



**The use of Broadcasting and Social Media
at Local to Mega Events across Qatar**

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ABSTRACT

The primary literature on media and broadcasting reveals how the landscape has been changing by advances in new information and communication technologies. This case study aims to analyse the emerging issues related to the use of broadcasting and social networking focusing on the Twitter accounts of a sport association, the Qatar Football Association, and a mega event to be hosted in Qatar, the FIFA 2022 World Cup. The case study will analyse and discuss findings, in relation to the previously presented theories, and provide points for debate about the current and future panorama of sport broadcasting.

INTRODUCTION

The impressive information and communication technologies (ICTs) developments, following the introduction of the Internet and its substantial impact on the media industry, led to a change in the way business organisations, and sport organisations among them communicate with their audience. More precisely, we have moved from the traditional media model, characterised by one-to-many communication style where the organisation talks indistinctly via TV, radio or newspaper to a mass of customers seen as targets, to the new media model, characterised by a one-to-one or many-to-many model.¹ On one hand, organisations interact with every single customer and tailor the content of their messages to the characteristics of the recipient also seen as a partner that can provide feedback and recommendations via online surveys, product ratings and, from the second half of 2000, social networks. On other hand, the new ICTs give people the opportunity to communicate with each other, sharing opinions and experiences related to a particular company, product or event and, in doing so, to be not only a consumer but also a producer of media content, which

1. Reza Kiani, "Marketing opportunities in the digital world," *Internet research* 8, No: 2 (1998): 185-194.

leads to the rise of the so-called prosumer, predicted by Toffler already in 1980.^{2 3} This phenomenon has been further boosted by the emergence and enormous diffusion, in the last 15 years, of the above-mentioned social networks.

Amongst the most used social network platforms in the Western world are WhatsApp (launched in 2009) with a staggering 900 million users,⁴ Instagram (launched in 2010) with more than 400 million users,⁵ their parent company Facebook (launched in 2004) with 1.19 billion active monthly users,⁶ and Twitter (launched in 2006) with 336 million monthly active users.⁷ As Petersen-Wagner⁸ argues, the full incorporation of social media on fans' daily lives had the power to alter fandom in distinct forms, especially by allowing them to become fans in the first place, but also to follow clubs worldwide in a constant fashion. In a way, we can conceptualise social networks as a new space of consumption of sport.⁹ The widespread adoption of social networks becomes particularly evident when analysing Hull City's proposed named change to attract new middle-class fans in East Asia, and more specifically in China by the fact that the further mediatisation of the English Premier League allowed

2. Alvin Toffler, *The Third Wave*, Vol. 484, New York (Bantam books, 1980).

3. George Ritzer and Nathan Jurgenson, "Production, consumption, presumption: The nature of capitalism in the age of the digital 'prosumer'," *Journal of Consumer Culture* 10, No: 1 (2010): 13-36.

4. Leena Rao, "WhatsApp hits 900 million users," Fortune tech, *Fortune Magazine*, September 2015, <https://fortune.com/2015/09/04/whatsapp-900-million-users/>.

5. "Press release," Instagram, Accessed 24 October 2018, <https://instagram-press.com/2016/12/21/600-million-and-counting/>.

6. "2014 Annual Report," Facebook, Accessed 24 October 2018, <http://investor.fb.com/annuals.cfm>.

7. "Q2 2018 Letter to Shareholders," Twitter, Accessed 24 October 2018, <https://investor.twitterinc.com/static-files/610f4a82-5b52-4ed9-841c-beecbfa36186>.

8. Renan Petersen-Wagner, "The Football Supporter in a Cosmopolitan Epoch," *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 41, No: 2 (2017): 133-150.

9. Renan Petersen-Wagner, "A "New" Form of Fandom? Looking at Social Media as the "New Pub"," Accessed 24 October 2018, <http://www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/blogs/carnegie-xchange/2018/06/a-new-form-of-fandom-looking-at-social-media-as-the-new-pub/>.

individuals across the globe to create a sense of belongingness to distant clubs.¹⁰ Born initially as social networks that allowed people to satisfy more effectively the need to connect with others,¹¹ they ended by producing unintended outcomes as reinforcing the impact of globalisation on how socialisations are fostered and maintained across time and space.¹² Moreover, the developments on those distinct social network sites progressively led them to become active media platforms, where users can gather information and watch videos related to their favourite topics, products, characters, teams and events shared by authoritative sources or by other users. Therefore, for example, a Manchester United fan can receive information from social networks simultaneously following the club's official account, the Daily Mail, the Manchester United Fans Banter Facebook page, their superstar Paul Pogba's Instagram profile or even another fan sharing on YouTube his/her perspective of the game, or by retweeting media content posted by these sources.

