American and Canadian participants, and in 2008 it was estimated to have 27.1 million American and 2.8 million Canadian participants ("Fantasy Sport Industry Grows," 2008). In 2013 the estimate is still on the rise at 35 million North American FSUS (Fantasy Sport Trade Association, 2012).

Research of fantasy sport is expanding, but currently the focus is on the participants and their motivation. The following four studies really advance fantasy sport research to the current level. The first study comes from Davis and Duncan (2006) where they critically identified a typical FSU as a young, white, well-educated male with substantial time for leisure activities, proficient computer skills, and access to the Internet. They determined that participants emphasized the importance of having sport knowledge. The second study, from Farquhar and Meeds (2007), examined motivations of FSUS and were able to identify and label five types of users: casual players, skilled players, isolationist thrill seeker, trash-talkers, and formatives. They determined arousal and surveillance as two dominant motivations among FSUS. Players motivated by arousal sought the "thrill of victory" (p. 1212) and believed the next victory was "just around the corner" (p. 1212). Players motivated by surveillance were interested in "information gathering, working with statistics, and staying in touch with real-world sports" (p. 1212). The Internet provides this access to statistics and player information, which allows for the blending of a real and virtual experience.

The third and fourth early fantasy sport studies examined virtual action, player control, and the rhetoric surrounding fantasy sport. Shipman (2001) concluded that positive, real-world consequences are the reason for the exponential growth in fantasy sport. By looking at fantasy sport advertisements, Shipman found an emphasis on empowerment and role-playing. Randle and Nyland (2008) also used role-play theory to develop a theoretical framework for exploring fantasy sport participation. They examined the cause-and-effect relationship between fantasy sport and non-Internet sport mediums. The researchers concluded that high levels of involvement in fantasy sport leagues resulted in increased sport media use. They found that high-level users had low levels of actual sport participation, and possibly used fantasy sport to achieve vicarious experiences. Finally, Randle and Nyland (2008) explored the relationship between fantasy sport participation and sport media use, but they did not determine which outlets participants preferred to use to aid in their FSE.

More current examinations of the topic focus in on motivations and consumption in participation. Ruihley and Hardin (2011a) examined FSU motivations, from a mixed-methods approach, and found fanship, competition, socialization about sport, and surveillance to be major reasons for participation. In addition, motivation relationships were examined for overall satisfaction and intent to return to the activity. Ruihley and Hardin (2011b) examined message-board use in the FSE and found that 62% of their sample used message boards for logistical conversation, socializing, surveillance, and a platform to seek out advice or opinion. Other recent fantasy sport work has examined fantasy football participation and NFL consumption (Drayer, Shapiro, Dwyer, Morse, & White, 2010), fantasy sport consumer segmentation (Dwyer & Drayer, 2010), and comparison between traditional fans and FSUs (Billings & Ruihley, 2013). While several studies have examined hours of fantasy and general media consumption (Billings & Ruihley, 2013; Ruihley & Hardin, 2011b), there still is a need for an in-depth examination of the FSE and media consumption. With that, the purpose of this research is to determine if fantasy sport host sites are meeting the informational needs of the FSU and how traditional communication outlets assist with the fantasy sport experience.

Research Questions

Two research questions guided this study, based on the aforementioned gaps in the literature.

Research Question 1: Are fantasy sport Web sites meeting the informational needs of the fantasy sport user?

Research Question 2: How are traditional media outlets being used in the fantasy sport experience?

Fantasy sport is becoming more prevalent and consumers need and desire information that will assist in this experience. It is important to investigate if the fantasy sport host site is meeting the informational needs of the consumer. The plethora of fantasy sport host sites available provides many choices for the FSU, so it is important to meet the needs of consumers to maintain and attract them. This research examines if those host sites are meeting the needs of the consumers. In addition, this research asks how traditional media outlets are also being used to meet those needs. This may assist fantasy sport host sites and traditional media outlets in determining what information FSUs want.

Method

Sample

The sample for this study consists of adults who have participated in fantasy sport leagues. The sample was created using a snowball sample. An initial set of FSUS ($n = 40$) were identified through a convenience sampling, and a final sample ($n = 158$) was developed after a snowballing occurred as a result of initial participants forwarding the invitation e-mail to other people they knew who had participated in fantasy sport. In response to the questions posed, this sample produced 790 total qualitative responses.

