Was dissent being displayed during the Sochi Olympics? Examining the #Sochi2014 hashtag for dissent

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Abstract

During the 2014 Sochi Olympic Games various issues came to light including Russia's anti-gay stance and construction issues. This study explored the Sochi 2014 Olympic Games official hashtag (#Sochi2014) through the theoretical lens of framing to see if dissent was being displayed. To examine those tweets, the software, Leximancer was used to explore conceptual and relational analysis on words that are written as well as visual text. Tweets were collected before, during, and after the Olympics to determine if dissent was being displayed. Results found five themes that emerged with at least 25% connectivity. Those themes were gold, Olympics, Sochi, NBCOlympics, and skating. Furthermore, findings noted that dissent was a peripheral theme and wasn't discussed much using the #Sochi2014 hashtag.

Introduction

Social media has changed the way communication takes place between various constituents. Over the last decade, the number of social media platforms and their users have grown exponentially among all age groups (Morrison, 2014). As of 2014, there were 1.79 billion active social media users worldwide. One such social media platform that has become a major communication tool is Twitter. As of February 2016, Twitter had approximate 320 million active monthly users (Twitter Usage, February 19). Twitter provides an instantaneous outlet for people to participate and share information, knowledge and opinions (Clavio & Kian, 2010; Newman, Peck, Harris, & Wilhide, 2013).During sporting events, Twitter can be used as a quick and instantaneous output of information to the masses.

The growth and overall impact of social media cannot be understated. Due to the growth of Twitter, sport organizations and events are utilizing the platform to disseminate information and creating conversations using an event created hashtag (#). A hashtag allows the Twitter community to catalog tweets which then helps create a dialogue between various users about a similar topic (Smith & Smith, 2012). Events such as the Super Bowl, the FIFA World Cup, and the Olympics, all have their own official Twitter hashtag.

At an event, Twitter users could share their thoughts, information, and experiences using the event hashtag. With the continued growth of Twitter, research examining hallmark events and hashtags has continued to take shape For example, Blaszka, Frederick, Burch, Clavio, and Walsh (2012) examined the use of #WorldSeries, Smith and Smith (2012) examined multiple hashtag use during the 2012 College World Series and Frederick, Burch, and Blaszka (2013) looked at agenda setting during the 2012 London Olympics.

Such events like the Super Bowl, the Olympic Games, and World Cup have seen large amounts of people tweeting using specific event hashtags (i.e. #WorldCup). One event that recently used an event hashtag was the Sochi Olympics (#Sochi2014). During the 2014 Sochi Olympic Games, various issues related to Russia's political practices surged to the forefront of international conscience. Twitter can often be used as an outlet to discuss political issues (Fitts, 2015). Twitter can provide a platform for political and monumental issues (i.e. the taking down of the Confederate Flag in South Carolina) to be discussed in a boundless forum. Similarly, during large-scale sporting events, often times political or national statements can be made. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine the use of #Sochi2014 within the context of framing on the social media platform Twitter. Additionally, this study sought to determine whether dissent was taking place on Twitter before, during, and after the 2014 Sochi Olympic Games by those who used this specific hashtag. As such, the study examined the #Sochi2014 hashtag to determine who was using it and what themes emerged from its use.

Review of Literature

Framing

Framing was originally defined by Goffman (1974) as mental schemas that facilitate the rapid processing of information in everyday life. When employed in a communicating text, the framing process serves to select various aspects of reality and makes them more salient through the selection, emphasis, and exclusion of information (Entman, 1993). In addition to the selection and emphasis function, cultural references can bound the interpretation of frames based upon the dominant social norms that exist within a particular society (Endres, 2004; Goffman, 1974).

