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JUST A SNAP: FAN USES AND GRATIFICATIONS FOR FOLLOWING SPORTS SNAPCHAT

A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
Communication, Technology, & Society

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by
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May 2016

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ABSTRACT

Of all the major social media platforms, none has quite ascended as rapidly as Snapchat. In recent years it has become a prominent part of the social media sphere, but given its relatively sudden arrival and unique nature, many teams are still trying to figure how best to use it. This research looks at why fans use Snapchat to follow sports from a Uses and Gratifications perspective in order to understand their motivations as well as ascertain what may be the best practices for teams to use on the platform. In order to do this, research was conducted in two phases. Phase I solicited open-ended responses from fans to the question, “Why do you use Snapchat to follow sports?” Utilizing these responses, Phase II built a survey to examine these motives for motivation factors. This resulted in five prominent factors: (1) Highlights/Recap, (2) Unique Perspective, (3) Behind-the-Scenes, (4) Presence, (5) Ease-of-Use. These themes were analyzed in depth using hierarchical regressions incorporating multiple factors to build a better overall understanding of the data.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Social media and sport is an area of research that has become an increasingly important subject for study in recent years. Scholars have focused on a number of different aspects, including athlete, organization and fan use. By now, the major platforms that have been utilized for sports media purposes have also seen extensive research. In recent years however, a new platform, Snapchat, has become increasingly relevant to the subject. Founded in 2011, Snapchat has seen a quick ascendance in popularity. As of 2015, it could boast 200 million active monthly members and 100 million daily active users (Morrison, 2015). This puts it ahead of other major social media networks Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter when they also reached their four-year anniversary. Snapchat is designed around users sharing photos or video with each other that have a limited amount of visibility before disappearing. This can be up to 10 seconds if shared directly with other individuals, or there is an option that allows users to post their “snaps” in a way that all of the friends of a user can see for up to 24 hours. The app has taken off the most with users in the younger age groups who are seeking to limit the public exposure that they have seen affect older users of social media like Facebook and Twitter.

Given that Snapchat is built around privacy and discretion, it makes it more difficult for brands to carve out a public foothold in the app. However, because it has so many active users, and because the vast majority come from

coveted youth demographics, brands have made incursions onto the platform in spite of its difficulties. Research on Snapchat is still relatively in its infancy given its recent arrival, but there have already been several attempts to study and understand its use. Several studies have attempted to detail what content users share when they use Snapchat (Bayer, Ellison, Schoenebeck, & Falk 2015; Piwek & Joinson 2015). Others have looked at what the emotional effects and motivations for using Snapchat can be (Utz, Muscanell, & Khalid 2015). Billings, Qiao, Conlin and Nie (2015) were the first to examine Snapchat in a sports context, examining issues of fandom and identification that the platform helped drive with sport-related interaction.

While Billings et al. examined how Snapchat was used and how it's function differed for users compared to other social media platforms, there has not been a study of the motivations for why fans choose to follow sports entities on Snapchat. Such a study would be best served by using the uses and gratifications (U&G) approach which examines how individuals use media or other communication channels to satisfy innate felt needs. This theoretical approach has a long history of application in communications research ranging from radio programs, to television programming (Herzog 1940, 1944; Rubin 1983). U&G also has a history of use in sport and sport media (Spinda, Haridakis 2008). It has been used to provide a deeper insight into the reasons that online gamers participate in Madden Football online fantasy leagues (Spinda, 2016). It has also been employed to better understand the motivations and constraints for

Twitter users as it relates to sport social media and marketing (Witkemper, Lim, & Waldburger, 2012).

The development and change in the media landscape, however, has forced U&G researchers to update the motivations that they examine. This is especially true in recent years with the continued development of new media--in particular social media. One attempt to better categorize these new affordances comes from the MAIN model developed by Sundar and Limperos (2008). The MAIN model breaks down into four affordances: modality, agency, interactivity, and navigability. Each of these broad affordances helps to give a better classification of the various motivations that may play into what users are expecting out of their social media use.

The purpose of this study is to better understand the motivations that fans and users have when they follow sports organizations on the social media platform Snapchat. This thesis will contain the following sections. First, I will examine the history of U&G research. Next, I will examine the MAIN model and its potential application for Snapchat research. The MAIN model will serve as the conceptual lens through which I view the results of my study. I will then discuss the development of Snapchat and its relevant research. Following the literature review I will provide my research questions and hypotheses. An explanation will then be given on the research methods and analysis conducted to give answers for the research questions and hypotheses. Finally, I will provide a discussion of

the results, including a summation of its limitations, and provide suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Snapchat

The genesis of Snapchat is attributed to Stanford alumnus Bobby Murphy and Stanford dropout Evan Spiegel. In the spring of 2011, Spiegel and a fraternity brother concocted an idea to create an app that would send disappearing photos and then enlisted the help of Murphy to help develop it (Dredge, 2013). The first version of the app was initially released in summer 2011 under the name Picaboo but would later have its name changed to Snapchat that fall before experiencing rapid growth heading in 2012 (Colao, 2014). The company's description of their product is fairly general—users can either take a picture or record video that they can then add a caption, drawing or filter. Once it is sent to another user they have a fixed amount of time to view the "snap" before it disappears (Singh, 2014).

Upon downloading the application onto either an Apple or Android phone, users will register an account and then search for other members through letting the application view the users' contact list (Donovan, 2014). Snapchat users are only able to send a message or snap to other users. The app allows for the user to send either a picture or video to whichever users they select for a period of 1 to 10 seconds that is determined by the sender.

A unique aspect of how Snapchat works is how users receive and view snaps. Upon being notified of receiving one, a user will select the snap and then

to view it they must tap their finger on the screen . Users then have the option to swipe out of the story, swipe to the next story, or tap through the snaps posted by one user. This format also creates a unique opportunity for advertisers as it can serve as a forced method of engagement on the part of the user (Colao, 2014). Senders are also notified when the snap they sent was received on the other phone, when it was looked at and if the receiver took a screenshot of it or replayed the video, which is a more recent feature.