Instrument

The instrument used in this research consisted of descriptive inquiry as well as open-ended questions. The instrument, an online questionnaire, consisted of questions focusing on demographic information, fantasy use, and communication outlet use in the participant's FSE. The demographic information consisted of participant's age, gender, marital status, highest completed level of education, and ethnicity. Descriptive information on fantasy use involved asking the participant's favorite fantasy sport, number of fantasy sport leagues participated in during one calendar year, and number of fantasy sports participated in during one calendar year.

To address the first research question, participants were asked: Do you use the Web, aside from your fantasy sport host site, to assist in your fantasy sport experience? If they responded yes to this question, the participant was directed to a follow-up question asking how they use the Web, aside from their fantasy sport host site, to assist. If the participant responded no to the initial question, they were asked to describe why they did not use the Web, aside from their fantasy sport host site, to assist. Questioning this way allowed for the participant to describe their Web use without the feeling that the question was strictly about their fantasy sport site. Many may be loyal and not want to disparage their host site.

To determine traditional outlet use in the participant's FSE, an initial question simply asked: Do you use [x communication outlet] to assist in your fantasy sport experience? Again, the participant had the option of answering yes or no. If the participant answered yes, they were directed to an open-ended question: How do you use [x communication outlet] to assist in your fantasy sport experience? If the participant answered no to using [x media], they were directed to an open-ended question: Why don't you use [x communication outlet] to assist in your fantasy sport experi-

ence? These questions were developed to inquire specifically about the communication outlets of television, radio, magazines, and newspapers.

Data Collection

Data were collected using an online questionnaire. A hyperlink, directing the participant to the online questionnaire, was included in an invitation e-mail requesting participation from FSUs. The questionnaire was sent to a small group of FSUs to start, and those participants were asked to complete the questionnaire and then forward the link along to other FSUs, in essence, creating a snowball effect. To increase response, reminder e-mails were sent out two weeks after the initial invitation e-mail. Also, requests were made to the original convenience group to send reminder e-mails to their snowballed portion.

Data Analysis

To analyze demographic information, fantasy sport use, and percentages of use of the communication outlets, descriptive statistics were compiled and reported using SPSS 16.0. Thematic analysis was used for the open-ended questions to precisely examine the words and sentences used by the participants in describing their reasons for choosing or not choosing to use a particular communication outlet to assist in their FSE. Thematic analysis centers on "identifying, analyzing and reporting patters (themes) within data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.79). Thematic analysis "minimally organizes and describes your data set in (rich) detail" (p. 79) and can assist in the interpretation of the research topic. The open-ended questions were coded line-by-line for common themes to the individual questions. The common themes were then placed into categories based on similarity.

Thematic analysis has been used in many studies regarding sport and athletics. In research examining self-presentation strategies on a specific blog, Sanderson (2008) used thematic analysis to analyze written statements from the blog of Boston Red Sox pitcher Curt Schilling. The author described this method as a grounded-theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) with "each blog entry serving as the unit of analysis" and analyzing the data line by line to generate categories of responses (Sanderson, 2008, p. 920). In another study employing thematic analysis, Holt (2003) analyzes "coping responses employed by an athlete to manage the daily hassles he experienced in professional sport" (p. 1). The author describes this

approach as developing a series of "pertinent themes that [represent] the participant's lived experience" (p. 4). The author also mentions conducting a line-by-line analysis in identifying and coding the units of meaning. These units were then organized as central themes to the participant's experience (Holt, 2003). In a final example of thematic analysis use in sport-centered research, Page, O'Connor, and Peterson (2001) examine achievement motivation among athletes with disabilities. In their research,

> Transcriptions were reduced and clustered into verbatim data. The data were then organized into larger core meanings (i.e. themes), each representing a specific aspect of the described experience, and a general description of each theme with participants' quotes supporting the theme was prepared. (Page, O'Connor, & Peterson, *2001*, p. *45*)

Results

Demographics

Demographic information revealed that 83.50% of the participants were male. The average age of the participants was 26.20 years (SD = 7.91); 69% identified as being single; and 45.60% had earned a college degree. Demographic information indicated 89.20% of the participants self-identified as being Caucasian/white and 5.10%, as African American/black. Other results showed the participants in this study participating in 1.94 fantasy sports (SD = 1.35) and being in 3.10 fantasy sport leagues per calendar year (SD = 3.11). The participants overwhelmingly identified football as their favorite fantasy sport (72.20%), followed by baseball (17.70%; see Table 1).