Within sport, framing has also been employed to examine issues such as race and nationality in the framing of professional athletes (Eagleman, 2011), or the framing of athletes and sports figures embroiled in personal scandals (e.g., Bishop, 2005; Laucella, 2009, 2010). Beyond individual athletes and sport figures, framing has been employed to examine issues surrounding mega-sporting events such as the Olympic Games. The most predominate issues examined from a framing perspective in regard to the Olympic Games have been related to race, gender, and nationality (e.g., Angelini, MacArthur, & Billings, 2014; Billings, Angelini, MacArthur, Bissell, & Smith, 2014; Eagleman, Rodenberg, & Lee, 2014). Studies have also investigated framing and the Olympics in regard to social or political issues within a country, or framing from a particular, country specific perspective (i.e., Huang & Fahmy, 2013; Liang, 2010; van Luijk & Frisby, 2012).

The examination of the framing of political issues outside traditional forms of mass media (i.e., print and broadcast) is increasingly relevant, as new media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter provide individuals the ability to advance certain frames or reframe issues (Meraz & Papacharissi, 2013). The investigation and framing of content produced by individuals, and not from media or news outlets is a process identified by Nisbet (2010) as a "bottom up model of framing" (p. 75). The bottom up framing process focuses on individuals who are consistent producers of online media (Nisbet, 2010). Specially focusing on social media in political communication, recent studies have employed a bottom-up framing process to examine the content around elections in the United Kingdom (Ampofo, Anstead, & O'Loughlin, 2011) and the United States in (Groshek & Al-Rawi, 2013; Hawthorne, Houston, & McKinney, 2013) as well as political events such as Arab Spring (Meraz & Papacharissi, 2013). The bottom up approach to framing defined by Nisbet (2010) provides scholars with the opportunity to investigate the framing of issues from the perspectives of individuals, which is an area that has yet to be

explored in regard to the intersection of sport, social media, and social issues. Since this study explores framing on Twitter, it is important to describe the current body of sport-related Twitter research.

Twitter and Sport

Twitter is a growing online medium within the sport management and communication landscape. However, a growing body of literature has begun to examine its utilization among various user groups within multiple levels of sport. Research has revealed that athletes utilize Twitter to share commentary, foster interactivity, and cultivate insider perspectives (Kassing & Sanderson, 2010) to manage their brand (Lebel & Danylchuk, 2012), to engage in interactivity and diversion (Hambrick, Simmons, Greenhalgh, & Greenwell, 2010), to discuss their daily lives (Frederick, Lim, Clavio, Pedersen, & Burch, 2014; Pegoraro, 2010), and to keep in contact with others (Browning & Sanderson, 2012). These studies focused on multiple athletes. However, this line of research has also focused attention on individual athletes. In their analysis of Lance Armstrong's Twitter use while he was being investigated for using performance enhancing drugs (PEDs), Hambrick, Frederick, and Sanderson (2015) found three image-repair strategies being used by Armstrong including attack accuser, bolstering, and stonewalling.

While athletes have proven to be a worthy avenue of investigation, Pegoraro (2010) argued that this line of research should include fans that follow athletes on Twitter. Clavio and Kian (2010) answered this call by examining followers of a retired female golfer. Their analysis revealed three dimensions of gratification including organic fandom, functional fandom, and interactivity. In extending this line of research further, Frederick, Lim, Clavio, and Walsh (2012) examined parasocial interaction and fans' motivations for following professional athletes on Twitter based on the athlete's interaction style. The authors found that followers of a social athlete felt a heightened sense of interpersonal closeness compared to followers of a parasocial athlete.

From a micro perspective, analyzing Twitter usage patterns among athletes and fan groups is valuable. However, analyzing Twitter usage from a more macro perspective becomes vital in order to gain a full and nuanced picture of this medium's reach and impact. That being said, research has begun to explore communication patterns among sport organizations (Sanderson, 2011) and media members (Sanderson & Hambrick, 2012; Schultz & Sheffer, 2010; Sheffer & Schultz, 2010). In their analysis of sport journalists, Schultz and Sheffer (2010) found variations in viewpoints toward Twitter usage based on age and job functionality (i.e., print vs. broadcast journalism). In a follow-up study, Sheffer and Schultz (2010) examined actual Twitter usage patterns among sport journalists. The authors found a discrepancy between claims and actual Twitter use. Sanderson and Hambrick (2012) extended journalist-specific research by examining how sport journalists covered the Penn State scandal on Twitter. Specifically, the authors analyzed the tweets of over 150 sport journalists. Their analysis revealed five usage trends including offering commentary, breaking news, interactivity, linking to content, and promotion. The authors concluded that Twitter provides another platform for journalists to effectively frame their stories to media audiences.