However, Snapchat has expanded beyond simply being an app for sharing photos and videos. Another feature that Snapchat includes is called “My Story” which enables a user to post a picture or video that can be accessed by any of their contacts for up to 24 hours before it is deleted (Donovan, 2014). The My Story feature allows for multiple photos and videos to be added in chronological order so as to show the progression of events. It is a way to tell a story that can be viewed multiple times over the 24-hour period, instead of only once.

The application has seen an explosion in terms of usage since 2012. In August of 2014 Snapchat was reported as being the most popular app amongst 18-34 year olds with 70% of college students posting on the app daily (Bennet, 2014). In February of 2015 it was reported that Snapchat was looking at securing a valuation of $19 billion, which far surpasses its previous valuation of $10 billion from August 2014 and makes it one of the most lucrative social media apps on the market (Picker, 2015).

Beginning in late 2013, the National Basketball Association (NBA) and its franchises began to adopt the platform for use with the Dallas Mavericks becoming the first team to create an account on December 20, 2013 (Dallas Mavericks, 2013). On January 21, 2014 the Washington Wizards became another early adopter of Snapchat stating, “The Wizards… use the Snapchat Stories function to give fans behind-the-scenes access of the team, including exclusive images of practice, players and game days” (Wizards, 2014). The league itself started to use the program in August 2014, and has since used it to cover events such as All-Star Weekend. The NBA Finals and the 2014 NBA Draft. Other sports that have moved towards a growing use of the platform include NASCAR and MLB, which—like other major brands and properties—see Snapchat the preeminent platform to reach younger generations with (Fisher, 2016; Stern, 2016).

Arguably the greatest allure for Snapchat users is that the content will eventually disappear. There are some who might argue that fact alone makes it a difficult platform for teams to use since content will only exist for a maximum of 24 hours before being deleted (Burns, 2014). However, it could also be argued that outside of the most successful content, most of what is posted on social media is soon overtaken by new content, especially on a platform like Twitter. The shorter lifespan of content also could serve as a reason for fans to prioritize Snapchat over other social media where content could be viewed at a later time or date (Beese, 2013). The case for using the Live Story is also bolstered by the

fact that as many as 20 million viewers on average will watch a Live Story over the course of a 24-hour period (Stern, 2016). This element of Snapchat provides a sense of urgency to the information that is shared and provides fans with an extra incentive to constantly be checking for updates.

While it still has not solidified its role in the world of sports social media, Snapchat has shown that it can become a valuable part in some capacity (Constine, 2014b). Given that the app does not allow for the upload of pre-made graphics and video, Snapchat provides a relatively unfiltered look. This helps to give the platform a sense of “insider-access”, which as Han (2014) notes: Snapchat is widely viewed as the best medium both for promoting fan attendance to games and also providing a unique this unique insider vantage point. A survey of 866 students at Clemson University found that 85.4% of the students used the app on a regular basis and the most sought after content was for a “behind-the-scenes” look (Fisk, 2015). Research has shown that sports fans tend to be dramatically different from fans of other types of television programming (Gantz, Wang, Paul & Potter, 2006). Sports fans demonstrate consistently high levels of consumption when it comes to their favorite teams, as compared to other kinds of fans. This includes both pre and post-viewing experiences, as well as seeking out ways to relive a game again and again (Gantz, Wang, Paul & Potter, 2006). This is relevant for social media and Snapchat because these platforms give fans numerous ways to engage the game experience.

The expanding use of Snapchat is not just limited to the world of sports though. Other industries, such as fashion, are trying to employ a greater use for it as well (Paton, 2016). Given the nature of the platform, it's difficult to use it to boost short term sales, rather, labels have insisted that Snapchat stories be used as way to build long-term brand equity.

Uses and Gratifications Research in Communication

U&G is a theoretical approach or framework that examines individuals use of communication channels or media to satisfy felt needs. U&G views a medium as just one source of influence on society and asserts that audiences hold an active, and not passive, role in shaping the message (Rubin, 2009). Therefore, U&G sees the "mechanistic functions" of the media as being controlled by psychological and social factors, and "mediated communication" constrained by them as well (Rubin, 2009, p. 526). However, this was not always entirely the case with the approach that has evolved over previous decades.

U&G was born out of early media effects research and centered around understanding the gratifications of the audience as they related to the new mass media. Much of this research began around the 1940's with studies like Waples, Berelson, and Bradshaw (1940) on reading; Herzog (1940,1944) on quiz programs and radio daytime serials gratifications; Wolfe and Fiske on the development of interest in comics for kids (1948); and Berelson (1949) on the functions found in newspaper reading. Despite their interest in gratifications, however, these studies did not aid in advancing the theoretical capability of

media gratifications research according to Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1974). They attribute this to four mutual traits found in these studies: (1) Statements pertaining to media functions were ascertained through open-ended questions. (2) The studies took a qualitative approach instead of a quantitative one, which would have been better suited to the “distribution of their frequency in the population” (Katz, et al, 1974, p. 509). (3) The studies did not examine the psychological or sociological origins of the needs that linked the discovered gratifications. (4) The studies did not seek out the interrelationships between varied functions of the media through conceptual or quantitative methods that could have discovered the inherent structure found in media gratifications.

U&G research until the 1970’s largely centered around the gratifications that were sought, rather than the gratifications obtained or other outcomes. Klapper (1963) is credited by some for ushering in a new dynamic to the communication field by calling for a shift in focus to the audience member that had been studied as passive and inactive, rather than taking a more engaged role. Based on the critiques of the approach and shifts from researchers like Klapper, the 1970’s showed a response to this call for change. The first notable response came from Katz, Gurevitch, and Haas (1973) who compiled an exhaustive list of the psychological and social needs that the mass media was could possibly satisfy. Rosengren (1974), aimed to give a theoretical restructuring of U&G and posited that the social environment and personal characteristics of an individual interact with specific needs and produce both

perceived problems and solutions. Both the problems and solution create gratification behaviors, which an individual will seek to satisfy through either the media or other outlets. This in turn will either lead to need gratification or a lack thereof on the part of the individual or the society as a whole, which results in the cyclical rebirth of the process. Along with these advances, another development included recognizing that an individual's cognitive or other mental states would play a role in determining what purpose the media was utilized for Rosengren (1974).