Fantasy Sport Communication Outlet Usage

When asked if they use a particular communication outlet to assist in their FSE, 66.50% of the participants identified, aside from their hosting fantasy sport Web site, the use of the Web, while 79.70% use the television, 20.30% use radio, 41.80% use magazines, and 24.70% use newspapers (see Table 2).

Responses to the open-ended questions inquired how the participants used (if the participant identified a use of the outlet) or why they did not use a particular outlet. The responses were thematized and placed into specific categories. Many of the categories could be combined and were similar; therefore, the categories were broken down to finite groups based on the actual words used by the participants. For example, *statistical information* and *player information* could be the same category because a player's

TABLE 1. **Demographic Information for Participants**

Variable Participant Information	(*n* = 158)
GENDER	
Male	83.50% (*n* = 132)
Female	16.50% (*n* = 26)
ETHNICITY	
Caucasian/white	89.20% (*n* = 141)
African American	5.10% (*n* = 8)
Asian	3.20% (*n* = 5)
Hispanic	1.90% (*n* = 3)
MARITAL/HOUSEHOLD STATUS	
Single	69.00% (*n* = 109)
Married/partner	27.20% (*n* = 43)
Engaged	3.20% (*n* = 5)
Divorced	0.60% (*n* = 1)
HIGHEST COMPLETED EDUCATION	
College degree	45.60% (*n* = 72)
Some college	27.80% (*n* = 44)
Graduate degree	24.10% (*n* = 38)
High/middle/elem School	2.50% (*n* = 4)
VARIABLE	
Age	26.20 (SD = 7.91)
Number of fantasy sports	1.94 (SD = 1.35)
Number of fantasy sport leagues	3.10 (SD = 3.11)

TABLE 2. **Communication Outlet Usage Percentages**

OUTLET	USAGE OF OUTLET	NONUSAGE OF OUTLET
Internet	66.50% (*n* = 105)	33.50% (*n* = 53)
Television	79.70% (*n* = 126)	20.30% (*n* = 32)
Radio	20.30% (*n* = 32)	79.70% (*n* = 126)
Magazines	41.80% (*n* = 66)	58.20% (*n* = 92)
Newspapers	24.70% (*n* = 39)	75.30% (*n* = 119)

Note. The Internet outlet category above denotes websites beyond the fantasy sport host site.

statistics are both statistical and player information. In further clarification of the aforementioned example, if a response used language utilizing forms of the word, "statistics," it would go into the *statistical information* category and not a category for player information.

Research Question 1

Addressing Research Question 1, results indicate the fantasy sport host site is not meeting the informational needs of the FSU. Nearly two thirds of the respondents chose to seek out information on a Web site other than the host site of the fantasy sport league.

The most prevalent reason or theme as to why participants left their host site was to gather news (67 of 105 responses, 63.81%) on a player, team, injury status, or for draft preparation. The next theme was created for responses regarding the gathering of statistical information (43 of 105 responses, 40.95%) on players or scores of games. Other results identified the Web as a resource to assist in conducting general research (17 of 105 responses, 16.19%) and seek out expert advice (13 of 105 responses, 12.38%). Some of the responses addressing their Web use are as follows:

> To look at past stats of players against specific teams. In doing this you can look for trends and past success and hopefully find players that can give you the most points every week. Also . . . to look at fantasy football Web sites that provide tips or extra info in order to have the best fantasy team.

> Doing research, reading blogs, going to Fantasy Sport Web sites. Ratings . . . who to start . . . research about players . . . off field issues . . . trends in performance.

> I search other fantasy sports sites that offer waiver wire advice and input on who to start.

> To stay up to date on injuries, stats, and other useful information.

In response to why the participants do stay on their host Web site to assist in their FSE, three major themes emerged from the participants. The first major theme states that the fantasy sport host site is sufficient (28 of 53 responses, 52.83%) and that there is not a need to search elsewhere for information. Some sample responses in the sufficient category follow:

I'm only participating in two leagues and last season three leagues and those sites did a great job of encompassing all I wanted to know with links or data on the site itself. So, I didn't see the need to search blogs or other sources online to confirm my picks, point spreads, or thoughts.

Because it's all provided on the fantasy sports site

It's not that important to me to go to additional sources, especially when ESPN has all the stats and info I need right there for the extent to which I participate in fantasy sports.