Research related to Twitter's utilization has also been extended to include sporting events. This research has been conceptual through the application of social network analysis (Clavio, Burch, & Frederick, 2012; Hambrick, 2012), as well as event-specific (Blaszka et al., 2012; Frederick, Burch, & Blaszka, 2013; Smith & Smith, 2012), and sponsors (Delia & Armstrong, 2015). Hambrick (2012) analyzed how two bicycle race organizers used Twitter to promote their events. The author found that the majority of messages were either promotional or interactive.

Through the use of sociograms, the author revealed that most Twitter users within the network followed race organizers within the first few days of an account's creation. It was concluded that race organizers can use Twitter and its influential users, to effectively promote upcoming events. In a similar study, Clavio et al. (2012) applied systems theory and social network analysis to the Twitter feed of a Big Ten football team. The authors did find a discernible network; however, the feedback loop was weak as the amount of reciprocal interactions within the network was low. Additionally, there was not much diversity within the interactions. In other words, media members interacted primarily with other media members, and lay people interacted primarily with other lay people.

Event-specific Twitter research has focused primarily on the utilization of hashtags during sporting events. Blaszka et al. (2012) examined #WorldSeries during the 2011 Major League Baseball (MLB) World Series. They discovered that #WorldSeries was primarily being used by lay people to express fanship and for interactivity. When lay people were being interactive, they were primarily communicating with MLB officials and other lay people. Even though lay people were attempting to reach out with MLB officials, the interaction was not reciprocal, indicating a lack of organizational understanding regarding the use of hashtags. In another hashtag utilization study, Reichart-Smith and Smith (2012) examined the development of event-specific hashtags during the final games of the 2012 College World Series. Their analysis revealed multiple hashtags and multiple themes including cheers and jeers. The authors stated that Twitter provides a new medium where traditional sport dialogue can take place.

Another avenue of event-specific research is the examination of sponsors of a particular event. Delia and Armstrong (2015) examined discussion about sponsors taking place using the #FrenchOpen hashtag. Their findings noted that there was a weak relationship between the sponsor and the Twitter users. As such, there was a weak association between the event sponsors media presence and the mentions of sponsors using tweets associated with the #FrenchOpen hashtag. The authors found that less than 1% of the tweets mentioning the French Open discussed a sponsor of the event. The authors note that event organizers and sponsors need to take a further examination into their social media relationship.

Only one study to date has examined Twitter use during the Olympic Games. Frederick et al. (2015) examined hashtag utilization during the London Olympics. Specifically, they were analyzing whether agenda setting was present by examining the @London2012 account and tweets containing #London2012. These authors also found that lay people were the primary user group of hashtags. Additionally, no agenda setting presence was found, indicating that lay people were bypassing the information being released by @London2012. The authors concluded that perhaps inter-media agenda setting was taking place with unclear directionality.

Due to the limited amount of research involving Twitter use during the Olympic Games and the amount of controversy surrounding the Games in Sochi, the following exploratory research questions were employed:

    RQ1: What themes emerged from #Sochi2014?
    RQ2: Was dissent being displayed when using #Sochi2014?