Ultimately, Katz, Blumler, and Gurevitch (1974) would come to define U&G research as examining " (1) the social and psychological origins of (2) needs, which generate (3) expectations from (4) the mass media or other sources, which lead to (5) differential patterns of media exposure (or engagement in other activities), resulting in (6) need gratifications and (7) other consequences, perhaps mostly unintended ones" (p. 20). To this day, this definition is often used to provide a basic outline for the research that is conducted on media gratifications (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974).

By the 1980's, Rubin (1983) wrote that U&G researchers had come a long way in responding to previous critiques. He noted that the researchers had made strides in attempts to (a) replicate or conduct modified extensions of studies, (b) refine the methodology, (c) analyze the results of separate studies comparatively, and (d) view the use of mass media as both a social phenomenon and an integrated communication. Windahl (1981) also

contributed a theoretical advancement by arguing that the traditional media effects approach and the U&G approach differed primarily in that media effects research examined mass communication through the paradigm of the communicator, and that the U&G perspective examine mass communication from the perspective of the audience.

The concept of the active audience also came under reevaluation during this period. Researchers began to assert that even though uses and effects sought explanations for the consequences or outcomes of mass communications, they had to acknowledge the potential for audience activity and initiative. Windahl (1981) noted “the notion of activeness leads a picture of the audience as superrational and very selective, a tendency which invites criticism” (p. 176). He then attempted to define a more substantive theoretical notion of audience activity and to provide a model for testing audience orientations that could link U&G and activity (Levy & Windahl, 1984). Windahl (1984) argued audience activity covered a wide range possible orientations that was dependent on a number of different variables which included individuals, types of activities, communication settings, and times in the communication process.

By this point, the nature and concept of U&G remained relatively stable, seemingly without too much need for new innovation or adaptation, that is until it’s revitalization due to the development of new telecommunications technology and its continued deregulation.

New Media

As communication technology advanced into the 21st century, U&G had to adapt as well. The available media has quickly expanded into various devices (smartphones, tablets, robots) and their apps, and channels such as the Internet or cable, which serve as hosts for social media and other venues. These advances have helped to provide users not only with human-computer interaction, but also the opportunity to interact with others through computer mediated communication (Sundar & Limperos, 2013).

While the new technology broke new ground for research, it also meant that there were new opportunities for criticism and theoretical reshaping of the traditional U&G approach. Historically, the criticism of U&G centered around several flaws, according to Ruggiero (2000). First, U&G was often too individualistic, therefore making it difficult to describe or predict the users or what impact their media use would have on society. Second, some studies were seen as too compartmentalized, and produced different typologies of motives. Third, a lack of clarity muddled the central concepts such as psychological and social backgrounds, behavior, consequences, needs and motives. Relatedly, researchers would also assign different meaning to these various concepts, making it difficult to actively define these terms. Finally, the tenants of the U&G approach hinge on the notion of the active audience and the veracity of self-reported data used to identify motives. However, these notions were often

assumed by the researchers and therefore brought on criticism of being too simplistic (Ruggiero, 2000).

The development of new digital technologies also brought in its own kinds of nuances centered around the nature of gratifications. Sundar and Limperos (2013) expounded upon the possibility that new gratifications were created by the technologies themselves, which would thereby increase the scope and potential of U&G research in the digital world. When they compared studies pertaining to older technologies (television, radio) with newer technologies (Internet, social media), they discovered that there were seemingly few differences in the gratifications that were found between the two. This either meant that people sought out the same kinds of gratifications in each kind of media or that the measurements for these gratifications did not account for perhaps new gratifications. This observation fell in line with the assertion Rubin (2009) made that U&G research would benefit from “increased specificity, especially as attention is turned to new media” (p. 176).

The MAIN Model

One major difference with new media such as the Internet is that, as Sundar and Bellur (2011) noted, is that it cannot be viewed as one monolithic entity. Instead, it is more worthwhile to break down each technology into its various affordances and examine the uses and gratifications gained from them. These affordances include concepts found in the MAIN model devised by Sundar (2008) which categorized four types of technological affordances:

modality, agency, interactivity, and navigability. This model asserts that these affordances are more or less present in the majority of digital media and possess an ability to cue cognitive heuristics that underlie the credibility assessments of the media that is being consumed. Sundar (2008) provided two ways in which these affordances can cue these judgments of credibility. The first is that through the “sheer presence of a given affordance...its value-added functionality will be rife with judgment-related cues” (Sundar, 2008, p. 77). An example of this would be the potential for interactivity on sites like Facebook or Twitter with the reply function which cues an increased sense of dialogue. The second comes from the media making a deliberate effort to showcase the information a user views as necessary for making the credibility assessments. For example, Twitter will display the number of times a certain hashtag has been used to give the viewer a way to understand its relative popularity.

The modality affordance refers to the different types of presentation of media content and its reception from the corresponding human senses. This could be how a picture appeals to one’s sense of sight or a sound to one’s sense of hearing. Some of the possible new gratifications given include: *realism*, *coolness*, *novelty*, and *being there* (Sundar & Limperos, 2013). The ability of Internet and other forms of communication to share content that comes in different modalities is what makes them “multimedia”. Presenting content in varying modalities happens to be more than just convenient; it also has perceptual and cognitive significance. Research shows that people process

information differently based on the modality, with audiovisual depictions of information being more distracting and textual information requiring more cognitive effort (Sundar, 2000). The MAIN model posits that the visual modality is the most trusted affordance because images will cue the “realism heuristic” that leads one to believe that if something is photographed it is more authentic than something that is only depicted through a textual modality (Sundar & Limperos 2012). Taken to the next level, modalities such as virtual reality can cue the “being there heuristic” which can cause the user to question whether or not the experience is real when assessing the content being shared through the experience. The developments of technology in recent years has increased our ability to experience mediated portrayals of realities that can trigger the heuristic of “being there”, further underscoring the assertion that new gratifications related to the modality affordance are to be expected with this continued technological innovation. These kinds of gratifications are especially pertinent when it comes to Snapchat, because it is at the forefront of modern-day social media and serves as a good example of the constantly altering media landscape.