The two other themes of the participants that stayed on their host site either identified an abbreviated involvement level, such as being not that involved or participating in fantasy sport for fun (12 of 53 responses, 22.64%), or indicated another non-Web outlet to gather fantasy sport information (7 of 53 responses, 13.21%).

Research Question 2

The participants were asked to respond to the question regarding their involvement with traditional communication outlets of television, radio, magazine, and newspaper in relation to their FSE. The participants who indicated using television to assist in their FSE brought forth five major themes from their responses. Watching specific shows, such as ESPN, ESPN SportsCenter, or Fox Sports, was a top theme (57 of 126 responses, 44.44%), while other responses identified themes of a desire to watch games (45 of 126 responses, 35.71%), gather news on players or teams (34 of 126 responses, 26.98%), and seek out expert advice (27 of 126 responses, 21.43%) and statistical information (21 of 126 responses, 16.67%). Some of the responses addressing television use are as follows:

Well there are numerous television shows that give details of all the games and they provide numerous stats that anyone can enjoy. These help you see which players are playing well and which ones are not. This helps in determining who to start and who [to] bench each week. ESPN also has their fantasy football experts that give their picks and sits for each week and that can also be used to help you have the best team.

I watch as many games as possible to understand each player's strengths and weaknesses.

Watching games, reading the stat ticker, watching fantasy updates on ESPN, watching SportsCenter.

I tend to watch the games that have players that are on my fantasy team, even if I do not follow the particular team that my fantasy player is on.

Few themes emerged from the small percentage of participants not using television to assist in their FSE. Choice of another outlet instead of television was a major theme (9 of 32 responses, 28.13%), while other themes indicated time and pace issues of information gathering (3 of 32 responses, 9.38%) and no ownership of a television or cable as other issues (3 of 32 responses, 9.38%). Some of the responses to the question, "Why don't you use television to assist in your fantasy sport experience?" are as follows:

Television does not provide the immediate response that I need and I don't have the time to wait for SportsCenter to get around to showing the highlights from the specific game I am interested in.

Prefer Internet. More resources and available all the time.

Don't watch TV much and I can get the same info online.

In the small group of participants who acknowledged a use of radio to assist in their FSE, a major theme contained responses of utilizing this outlet to listen to fantasy sport–specific shows (17 of 32 responses, 53.13%), while other themes indicated a use to gather news (7 of 32 responses, 21.88%) or expert advice (5 of 32 responses, 15.63%). A response as to how the participant uses radio to assist in the fantasy sport experience states that "I listen to fantasy talk shows and try to gain some information about things that I might not be aware of."

Of the participants not using the radio to assist in their FSE, many identified they do not use or have no desire to use the radio (49 of 126 responses, 38.89%). Other themes consisted of responses indicating the users listening, but to other programming (not to sport-related radio; 22 of 126 responses, 17.46%). Another major theme housed responses in regards to using another outlet to assist in their fantasy sport experience (21 of 126 responses, 16.67%). Examples of responses to the question, "Why don't you use radio to assist in your fantasy sport experience?" are as follows:

I don't listen to radio.

Who listens to radio?

Radio is almost completely irrelevant as a media to people my age, especially with regard to sports.

Radio doesn't really give you an extra boost to improve your fantasy football team in my opinion. I think because TV and the Internet are so visual and you can see all the stats, it really puts radio coverage in a huge hole and it is hard to remember what someone said. It is must easier when you can actually see the stats and predictions.

The results for magazine use were the closest in terms of the participants who chose to use and those who did not indicate a use of magazines to assist in their FSE. Of the participants who use magazines to assist, a major theme contained many responses stating a use of magazines as a way to prepare for a fantasy sport draft, prior to a season beginning (28 of 66 responses, 42.42%). Other themes identified a use of magazines to read about player news and information (22 of 66 responses, 33.33%), while other themes regard the use of magazines for general reading of fantasy sport (8 of 66 responses, 12.12%) and seeking out expert advice (7 of 66 responses, 10.61%). Example responses as to how the participants use magazines are as follows:

Pre-draft research and analysis of teams and team philosophy.

I bought *USA Today*'s fantasy magazine that they published that talked all about players, top picks, sleepers, steals, and who will do what.

I buy several magazines each year to prepare for the draft.

Check stats, read articles on up-and-coming players in order to draft onto my fantasy team.