Method

NVivo10 was utilized to capture tweets containing #Sochi2014. NVivo10 is software that supports the collection of social media sites and qualitative analysis. Tweets were collected

twice each day during the month of February. This allowed for data collection during the week prior to the Games (Feb. 1st – 6th), the two weeks of the Games themselves (Feb. 7th – 23rd), and the week following the conclusion of the Games (Feb. 24th – 28th). Specifically, tweets were collected at 11am EST and 11pm EST resulting in a total sample size of N = 70,300. These specific times covered live coverage as well as tape-delayed prime time coverage on NBC in the United States. To analyze the comments qualitatively, the researchers utilized the computer software Leximancer.
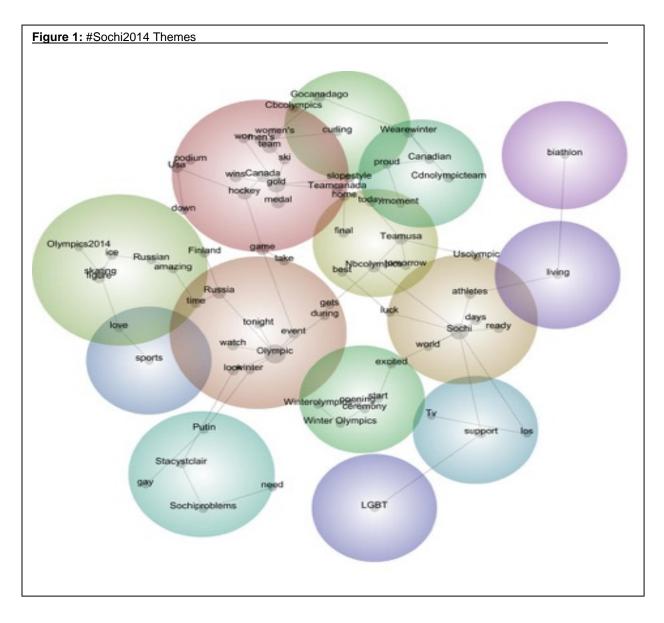
Leximancer Software

Leximancer is a computer software tool that conducts conceptual (i.e., thematic) and relational (i.e., semantic) analysis on written words as well as visual text (Bals, Campbell, & Pitt, 2012). The Leximancer mapping subsystem works in two stages, characterized as conceptual extraction or the determination of dominant themes, followed by relational extraction which involves the mapping of relationships of the themes against each other (Smith & Humphreys, 2006). An advantage of the automated approach of Leximancer is it generates the concept list (i.e., descriptors) is that the list is statistically reliable and reproducible, as it is generated from the input text itself, whereas manual lists require checks for coding reliability and validity (Angus, Rintel, & Wiles, 2013). Additionally, the ability to analyze very large datasets in totality, instead of using a subsample with human coders allows researchers to consider complete samples and draw more concrete conclusions from these datasets. Lastly, elusive or rare relationships may be more likely to emerge using the automated concept list creation provided by Leximancer (Angus et al., 2013).

The Leximancer output is a conceptual map that identifies the dominant themes contained within the text analyzed. The relative importance of concepts is determined based on where the words on the concept map appear (Bals et al., 2012). For example, when looking at the concept map, words representative of the consolidated themes appear closer to the center whereas those that are less important are located on the periphery. Those concepts that are strongly semantically linked appear near each other, and possibly overlap, and concepts that are not semantically linked are further away. The color of concepts also indicates their relative frequency in the text with more darkly colored concepts appearing more frequently.

Smith and Humphreys (2006) validated the output of Leximancer, using a set of evaluation criteria taken from content analysis that were appropriate for knowledge discovery tasks. Leximancer has also been used previously to analyze opinion polling and political commentary (McKenna, 2007), and to assess tourism event images and determine how public representation of events change over time (Scott & Smith, 2005). Leximancer has also been employed to determine enterprise risk in large computer companies in order to identify risk themes, concepts, and ideas from the screening and conceptual analysis of business reports and corporate data (Martin & Rice, 2007). In the online realm, researchers have used Leximancer in analysis of website content of state tourism authorities, as it relates to online brand image communication strategy, in conjunction with consumers' perceptions of that content to identify overlaps and gaps (Kattiyapornpong & Nel, 2009). Campbell, Pitt, Parent, and Berthon (2011) investigated consumer conversations around online advertisements. The authors mapped those conversations and provided a typology of consumer-generated ad conversations. One of the advantages of Leximancer is that it can analyze vast sets of texts that contain a large number of concepts, making it an effective tool to analyze blogs, user comments, and social media posts (Bals et al., 2012). Therefore, it was deemed the proper data analysis tool for the current study.