The agency affordance allows for users to be sources of information or agents while on the Internet. The advent of the Internet has allowed for users to become gatekeepers of content, which prior to the Internet wasn’t always the case. Sundar and Limperos (2013) gave some of the possible new gratifications, including: *agency-enhancement*, *community building*, *bandwagon*,

filtering/tailoring, and *owness*. Thanks in large part to social media, user-generated content has become so prevalent that it has altered the sender-receiver equation of communication, and also given birth to new gratifications (Shao, 2009). According to studies, digital media users take on more agency and are likely to assume the role of the source of information, due in large part to the extensive availability of customization technologies (Sundar, Oh, Bellur, Jia, & Kim, 2012). As it pertains to this study however, the agency for fans is limited given the restrictions of the platform. The setup of Snapchat makes it difficult to find and interact with other fans; therefore, fans are really only be able to consume what is put out by the team and then respond to that. A study of sports fans using Snapchat found that one of general negative perceptions of the app is that other types of social media are more conducive to picture and video sharing that will facilitate self-expression (Billings et al, 2015).

Williams, Rice, and Rogers (1988) defined interactivity as “the degree to which participants in the communication process have control over, and can exchange roles in their mutual discourse” (p.10). Essentially, interactivity is the affordance which users can interact with and through a medium by making real-time changes to the content (Sundar & Limperos, 2013). They also give possible new gratifications such as: *interaction*, *activity*, *responsiveness*, and *dynamic control*. An example given by Sundar (2008) is that upon seeing a map on a web page users will often try to drag it to view the area. If the drag option is unavailable, the user will likely be disappointed with their experience. As

interactivity has changed, so too have the gratifications associated with it. Users will increasingly expect that their media experience incorporates greater levels of interaction. This could look like more linked content to click on, more choice and control over the content that is presented, a better flowing experience, and ultimately a more responsive overall interface.

While the traditional understanding of interactivity may not make as much sense with Snapchat, it still plays an important role in the overall experience. Users have the capability to tap or swipe through content, thereby making their experience built on interacting with the material.

The final affordance that is taken into consideration is navigability. The related gratifications are centered around how a user moves around the medium. Some of the new possible gratifications are: *browsing*/*variety-seeking*, *scaffolds*/*navigation* aids, and *play*/*fun*. Much like Interactivity, this affordance has more to do with shaping the overall experience of using a medium, rather than the actual relationship between a team and its fans. However, the navigability and functionality of a medium is relevant when choosing what platforms to use. For many sports fans who use Snapchat, one of the biggest complaints that they have is that they do not know how to follow their favorite teams or athletes on the app (Billings et al, 2015).

In a table provided by Sundar and Limperos (2013), they delve into the potential measures of these new gratifications. Of the four types of gratifications found in the MAIN model, Fthe modality-based Gratifications are perhaps the

most relevant when it comes to Snapchat. Modality can be measured by looking at four different measures: *realism*, *coolness*, *novelty*, and *being there* (Sundar & Limperos, 2013, p. 518). Realism is made up by statements like, “I know the content is real and not made up”, “It is like communicating face-to-face”, “The experience is very much like real life”, and “It lets me to see it for myself”. Coolness is defined by statements like “It is unique”, “It is distinctive”, and “It is stylish”. Novelty can be expressed as “It is new”, “The technology is innovative”, “The interface is different”, and “The experience is unusual”. Finally, *being there* is seen as “It helps me immerse myself in places that I cannot physically experience”, “It creates the experience of being present in distant environments”, “I feel like I am able to experience things without actually being there”.

While not as applicable as modality, there are a few other possible measures of gratifications that can be relevant to this study. *Filtering/tailoring* is a gratification related to Agency and shapes what and how fans choose to consume their media. One important measure is, “It allows me to set my preferences” (Sundar & Limperos, 2013, p. 519). A relevant gratification associated with Navigability is “The device is easy to use and explore” (Sundar & Limperos, 2013, p.519). While the teams do not have direct control over how the medium functions, they do get to choose which ones they use and that has an effect on how fans are able to reach or be reached by them.

Research Questions

RQ1: What are the motives that fans have for using Snapchat to follow sports?

RQ2: How do the motives for sports Snapchat use vary based on age and gender?

RQ3: How are the motives for sports Snapchat use affected by social media preferences?

As the focus of this research is a U&G approach to better understanding why fans use Snapchat to follow their favorite teams and players, RQ1 seeks to understand the motives fans have for following sports. Given that motives can be very broad and affected by many different factors, it's important then to identify what some of these factors are and the roles that they play. RQ2 examines how motives for sports Snapchat use can vary depending on two demographics: age and gender. RQ3 examines how the motives for sports Snapchat use can be shaped according to social media preferences. These last two questions are important to examine in order to start getting a better understanding of who exactly is using Snapchat to follow sports and how their use compares to that of other social media platforms.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

Previous U&G research has employed a multiple-phase approach of exploring motives for media use (Greenburg, 1974; Rubin, 1981), and more recently, motives for playing Strat-O-Matic baseball (Spinda, Wann, & Sollitto 2012). In these quantitative studies, the research begins qualitatively with a collection of participant narratives. These narratives are then further explored for verbatim statements within these narratives that indicate motivations for a particular activity. Similarly, we employed a two-phase method for the development of motive items in this study.

Phase I

A mixed-method approach to data collection has seen previous employment in U&G research (Greenberg, 1974; Rubin & Bantz, 1987; Spinda & Haridakis, 2008; Spinda,et al. 2012). Qualitative data has been explored in these studies for verbatim statements, which are subsequently tested in a qualitative method as attitudinal statements in a Likert-scale format. Spinda & Wann (2012) stated, “The first step in this mixed-method approach could be best described as a thematic analysis” (p. 251). Saldana (2009) noted that “the definition and analytic function of a ‘theme’ varies…but overall, a theme is a *phrase* or *sentence* that identifies what a unit of data is *about* and/or what it *means*” (p. 139). Therefore, the thematic analysis utilized during Phase I of this

study was employed so that the phrases provided by the participants could be interpreted and provide a greater insight into their motives for using Snapchat.