For those participants who do not use magazines to assist in their FSE, many responses created a theme that identified money and the obligation to purchase magazines as a reason for not using this outlet (29 of 92 responses, 31.52%). Other themes contain responses indicating that participants do not use or have no desire to use magazines (22 of 92 responses, 23.91%), use other outlets (20 of 92 responses, 21.74%), and are concerned with the time and convenience of magazines (16 of 92 responses, 17.39%). Responses as to why the participants do not use magazines are as follows:

I find that I can get the same information by searching the Internet that I could attain through buying specialized magazines.

Magazines cost money.

They are always very inaccurate and not up to date information . . . most of them come out way too early and so much has changed by draft time.

Of the participants who indicated a use of newspapers to assist in their FSE, a theme containing several responses identified a use of newspapers to gather box scores and other statistical information (19 of 39 responses, 48.72%), while another major theme involved responses associated with player information (14 of 39 responses, 35.90%). Responses as to how the participants use newspapers are as follows:

When I do read the newspaper I will look up results and recent news.

The daily sports section helps me out sometimes when it tells me who is hurt and who is hot (really good) in football.

Look up box scores to see how players fared the night before.

For the participants who do not use newspapers in their FSE, a prevalent theme of this group identified responses of how the participants do not use or have no desire to use a newspaper (44 of 119 responses, 36.97%). Other key themes indicate responses in regards to a use of another outlet to seek out information (34 of 119 responses, 28.33%) and concerns of timeliness and convenience of newspapers (12 of 119 responses, 10.08%). Responses to the question, "Why don't you use newspapers to assist in your fantasy sport experience?" are as follows:

I find other media more useful for fantasy research.

I already have the Internet at my fingertips. Why wait for yesterday's news?

An outdated source of information (Internet offers same material instantly, for free).

Discussion

The results of this research show that fantasy sport host Web sites are not providing all of the information needed for fantasy sport participants, and the results also indicate value of traditional media outlets in the FSE. Uses and gratifications argue that users select media based on satisfying a need

(Katz et al., 1973). The questionnaire determined if they did or did not use a communication outlet, and the qualitative responses provided the researchers with an insider view as to how and why FSUs are utilizing certain outlets to enhance their FSE and meet their informational needs. Katz et al. (1973) contend that this approach "represents an attempt to explain something of the way in which individuals use communications" (p. 510) to satisfy their needs. This work provides insight into how FSUs are utilizing their fantasy sport host site, the Web, television, radio, magazines, and newspapers to meet distinct needs revolving around their fantasy sport participation. This research also discusses why FSUs do not use particular communication outlets in their FSE.

Understanding this usage is important. Technology is changing the way society consumes sport, and fantasy sport is one of those activities utilizing technology to expand and grow. Knowing what outlets FSUs frequent for informational and other needs provides marketing and advertising organizations a specific venue to reach this target market or other targeted populations residing in the fantasy sport market. The following sections will discuss each of the communication outlets specifically, highlighting some of the findings. Practical implications and suggestions will be given in effort to link this academic research to industry practice.

Fantasy Sport Host Site

Examining the usage of the fantasy sport host site proved that aside from this site, the Web is used quite often in the FSE. This use differed from other traditional outlets because most FSUs have to be online to participate in a fantasy sport league. As a result, when asked if they use the Web to assist in their FSE, participants were asked if their use was outside the boundaries of their hosting fantasy sport league site. To no surprise, a majority of the participants (66.50%) chose to leave their host site and seek out information elsewhere on the Web. Reasons given as to why they would veer from their host site were to gather news, research, and seek out expert advice and statistical information. This finding does not ultimately mean that the host site was insufficient in those areas. Possible explanations for surveying the fantasy sport landscape could be to confirm host site opinions, gather diverse viewpoints, seek out information from multiple outlets, or just satisfy the need to obtain as much information as possible. The host site could be perfectly stocked with information, news, and statistics; the FSU might desire more.

It was interesting, however, to see the number of responses of the par-

ticipants who did not venture past their fantasy sport host site in their FSE. Many of these responses (28 of 53 responses, 52.83%) labeled the hosting fantasy sport Web site as sufficient and stated that there was not a need to search elsewhere for information concerning their FSE. This finding illustrates recognition from FSUs that they do not have to search ubiquitously across the Web for information to assist in their experience. These participants have a one-stop shop for all their fantasy sport needs right within the friendly confines of their host Web site. Companies hosting fantasy sport Web sites should offer this type of convenience and market it. This not only is convenient for FSUs, but this type of information can also be presented to advertisers and sponsors of the fantasy Web sites. Advertisers and sponsors would be confident in people using only the hosting fantasy sport site, and this creates assurance of reaching a constant and consistent market.