Results

Using the Leximancer software, five major themes emerged. These themes had at least 25% connectivity within the 70,300 tweets that were collected. These themes were gold (100% connectivity), Olympic (54%), Sochi (34%), NbcOlympics (26%), and skating (25%). The conceptual map of these emergent themes is displayed in Figure 1. Henceforth, the emergent themes will be discussed with the concepts that were found within each theme.

Figure 1: #Sochi2014 Themes

Gold

Gold was the most dominate theme found during the use of the #Sochi2014 hashtag. The following concepts were encompassed in this theme: _gold, team, hockey, medal, Canada, men's, women's, game, USA, wins, Teamcanada, ski, won, podium,_ and _down._ Many of the

tweets in this theme mentioned the gold (medal) in some form. For example, RT "@sochigames Gold medal results to date #Sochi2014 (link)" and "Go and get gold #GoTeamGB #sochi2014". While many tweets mentioned the word *gold* others included the word gold and other concepts within the gold theme. For example, this tweet included *gold, Canada's, women's,* and *team*: RT "@ThankYouMomCA: "Canada's Women's Ice Hockey team has taken gold at the last 3 Olympic Winter Games. RT to cheer them on! #sochi2014". While this tweets mentioned *gold, hockey,* and *Canada*: "RT @B_MacD94: Can't even explain how stoked I am for Olympic hockey and another gold for Canada! #Sochi2014 #Olympics".

Olympic

Olympic was the 2nd most prominent theme to emerge from the results. The following concepts emerged from the data set: *Olympic, Russia, watch, event, look, time, take, during, winter, gets,* and *tonight*. The content found in these tweets discussed a variation of the concepts found within the data set. Many of these tweets provided links to further information. For example "RT @RT_com: Mount Elbrus reconquered: Olympic flame reaches Europe's highest point (PHOTOS) http://t.co/W9ygaVR1IU #Sochi2014". Other tweets focused on various other nations at the Olympics using the *Russia* concept.
"OLYMPIANS HELP#UKRAINE #Sochi2014 #Olympics #Winter #Sports #Nachrichten #Euroma idan #Journalism #News #Russia (link)".

Sochi

The third most emergent theme was Sochi. The following concepts emerged from the data set: *Sochi, days, athletes, ready, UsOlympics, luck,* and *world*. These tweets most often discussed the host city, Sochi with various concepts. For example, "I support Jason BROWN at Winter Games 2014 in Sochi #JasonBrownUSA #Sochi2014. The second biggest concept focused on the words *days*. This was often discussing the various events during a specific day of the Olympics. For example: "@sochigames: Day 5 events include the bobsled and cross country skiing #sochi #sochi2014 #Day 5". The third largest concept was athletes. Either athletes were directly discussed or a country's athlete was talked about. For example, "RT @RJohnst16: Finally on our way to Sochi! I can't wait to join all the other Canadian Olympic athletes!".

NBColympics

This was the fourth most prominent theme during the Olympics. The various concepts and names were: *NBColmypics, teamusa, today, final, tomorrow, home,* and *best*. All the tweets in the theme tagged the @NBColympics account which is why it was a major theme. For example, "RT @leighdiffey: My 5yr old son watched Luge on @NBCOlympics today and has some aspirations!! Just got this pic from home". The second biggest concept within this theme was *teamusa*, which referred directly to different concepts regarding the United States Olympic team. For example, "@NBCOlympics #SochiSelfie #Sochi2014 #Olympics We are cheering on #TeamUSA this winter, @USLacrosse later this year http: (link)". The third biggest concept or word found was *today*. This concept often focused on what was going on during the Olympics on that particular day. This could include athletes and events. "@NickMcCarvel: Going thru @NBCOlympics today and finding some vids I missed. Love this @GraceEGold feature w @ApoloOhno: (link)".