Snapchat users were sought out through social media posts and email requests. Participants (*N* = 49) were invited to click a hyperlink that brought them to an online consent form where—once consent was provided—they were given an open-ended question that only asked the question, *"Why do you use Snapchat to follow sports?"* Comparable studies also used open-ended essay questions for previous U&G research (Greenberg, 1974; Spinda & Haridakis, 2008; Spinda & Wann, 2012). Once the response was given, the participants were thanked for their time and allowed to exit the page. Upon completion, a thematic analysis was conducted of the completed narrative responses. Verbatim wording of participant narratives were then extracted in order to give a precise insight into the motives of Snapchat users for sports. Overall, 39 motive items were derived from the participant narratives to be employed in the survey distributed in Phase II.

Phase II

Participants. Participants for Phase II of the research (*N* = 336) were recruited online in through several channels (M_{age} = 28.51, *SD* = 7.64, age range= 18-66). Some participants responded to requests through social media channels such as Twitter and Facebook. Student participants at a large public university in the south eastern United States were also solicited for their help via emails. The majority of respondents though came from Mechanical Turk, a

survey service provided by Amazon. Data collected from Mechanical Turk has been confirmed as reliable as traditional methods (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011). The sample was 63.4% male and 35.1% female with 1.5% abstaining.

Procedure. Similar to the research in Phase I, the participants were redirected to a consent form via a shared hyperlink. Once their consent was obtained, the participants began the online survey. Once they were finished with the survey, the respondents were thanked for their time and invited to leave the page. The respondents were also provided with an option to obtain the results of this study upon completion. The participants from Mechanical Turk were given a four-digit code that they could later re-enter in the Mechanical Turk website for confirmation of their participation where they received $1.10 as compensation for their time.

Materials. On the first page of the questionnaire, participants were prompted to give the researchers insight into how they divided their time up amongst their favorite sports. Using slider bars, respondents would indicate the percentage of their time that they spent following or watching their preferences. These values were required to add up to 100. The provided options included: Pro Football (NFL) (M = 28.90, SD = 25.75), Baseball (M = 13.57, SD = 19.5), College Football (M = 15.42, SD = 20.44), Pro Basketball (NBA) (M = 11.49, SD = 17.45), College Basketball (M = 6.49, SD = 11.97), Soccer (M = 8.04, SD = 16.54), Hockey (M = 5.98, SD = 13.86), Auto Racing (M = 3.28, SD = 10.50), and

two open-ended options (*M* = 6.40, *M* = .44, *SD* = 17.55, *SD* = 2.69) for other sports not listed.

The next question then asked the respondents to list their favorite sports team in an open textbox. Their answer was then included later in the survey to provide a more personal set of questions related to their Snapchat experience. All together 17 sports were noted as being a participants' favorite sport (see Table 1.1).

Table 1.1

Sample Representation of Fans by Favorite Team's Sport

Favorite Team's Sport	*N*	*Percentage of Sample*
NFL	62	28.3%
MLB	36	16.4%
NCAAFB	21	9.5%
NBA	21	9.5%
NHL	19	8.7%
NCAABB	18	8.2%
Premier League	15	6.8%
National Teams	7	3.2%
Cricket	6	2.7%
La Liga	3	1.4%

Minor League Hockey	2	0.9%
Bundesliga	2	0.9%
ESports	2	0.9%
Auto Racing	2	0.9%
MLS	1	0.5%
Tennis	1	0.5%
Minor League Hockey	1	0.5%

Using the aforementioned narrative items from Phase I, the participants were then asked to measure their levels of agreement with each of these motive items on a seven-point Likert scale (1= *Strongly Disagree* and 7= *Strongly Agree*). An open-ended response was also incorporated here to allow the participants the chance to include any motives they felt had been left out of the analysis.

The final question asked the participants to rank social media platforms based on the importance to the individual. The question allowed for users to drag and drop the given platforms in the desired ranking with 1 = *Most Important* and 6 = *Least Important*. The options included: Facebook (M = 2.28, SD = 1.51), Twitter (M = 3.34, SD = 1.50), Instagram (M = 3.60, SD = 1.49), Snapchat (M = 2.79, SD 1.10), Youtube (M = 3.33, SD = 1.31), and an open-ended option (M = 5.66, SD 1.06) for users' to include platforms they felt were left out. The data collected

here mirrored the data found in other research as Facebook remained the top social media platform, followed by Snapchat.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Research Question 1 was concerned with the motives for why fans used Snapchat to follow sports. To explore the factor structure of the pool of 39 motive items related to sports Snapchat motivations, principal components analysis with varimax rotation was used (N = 336). The variables were highly correlated, according to Bartlett's Test of Sphericity, χ^2= 8267.783, df =741, p < .000. Additionally, Kaiser Normality was acceptable at .955. This analysis yielded six factors that explained 63.40% of the total post-rotation variance. A .60/.40 criterion was used for factor loadings, where items with factor loadings of .60 or less on a primary factor, as well as items with a secondary loading of .40 or greater on a secondary factor were not retained (Garson, 2011; Spector, 1992). Five of the six factors provided enough support for inclusion as motive subscales in this study. Overall, 28 of the 39 items from the original pool of motives loaded on to the five factors (see Table 1.2).