Keeping consumers on the fantasy sport host site is important due to stickiness reasons. Stickiness is defined as the "repetitive visits to and use of a preferred Web site because of a deeply held commitment to reuse the Web site consistently in the future" (Li, Browne, & Wetherbe, 2006, p. 106). Meeting the informational needs of the FSU may provide more reason for a person to stick to a fantasy sport Web site. Not only does the stickiness of FSUs involve the action of returning to Web sites, but it can also involve the length in which they stick. Many FSUs will watch the scores accumulate throughout the competition, socialize, and seek out information during their visit to their host site. If their needs are met, users can stick for an extended period of time. This, in turn, creates the potential for more advertisement revenue with more page views and the potential for more clicks on advertisement messages.

Television

Many participants use television to assist in their FSE ($n = 126$, 79.70%). In their use, the participants identified watching specific shows or games and seeking statistical information and expert advice as reasons for viewing television to assist. A major finding came with participants watching specific shows to aid in their FSE. The participants mentioned that programs on ESPN, ESPN's SportsCenter, and Fox Sports assisted in locating information on their players or teams, seeking expert advice, or just viewing highlights of the day's action. Many sport-related programs are beginning to create more fantasy sport programming presenting information to consider when setting a fantasy lineup. According to our findings, FSUs are

watching and consuming. This consumption gives advertisers and sponsors another venue to sponsor a segment, advertise during the program, or be involved in other ways with the goal in mind to target a specific group of sport consumers.

Watching games is another reason FSUS use television in their FSE. This idea tends to be common as 45 of 126 responses (35.71%) indicated watching games as a reason for television use in the FSE. One respondent discussed a tendency to watch games of the players on their fantasy sport roster even if the player is not on a team normally followed. This is where television can really take advantage of the attention of the viewer. The NFL seems to understand this kind of following. In recent years, the NFL has created the NFL Redzone Channel and offered viewers the right to purchase television packages featuring access to every NFL game. Other networks provide football viewers with constant video highlights and game breaks to keep the out-of-market viewer informed on the action. Other considerations with FSUS watching games to enhance their FSE involve providing constant information, information on top performers, and fast updates. Similar to the aforementioned paragraph is the idea that FSUS want to be informed. During a game, a suggestion would be to show a wide variety of statistics frequently to satisfy the need of information gathering. This offering gives FSUS an opportunity to stay tuned-in to the current game instead of searching out information from other outlets.

Participants not using television to assist in their FSE identified convenience issues as an overarching factor. These participants used another outlet to assist, due to time and pace concerns on receiving information and the frequency in which information was given through a television broadcast. One example of this was a response stating, "Television does not provide the immediate response that I need and I don't have the time to wait for SportsCenter to get around to showing the highlights from the specific game I am interested in." Obviously, in this case, watching games provides immediate response to statistics and performance. However, in many cases, not all games are on television, and FSUS may utilize other outlets to get the desired statistics and information. The aforementioned comment refers to sport highlight shows and the time it takes to cover the day's action of sports. This finding illustrates a desire, from FSUS, for instant and/or consistent results. In-game features provide scrolling information bars or pop-up graphics focusing on fantasy performers throughout the games, but many of the participants in this study indicated impatience with this attempt to satisfy the fantasy user. A possible solution to this issue, in an attempt to retain viewers, is to have scheduled time that fantasy information will be highlighted. Similar to the Weather Channel's

"Local on the 8s" feature, many sport-related programs could institute a comparable element where FSUs know when the discussion will happen or when information will be presented about their fantasy sport personnel. Examples of this could be a scrolling bar presenting information only on fantasy statistics every 10 minutes, every three innings, or every quarter in a football or basketball game. The idea is to create a routine or a consistent and reliable information source for FSUs to utilize. With this information presented in a consistent and reliable fashion, FSUs may not seek out other sources to receive the information they desire.

Radio

A small amount of participants indicated a use of radio to assist in their FSE ($n = 32$, 20.30%) and identified listening to fantasy sport–specific shows and seeking expert advice and statistics as reasons for their use. Of those who do not use radio to assist ($n = 126$, 79.70%), many mentioned not having a desire to use radio. In some of the responses, it appeared as though the participants were asked to interpret smoke signals or Morse code to seek out fantasy sport information. In their explanation, respondents asked, "Who uses radio anymore?" The responses indicated a need for radio only when in the car; and even now, many are using portable music or MP3 players while in an automobile, with radio becoming a second option.