Skating

The fifth most prolific theme that emerged was skating. The following concepts or words fell into this theme: *skating, figure, ice, Russian, Finland, Olympics2014, love,* and *amazing*. The most used concept was *skating*. This theme discussed skating in general. "Sunday skating in Central Park w @laurenwprince @therealnicobico @brianforde #sochi2014 … (link)". The second most discussed concept in the skating theme was *figure*. This concept mostly discussed speed skating or the general shape of speed skating. "RT @jaygraymatters: The speed skating oval #Olympics #Sochi2014 #GoTeamUSA(link)". The third most prevalent concept was the phrase *ice*. Seeing that that theme was skating, most of the tweets consisted of discussing the surface or the sport in general. For example, "RT @TanithJLB: Just discovered that the first ice skates were made from bones, attached to the feet by leather straps! #Sochi2014".

Dissent Themes to Emerge

A number of peripheral themes emerged from the data set. Of note, three were related to dissent that was taking place during the Sochi Games. These themes were, Sochi Problems, Living (which was discussion about dolphins living in captivity), and LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender).

Sochi Problems

The Sochi problems theme was found in a 7% of the tweets. The concepts were *sochiproblems, stacystclair, Putin, need,* and *gay*. The most used concept, *sochiproblems*, was used to discuss various problems and sometimes used the #SochiProblems hashtag. For example, "Argh, the strays are attacking. #SochiProblems (link). The second most discussed concept regarding reporter *Stacey St. Clair* who discussed the various problems at the Sochi games including, plumbing. "My hotel room has no running water. If restored do not use on face because it contains something dangerous #SochiProblems #Sochi2014".

Living

The living theme was found in about 1% of the tweets and related directly to dolphins being captured and being displayed in captivity. The concept was *living*. "A very sad day for Russia & the Olympics, VERY sad living for Taiji dolphins forced to perform (link) #Sochi2014".

LGBT

The last peripheral theme found in the study was LGBT. Words or concepts associated in this theme were *LGBT* and *gay*. Most of these tweets were regarding the anti-gay stance by Russia. For example, "NUS__LGBT Over 100 people here were sending a clear message to Putin #lovewithoutborders #sportsgay #LGBT #Sochi2014 (link)".

Discussion

The study specifically examined #Sochi2014, which was created by the Sochi Olympic committee (in 2009) in order to aid in the dispersion of content through their @Sochi2014 Twitter handle. Examining this hashtag through the lens of "bottom up" framing allowed the researchers to gain a better understanding of the conversations taking place between individuals who chose to utilize #Sochi2014. While framing research has traditionally analyzed

the frames emphasized by traditional media outlets (i.e., television and newspapers), this study was unique in that it analyzed how individual users congregated around a corporate hashtag to discuss the Olympic Games. Furthermore, this study lends credence to the claims of Billings, Moscowitz, Rae, and Brown (2015), who stated that social media platforms such as Twitter provide an opportunity for the public to "collaborate in the framing and dissemination of breaking news" (p. 154). In this particular case, the news that was being disseminating pertained primarily to cheers, and athletic performances rather than other more controversial news related to the Games (i.e., accommodations and political policies).

The goal of this study was to determine whether dissent was being displayed using the #Sochi2014 hashtag. To analyze whether dissent was being displayed two exploratory questions were used. The first research question was employed to decipher what themes emerged from those users of the #Sochi2014 hashtag. The most salient topics (in order) were *gold, Olympics, Sochi, NBCOlympics,* and *skating.* The results of the study indicate #Sochi2014 was primarily used as a hub for all sport related content. Given that a hashtag creates a conversation controlled by the users, the "bottom-up" approach (Nisbet, 2010) of framing is deemed appropriate for social media research. In other words, the conversation on Twitter when utilizing hashtags usually is dictated by the event and the users. Users of the #Sochi2014 hashtag spent time cheering, interacting, or directing users to content and events. In addition, tweets were often most salient in real-time. For example, "what a goal by #TEAMUSA! Love these #hockey #Olympics #Sochi2014" was tweeted to celebrate or show fanship for a goal in real-time by the United States hockey team. Twitter users will often use the event hashtag to join in on the conversations during large scale sporting events during peak moments (i.e. the conclusion of a sporting event or a controversial play). The #Sochi2014 hashtag was no different.