Table 1.2

Factor Loadings for Snapchat Motivational Items

"I use Snapchat for sports because…"	Factor Loading				
	1	2	3	4	5
Factor 1: Highlights/Recap					
It is a great way to figure out what is going on without to search through multiple websites	**.79**	.20	.06	.13	.21
Snapchat is a great way to catch up on sporting events that I can't physically attend, or am unable to watch on TV	**.74**	.31	.04	.21	.06

To get quick highlights	**.72**	.06	.08	.03	.32
It gives you the highlights and quick access to the score of the games	**.68**	.13	.04	.07	.36
Snapchat allows me to stay updated with sports	**.66**	.14	.12	.16	.29
It is an easy way to access sports quickly, and in a condensed format	**.66**	.02	.08	.14	.47
It gives more information that just going back and looking at stats if I missed watching the game	**.63**	.41	.17	.17	.07
Factor 2: Unique Perspective					
I find it interesting watching the same sporting event from the different point of view that people post to the story	.30	**.65**	.21	.24	.14
I get unedited/unfiltered content cannot be accessed anywhere else	.09	**.64**	.22	.14	.25
I get to see places and hear things I wouldn't get to otherwise	.22	**.63**	.41	.19	.19
It gives me a more personalized view of what happens at the game than just checking the score or reading an article	.36	**.58**	.25	.15	.31
You can see the action from a different perspective than what you see on TV and other social media outlets	.15	**.56**	.26	.11	.34
To gain perspective of unique experiences that student-athletes and fans alike may have in a sports environment	.20	**.55**	.23	.32	.05
Factor 3: Behind the Scenes					
I like seeing what athletes are like off of the field	.06	.13	**.78**	.20	.16
It gives you an opportunity to see athletes' personalities face	.14	.15	**.73**	.23	.08
I want to know what goes on behind the scenes with my favorite teams and players	.06	.32	**.69**	.23	.22
There is a lot of behind-the-scenes content	.06	.32	**.69**	.23	.22
Gives a behind-the-scenes look into teams, warm-ups, and league events	.11	.26	**.58**	.19	.31
The players are uncensored	.07	.31	**.55**	.20	.13
Factor 4: Presence					
Watching through my phone makes me feel like it could be me at the event taking the same picture or video	.30	.18	.11	**.72**	.07
It feels like you are in the clubhouse or even watching the play or practice when you aren't there yourself	.10	.31	.18	**.68**	.06
League and team Snapchats help me feel like I'm in the	.15	.24	.17	**.66**	.29

action of events that I'm not actually at					
Feels closer to being part of the team with on-court or on-field video	.06	.19	.31	**.65**	.32
Factor 5: Ease-of-Use					
It's easy and accessible	.32	.18	.21	.08	**.76**
It's modern and easy to view	.31	.21	.18	.20	**.65**
It is entertaining	.27	.32	.26	.08	**.64**
It's easy and convenient	.47	.21	.19	.00	**.64**
I am typically on Snapchat anyhow, so it's easy to slide over to sports content	.23	.19	.08	.25	**.55**

Factor 1, *Highlights/Recap* (eigenvalue = 5.573), explained 14.29% of the overall post-rotation variance. This motive contained seven items that indicated that users turned to Snapchat for "quick hits" from a sporting event. In addition, Snapchat users indicated that the platform "is a great way to catch up on sporting events that I cannot physically attend, or am unable to watch on TV", "is a great way to figure out what is going on without having to search through multiple websites", and "gives more information than just going back and looking at stats if I missed watching the game" (M = 2.64, SD = 1.04, α = .894). Factor 2, *Unique Perspective* (eigenvalue = 4.779), explained 12.25% of the overall post-rotation variance. This factor consisted of six items that reflected a belief among Snapchat users that the platform gave them access to a view of the team/event that they did not have. For instance, participants noted that Snapchat helps them "get unedited/unfiltered content that cannot be accessed anywhere else", watch a game from different vantage points, and get "a more personalized view of what is

happening at the game, rather than just checking the score or reading an article" (*M* = 2.63, *SD* = 1.01, α = .861). Factor 3, Behind-The-Scenes (eigenvalue = 4.70), explained 12.05% of the overall post-rotation variance. This factor contained five items that indicated Snapchat users valued the platform for its ability to provide a deeper dive into goings-on at a sporting event. This included a chance for users to see an athlete's personality up close, or what goes into a team's warm-ups (*M* = 2.68, *SD* = 1.05, α = .870). Factor 4, *Presence (*eigenvalue = 4.35) explained 11.16% of the overall post-rotation variance and had four items that implied Snapchat users used the platform because it gave them the sense that they were present at the present at the event itself and right behind camera (*M* = 3.18, *SD* = 1.23, α = .829). Factor 5, *Convenience* (eigenvalue = 4.13), explained 10.6% of the overall post-rotation variance and contained five items that related to the ease of use when it came to Snapchat (*M* = 2.22, *SD* = .97, α = .858).

Research questions 2 and 3 were both answered with a set of hierarchical regression analyses, where age and gender (RQ2), as well as social media channel preferences (RQ3), were both regressed on each of the five motives in this study. Step one included control variables (age and gender). In step two, social media preference variables (ranking the different platforms) were added to the equation. The expectation was that the social media preference variables would be shaped according to the control variables based off of the control variables.

Hierarchical regression findings indicated that the age of a user impacted the strength of their motives as it related to *Highlights/Recaps*, R = .30, R^2 = .07, F(7, 328) = 4.52, p = .000 (Appendix 3). The final regression model indicated that age had a positive relationship with the strength of *Highlights/Recaps* as it related to Snapchat (β= .252 , p = .001). Age was also shown to have an impact on the motives of *Presence*, R = .26, R^2 = .05, F(7,328) = 3.15, p = .001 (Appendix 5) and *Ease-of-Use*, R = .283, R^2 = .08, F(7,328) = 4.10, p = .000 (Appendix 6). Age was also shown to have a positive relationship with the strength of *Presence* (β= .167, p = .03) and *Ease-of-Use* (β= .156 , p = .037). Age was not shown to impact the strength of either *Unique Perspective*, R = .22 , R^2 = .05, F(7, 328) = 4.02, p = .000 (Appendix 4) or *Behind-the-Scenes,* R = .24, R^2 = .05, F(7, 328) = 3.97, p = .000 (Appendix 5).