With many people using some kind of digital music player in the car, suggestions for radio professionals are similar to those made for television. Creating a reliable time when fantasy sport information is discussed will assist consumers in knowing when and where to seek out fantasy sport–specific information while listening to the radio or traveling in their car. ESPN Radio has SportsCenter updates every 20 minutes, and listeners know the airtimes and trust the feature will be consistently aired. Another suggestion, which is becoming an alternative trend to radio programs, is to create a podcast. Podcasts are audio or video programs that are downloaded off the Internet to your iPod or portable MP3 player to listen to at your convenience. Fantasy sport podcasts would offer a radio-type experience, with the convenience and ability to listen and retrieve information on your own time.

Magazines

Participants indicating a use of magazines to assist in their FSE ($n = 66$, 41.80%) most mentioned using magazines to prepare for the beginning of

a season and fantasy draft. With this finding, it is important for magazine publishers to recognize the fact that FSUS are using magazines for a one-time event. Magazines are already prescribing to the idea of presenting a majority of fantasy features in the preseason and prior to a fantasy draft. A draft or beginning of a season is good for magazine formats because statistics are not changing nightly or weekly, analyses do not change drastically during an off-season, and the material can last longer. Once a season starts, statistics are changing constantly, and producing a current magazine can be difficult. Another option would be to have magazine writers, columnists, and experts team up with a more widely used and timelier communication outlet. These contributors would be able to still promote their magazine while staying on top of current news, analysis, and events. As a result, the fantasy sport features in magazines could focus on those issues not impacted by day-to-day happenings in the sport (e.g., future events, trades, and off-season information).

The participants who do not use magazines ($n = 92$, 58.20%) stated financial concerns as a primary reason for not using the outlet. The Internet, in a sense, provides free, unlimited, instant, and current information, and many of the participants declared they would rather not spend money on something they can receive for free. One consideration for fantasy sport magazines would be to partner with popular nonsport magazines to produce a fantasy sport section or special issue. Collaborating with established magazines would offer fantasy statistics, expert advice, and other pertinent information to FSUS, who would not have to buy a special magazine or spend more money to find information. Of course, with this suggestion, research would need to be conducted by the individual magazine organizations to see if there would be a need for a fantasy sport feature. Other responses denoted participants not having a desire to read magazines; and as mentioned above, some identified the convenience and timeliness issues as reasons for not using magazines to assist in their FSE.

Newspapers

The participants who use newspapers to assist in their FSE gave reasons of gathering box scores, seeking out statistical information, and reading news and other sport-related articles as reasons for their use. The participants who do not use newspapers primarily discussed issues of not having a desire to read newspapers and chose to use other outlets for information gathering concerning their FSE. This fits the common theme that newspaper readership is down as demonstrated in research conducted by PEW, in-

dicating that the percentage of newspaper readership has decreased from 1993 to 2006 by over 18% (Pew Internet and the American Life Project, 2006). Another result from this study, although coming from a small portion of this particular subgroup (11 of 119 responses, 9.24%), indicates that newspapers lack fantasy sport–related material. Daily circulation newspapers have the ability, unlike magazines, to print and present information every day. Articles, statistics, and other sport-related information are relevant when the paper is delivered to the doorstep. Many people turn to the sports page to catch up on local and national sport news and information. Having a fantasy sport section offering expert advice, hot and cold picks, injury updates, and other applicable information could be useful in any newspaper setting desiring to attract FSUs. This, of course, would have to be researched by the specific newspaper to see if there is a need to print information like this in a daily sports page. Another option, a less expensive endeavor, suggests that newspaper companies have a fantasy sport section on their Web site. This might be considered as adding fuel to the fire of online readership compared to print readership, but this would be in the proverbial effort of joining them, if beating them is not an option.

Summary

The purpose of this study is to identify in what ways the fantasy sport host site and traditional communication outlets are meeting the informational needs of the FSU. Examining from a uses-and-gratifications perspective, the objectives of this study were met in efforts to identify *if* needs were being met, *which* communication outlets were most used to assist in the experience of fantasy sport, and *why*.