The #Sochi2014 hashtag was created to enhance dialogue amongst various nations and fan bases worldwide. Hashtags provide Twitter users the opportunity to interact with constituents to discuss a particular event (Blaszka et al., 2012, Frederick et al., 2015). The five most emergent themes using the #Sochi2014 were directly connected to Olympics while creating a vast dialogue amongst Twitter users as well as the hashtag user.

Similar to the Major League Baseball World Series (#WorldSeries) and the Super Bowl (#SuperBowl), the Sochi 2014 hashtag (#Sochi2014) was the hub for all sport related content before and during the games. As stated earlier, the top five themes that emerged from the #Sochi2014 were directly related to the Olympic Games. Prior to the beginning of the Olympic Games, the #Sochi2014 was used for other issues that were not directly related to sport content. This content included, but was not limited to Russia's anti-gay stance, using dolphins living in captivity for the opening ceremonies, hotel accommodations, and political issues, within Sochi Olympics and Russia. During the same time frame, two additional hashtags were created, #SochiProblems and #Cheerstosochi.

#SochiProblems was a hashtag created organically by Twitters users who were either at the games to discuss issues (i.e., unfinished hotel rooms) and political issues (i.e., stray dogs). This hashtag specifically created a space away from the actual Sochi 2014 hashtag to poke fun at the Sochi Olympics or discuss larger issues such as Russia's anti-gay stance. In fact, the @SochiProblems Twitter account was created to tweet and retweet pictures of unfinished construction, issues with hotel rooms, and delve into a series of issues surrounding the Sochi Olympics Games. In fact, @SochiProblems had more followers than the actual Twitter handle of the Olympic games, @Sochi2014 (Williams, 2014). The use of the #SochiProblems by Twitter

users provided an outlet for conversation to discuss the various issues surrounding the Sochi Games without using the main hashtag. In that sense, #SochiProblems allowed Twitter users the ability to shift the focus of discussion on their own terms without contending with the typical sport dialogue present on #Sochi2014.

#CheerstoSochi was originally created by McDonald's to send well wishes to athletes, teams, and countries competing in Sochi (McDonald's, 2014). McDonald's signed six athletes to endorsement deals to promote the #CheerstoSochi hashtag (Armour, 2014). Quickly LGBT activist "hijacked" the hashtag #CheerstoSochi demanding official sponsors McDonald's and Coca-Cola stop supporting Russia (Pegoraro, Burch, Frederick, & Vincent, 2015; Merevick, 2014). Both hashtags were user driven and diverted non-sport conversation away from the #Sochi2014 hashtag. Because of the organically created hashtag, #SochiProblems and the hijacked hashtag, #Cheerstosochi, the #Sochi2014 hashtag was used directly to discuss the events of the Olympics. With that, the #Sochi2014 was not utilized for dissent.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine the #Sochi2014 for dissent using the theory of framing. This research continued the examination of hashtag use in hallmark events (Blaszka et al., 2012; Frederick et al., 2012; Smith & Smith, 2012). As hashtag usage continues to evolve for hallmark events, future studies could examine the Super Bowl, FIFA World Cup, and The Masters. While dissent rarely is discussed at the Masters and the Super Bowl, it could be examined during the next Men's FIFA World Cup in 2018 that will take place in Russia. Future studies could measure the designated hashtag of each event for issues that surround the even rather than just dissent. As such, a longitudinal study could be conducted over the course of next three Olympics to see if the conversation continues to be about the games while using the official hashtag. Research could also examine hashtags as a way to frame future events. This study examined framing using the "bottom up" approach as the users are generally creating the dialogue. Future research could examine users that organically create hashtags during mega sporting events that generate conversation about any event (or away from the event).

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