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to better understand the motivations of individuals who use Snapchat to follow sports. Given that the app did not come into existence until 2011, there has not been as much research conducted on its use. Compared to other major social media platforms, Snapchat has seen a rapid ascension to prevalence. Established platforms like Facebook or Twitter have been around for over a decade now, which has allowed for their place in the social media sphere to be defined. Snapchat, however, is still evolving in the sense that its role for users has continually developed in recent years. This makes it fertile ground for research as not only organizations and companies are trying to figure out how to use it, but users as well. This research is relevant in practical sense for social media practitioners looking to gain a deeper insight into the kind of content they can best provide to their consumers and fans.

From an academic perspective this research can play a role in the continued development of U&G. In accordance with the idea set forth by Sundar and Limperos (2013) that social media led to new unique motives, this research helped to identify unique motives associated with the use of Snapchat. Given the private nature of Snapchat, the platform stands unique among the rest of social media with regards to the experience it gives to its users. Therefore, the motivations its users have in using it will also likely be unique among the other major social media platforms. The findings in this study clearly illustrate that this

is the case with Snapchat. While Snapchat did not create these motivations, it did help to unlock them so that users would turn to the app to have these specific needs met. Due to its explosive growth over the past few years, Snapchat is going to continue to be an important area of research—especially as it dominates among the younger age groups. Although Facebook remains the most used social media platform, it would not be surprising if Snapchat came to be more preferred, particularly with younger demographics. Snapchat continues to evolve as an application and every few months sees a new development that further engages users. Ultimately this research may best serve its purpose as a touchstone that further explorations into Snapchat can build off of.

Of the 39 unique items given by respondents, 28 loaded into five separate factors that defined the motivations users had for following sports on Snapchat. These five factors—*Highlights/Recaps*, *Unique Perspective*, *Behind-the-Scenes*, *Presence*, and *Ease-of-Use*—speak to the nature of what Snapchat has to offer. They also match up well with the gratifications set forth by the MAIN model. *Highlights/Recaps* contains elements of both Modality and Navigability. The ability to get highlights in this new way speaks to the elements of Novelty and Realism found in Modality. Navigability is found here with regards to Browsing/Variety-Seeking, as users are looking to obtain a variety of information they are searching for. *Unique Perspective, Behind-the-Scenes,* and *Presence* all demonstrate a high level of Modality as they are effectively synonymous with Realism and Being There. *Ease-of-Use* is essentially another way of explaining

Navigability. While less explicitly obvious, both Agency and Interactivity are both inherently involved. The sense of presence and ability to post to the Live Stories afforded by Snapchat allows a user to feel like a part of a community, which feeds into the Community-Building aspect of Agency. Users also have the ability to effectively customize their experience. The interface of Snapchat involving swiping, tapping, drawing, and using filters showcase the high degree of Interactivity of Snapchat. Since the research focused more on the content rather than the app itself, the motivations given would therefore align more with Modality and Navigability. Agency and Interactivity are vital though when it comes to making Snapchat use an enjoyable experience in and of itself.

Given that Snapchat use is heavily skewed towards the younger demographic, Research Questions 2 and 3 sought to gain a better insight into how these demographics use the platform and how it compares with the rest of social media. Regressions indicated that while gender did not play a significant role in affecting the motivations, age did. Age particularly showed a strong positive relationship with a preference towards Snapchat use with regards to three motivations, Highlights/Recap, Presence, and Ease-of-Use. The older a user is, the more likely it is they enjoy using Snapchat to follow sports for these reasons. As the average age for this study was 28.5, it also happens to fall in line with the general cutoff age for individuals who consider themselves to be “millennials”. This is significant because these results may speak to fact that these findings are indicative of a generational difference in sports fandom. The

older users grew up consuming sports in a radically different fashion from how they may consume it now. Whereas highlights and recaps may have only been available through the newspaper or evening news, it is now available in many instantly accessible formats. This could also apply to Ease-of-Use as Snapchat provides a quick and easy way to find the type of content and information they may be seeking. The novelty of Snapchat's first-person feel also gives users a different vantage point on the action than has normally been available in the traditional broadcast. This likely plays a large part in the Presence motivation because it gives the user a chance to see the game like never before. Unique Perspective and Behind-the-Scenes speak to motive factors that are examples of the new gratifications created by social media. Athletes have become more accessible than ever before and have been able to showcase their own personalities and increase their status as celebrity figures. This has led to a growing interest in understanding their personalities beyond just what is seen in competition, but what they are like in person. Snapchat allows users to not only gain an inside look into what goes on into an athletic competition, but get a greater feel for the complete experience as a whole. For those that grew up without social media playing a large role in their sports consumption, these reasons may not be as important for how they need to view an event.

While it could be argued that these findings may not be revelatory in the sense that the findings more or less confirmed what would be expected for Snapchat gratifications, that does not lessen their relevancy in practice. The

results of this study help define what it is that users enjoy about the platform. Coordinators may do well to treat the motive factors as a checklist of sorts and ensure all of their content contains at least one of them. The advantage of Snapchat is that it allows for such frequent posting that all of the five factors can be accounted for easily.

Beyond a simple checklist however, the informal nature of the content that is posted on Snapchat makes it much more difficult for teams to put out the same quality of content that they are used to sharing on other platforms. This presents organizations with a choice: Do you do your best to synergize your Snapchat account with the rest of your social media presence, or do you let it become something different? Much of social media use is often an extension of public relations and serves a primary role of dispersing information. However, given the unique nature of Snapchat, the platform might serve a better primary function, e.g., entertainment. Sports as entertainment is nothing new, but often the sport itself is really the only source of entertainment put forth by teams. By treating Snapchat as a medium for engaging their fans primarily through entertainment rather than information dispersion, teams could open up new avenues for interaction. This could mean letting a specific player take over the account to showcase “A day in the life” and also interact directly with fans. Teams could also utilize it to showcase personalities or other quirks of players and coaches, such as odd items in lockers or offices. By using it in this manner, Snapchat can retain

its value beyond just being useful on game-days and become a social media fixture on the off-days.