In the case of the Web and television, our findings indicate that these outlets are greatly used by FSUs. FSUs are leaving their fantasy sport host site to search the Web for information, and the majority is also utilizing television at a high rate to enhance their experience. This is an important finding for the host sites because they are losing time that could be spent on the Web site. Fantasy sport host sites should reevaluate their site to determine what information is not available that should be. There should also be a feedback area where participants could provide suggestions on information and features that should be available. This also provides a chance for cross advertising. Knowing that FSUs seek information on television allows for the promotion of upcoming television programming. Television programming can also guide potential fantasy sport participation to specific host sites to partake in the fantasy sport experience.

These users are searching out information through these two immense outlets validating the first element of the uses-and-gratifications theory (Katz et al.1973); users *actively* consume. Radio and newspapers, from the perspective of the participants in this study, are not assisting much at all in the FSE. Many of the users would rather seek out information through the quicker, less expensive, and generally more convenient outlets of the Web or television. The idea of seeking out other alternatives agrees with the third element of the uses-and-gratifications theory (Katz et al. (1973), proposing that outlets compete with other sources in fulfilling the needs of the audience. Obviously, there is a demand for information regarding fantasy sport, but newspapers and radio are not generally the most desired way to meet those informational needs. Radio sport programming is popular, so perhaps a programming suggestion would be to include segments or programming on fantasy sports. This is occurring in television, where many game previews offer suggestions on what players to play or what players to sit during a particular game. Radio programming can do likewise. The same could be true for actual game broadcasts. A fantasy update for participants in the particular game could be a part of the half-time programming or between-inning programming during the broadcast. This may keep the listener with the broadcast rather than seeking out information elsewhere. It is much more difficult for newspapers to meet the instant information needs of the consumers, but there is certainly a place for recapping games and including fantasy statistics rather than just the traditional box score. Many sports columnists also have a weekly picks section for NFL and college football. So there could be a fantasy sport column inserted into the newspapers as well as developing leagues on fantasy sport host sites in which the columnists compete. There can then be some sort of prize or award for whoever beats the columnists that particular week. Newspapers have to become inventive if they want to capture the attention of the FSU.

In this case, almost all the outlets were competing with one another for the attention of the FSU. With this element, the fourth element argues that users are aware of their choices. According to our responses, users knew when an outlet would not satisfy their needs as well as other outlets would, and they would then discard that outlet as it related to their FSE.

Limitations and Future Research

Generalizing the results is cautioned due to the research examining responses from 158 FSUS. Another limitation considers the methodology, spe-

cifically in the design of the instrument. Using open-ended questions in an online questionnaire format limits the response to only the words typed at the time of data collection. Many respondents provided brief responses consisting of only a few words. Due to anonymity, there is no way to utilize follow-up questions or ask for clarification to a response. A final limitation focuses on the snowball sampling technique. If the sample is defined and identified, then it is easier to distribute reminder e-mails, calculate a response rate, and generalize the results to the particular population. In this study, the participants were asked to copy the researchers on any forwarding, or snowballing, of the e-mail to other FSUS. The participants assisted greatly in creating a moderate-sized sample, but many did not copy the researchers in the process, and this lead to an unidentified sample and created difficulties in sending reminder e-mails in an effort to increase the participant response size.

Future research in the area of fantasy sport is needed to understand more of this phenomenon consuming the time and energy of the 35 million North Americans. In the particular area of communication and fantasy sport, research is needed in discovering what FSUS specifically want to get from Web sites, publications, programs, or articles. This research focused more on why and how the participants used an outlet, but not much examination was given to what, exactly, they seek through these communication outlets. Another area of future research involves mobile media and sport. Mobile phone, smart phone, and tablet use are increasing in all areas of life. Pederson et al. (2007) states that this technology is remaining constant but also that it is "now allowing sport entities to communicate with sport consumers 24–7" (p. 230). This allows consumers to check stories, download video, check a box score, and surf the Web all from their phone or tablet. Not only is this convenient and accessible; the information gratification is instant. The main Web page for ESPN Mobile Products (2011) states the following about their product: "The world of sports. Right in your hand . . . Get the most in-depth mobile sports content including real-time scores, late-breaking news, video-on-demand and even live TV— Anywhere, Anytime" (Paras. 1–2). The usage of mobile media in sport is a good research topic to examine in itself, but this topic could also be examined in a fantasy sport context based how participants utilize mobile media to assist in their overall FSE.

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