As social media accounts continue to strive for a high degree of “authenticity”, Snapchat may be one of the best places to turn due to its first-person nature. By constantly putting familiar faces in front of the camera, such as players, coaches, or a consistent host, a team’s Snapchat account could easily gain a high level of authenticity. Another way to gain this authenticity is to let the team’s story be populated with fan submissions as they wear team apparel throughout the week, prepare for a game, cheer at a game, etc. In essence, a Snapchat story could turn into a more visual version of a string of Twitter retweets. While Snapchat does not officially have the capacity to serve this role yet, there may be other ways to make this work.

A difficult aspect teams may have though is promoting the account since Snapchat is not as conducive to discovering new accounts and so fans may not realize a team is on the platform. One possible remedy to this is for teams to change their social media account profile pictures to their Snapchat account barcode, which would make the account visible and immediately accessible to fans. Another difficult aspect would be that accessible Snapchat data is very limited and it could be hard to figure out how big or active the fan-base following the account may be outside of checking the viewership on the Snapchat stories. One potential remedy here could be creating limited range geofilters. Geofilters are filters that Snapchat users can put over their pictures that can only be

accessed at certain locations. By encouraging fans to send in their pictures that have the geofilter being used, teams could identify how active their Snapchat fans are and how well information put forth by the account is shared.

CHAPTER SIX

LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

This study sought to be an entry point into providing a deeper understanding into the fan consumption of Snapchat. It will hopefully serve as a starting point for other areas of future research related to the platform. One area that could be explored more in-depth is looking exclusively at actual team accounts, or focusing more on the Live Story, or potentially examining the one-to-one communication between users. Given the lack of material on the subject, this study did not differentiate between the different aspects of Snapchat, because especially with regards to team accounts, they aren't as developed as they are on more established platforms like Facebook or Twitter. Future research may also seek to narrow the age range and focus on specific groups; especially those in the younger demographics that constitute the majority of Snapchat's user base.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Summary of Regression Analysis for Demographic Variables and Social Media Preferences Predicting Highlights/Recap motive

Variable	*B*	*SE B*	*β*	*t*
Step 1				
Age	.01	.01	.04*	.76
Gender	-.11	.12	-.05*	-.94
Step 2				
Age	.01	.01	.05*	.94
Gender	-.12	.12	-.06	-.98
Twitter	-.05	.06	-.07	-.81
Instagram	-.04	.06	-.06	-.74
Snapchat	.24	.07	.25	3.40
Youtube	.02	.07	.03*	.29
Facebook	.05	.06	.08	.88

Note. R = .067, R^2 = -.001, F(2, 333), p < .469 for Step 1, R = .30, R^2 = .07, ΔR^2 = 6.001, F(7, 328), p < .000, for Step 2
* p < .05 and ** p < .01

Appendix 2

Summary of Regression Analysis for Demographic Variables and Social Media Preferences Predicting Unique Perspectives motive

Variable	*B*	*SE B*	*β*	*t*
Step 1				
Age	.03	.01	.22	4.03
Gender	.13	.11	.06	1.14
Step 2				
Age	.02	.01	.18	3.2
Gender	.13	.12	.06	1.1
Twitter	-.04	.06	-.06	-.67
Instagram	-.04	.06	-.06	-.74
Snapchat	.10	.07	.11	1.44
Youtube	-.04	.07	-.06	-.73
Facebook	-.08	.06	-.11	-1.29

Note. R = .22, R^2 = .04, F(2, 333), p < .000 for Step 1, R = .28, R^2 = .06, ΔR^2 = 2.1, F(7, 328), p < .000 for Step 2

* p < .05 and ** p < .01

Appendix 3

Summary of Regression Analysis for Demographic Variables and Social Media Preferences Predicting Behind-the-Scenes motive

Variable	*B*	*SE B*	*β*	*t*
Step 1				
Age	.03	.01	.23	4.29
Gender	.18	.12	.08	1.50
Step 2				
Age	.03	.01	.19	3.28
Gender	.19	.12	.09	1.54
Twitter	-.01	.06	-.02*	-.20
Instagram	-.01	.06	-.01**	-.13
Snapchat	.04	.07	.04	.52
Youtube	-.06	.07	-.7	-.81
Facebook	-.09	.06	-.13	-1.49

Note. R = .24, R^2 = .05, F(2, 333), p < .000 for Step 1, R = .28, R^2 = .06, ΔR^2 = .02, F(7, 328), p < .000 for Step 2
* p < .05 and ** p < .01

Appendix 4

Summary of Regression Analysis for Demographic Variables and Social Media Preferences Predicting Presence motive

Variable	*B*	*SE B*	*β*	*t*
Step 1				
Age	.03	.01	.18	3.3
Gender	.23	.14	.09	1.66
Step 2				
Age	.03	.01	.16	2.75
Gender	.21	.15	.08	1.41
Twitter	.02	.08	.02*	.23
Instagram	-.03	.07	-.04	-.44

Snapchat	.17	.08	.156	2.09
Youtube	-.02	.08	-.02*	-.238
Facebook	-.05	.07	-.06	-.63

Note. R = .20, R^2 = .03, F(2, 333), p < .001 for Step 1, R = .266, R^2 = .05, ΔR^2 = .03, F(7, 328), p < .001 for Step 2
* p < .05 and ** p < .01

Appendix 5

Summary of Regression Analysis for Demographic Variables and Social Media Preferences Predicting Ease-of-Use motive

Variable	*B*	*SE B*	*β*	*t*
Step 1				
Age	.02	.01	-.18	3.25
Gender	-.09	.11	-.04*	-.80
Step 2				
Age	.02	.01	.15	2.6
Gender	-.07	.111	-.04	-.65
Twitter	-.07	.06	-.11	-1.16
Instagram	-.01	.05	-.02	-.23
Snapchat	.15	.07	.17	2.25
Youtube	.01	.06	.02	.18
Facebook	-.03	.06	-.05	-.55

Note. R = .18, R^2 = .03, F(2, 333), p < .004 for Step 1, R = .28, R^2 = .06, ΔR^2 = .05, F(7, 328), p < .000 for Step 2
* p < .05 and ** p < .01

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