It emerges from what has been discussed above that “content is not just king, it is the emperor of all things digital”, as stated by the media tycoon Rupert Murdoch.¹³ This content is not easy to control, as there is an increased number and range of providers that can now supply live or retransmitted sports news and footage to anyone able to access it. This represents a very critical issue in relation to the sport media industry, where the most popular sport live broadcast, highlights and news are an incredibly valued asset, but it is extremely

10. John William Hayton, Peter Millward, and Renan Petersen-Wagner, “Chasing a tiger in a network society? Hull City's proposed name change in the pursuit of China and East Asia's new middle class consumers,” *International Review for the Sociology of Sport* 52, No: 3 (2017): 279-298.

11. Lon Safko and David K. Brake, *The Social Media Bible: Tactics, Tools, and Strategies for Business Success* (John Wiley & Sons, 2010).

12. Renan Petersen-Wagner, “Cultural consumption through the epistemologies of the South: ‘Humanization’ in transnational football fan solidarities,” *Current Sociology* 65, No: 7 (2017): 953-970.

13. George Szalai, “Murdoch: Content is emperor, not king,” Accessed 30 October 2018, <https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/murdoch-content-emperor-not-king-20199>.

difficult to exercise tight control over content distributed via the Internet.¹⁴ As such, it is essential to ask how and who actually controls the broadcasting of information? Who can shape and re-shape our understanding of events that happen worldwide?

On one hand, there are users, especially in the younger age groups, not willing to pay the cost of the subscriptions required to access (especially live) sport content, resorting to illegal streams¹⁵ or the use of VPN to bypass national right holders and follow broadcasters around the world.¹⁶ That said, anyone can easily retransmit digital content without authorisation as with fans inadvertently broadcasting via live stories on Instagram or YouTube or Facebook Live content that is protected by copyrights as games. Those concerns do not only apply for fans as audience/producers, but also to athletes as it can be seen on the clear rules, regulations, and guidelines set up by the International Olympic Committee (IOC), in respect of any accredited person blogging, Internet, and social networking engagements.¹⁷ Are those guidelines and protections just a last resort for traditional media in its 'battle' with new media? How can both traditional and new media co-exist in order to continue to be relevant for audiences in their desire to consume mediated sport?

This issue has had a significant impact on the broadcasting industry. The difficulty in controlling the media content even after the introduction of specific legislation in different countries has led the rights holders to increase the cooperation with the social network platforms in order to enhance the surveillance over the illegal retransmission of sport

14. Brett Hutchins and David Rowe, *Sport Beyond Television: The Internet, Digital Media and the Rise of Networked Media Sport* (Routledge, 2012).

15. Matthew David and Peter Millward, "Football's Coming Home? Digital reterritorialization, contradictions in the transnational coverage of sport and the sociology of alternative football broadcasts," *The British Journal of Sociology* 63, No: 2 (2012): 349-369.

16. Renan Petersen-Wagner, "The FIFA World Cup and 'Banal Nationalism,'" Accessed 24 October 2018, <http://www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/blogs/carnegie-xchange/2018/06/the-fifa-world-cup-and-banal-nationalism/>.

17. "Social Media," International Olympic Committee (IOC) (website), Accessed 24 October 2018, <https://www.olympic.org/documents/social-media>.

broadcasting, to transmit the highlights on their own social accounts and, at the same time, to enable the social platforms themselves to broadcast a certain number of events. This goes even to the extent that the European Union (EU) is considering passing a law commonly known as the Meme Law that stipulates that social network platforms need to filter all the posts made by users to check for any copyright infringement.¹⁸ As a consequence of the prominence of social networking platforms on the way we consume sport nowadays, we have the example of the deal between the American network CBS in September 2016 and the National Football League (NFL) to live broadcast on Twitter their first game ever – Twitter now holds the right to broadcast Thursday Night Football.¹⁹

More recently, the online provider Eleven Sports has started broadcasting several games of the Spanish Liga and Italian Serie A per week. The law and globalisation infringement debate has called into question the archaic rule of no live football to be broadcasted in the UK.²⁰ This leads us to consider another issue: the emergence of online media providers such as YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, Netflix, Amazon Prime, Eleven Sports, DAZN that compete or are considering competing with traditional broadcasters for the buy of the broadcasting rights of major sport events. How will large social networks or online distributors disrupt the traditional broadcasting landscape? Would they take over and simply substitute the traditional broadcasters, or will we see a ‘revolution’ in how sport as a mediated content is produced, distributed and consumed? How on a global, digital, and online world can we stop individuals from following their favourite sport and athletes? How can

18. “EU Parliament Approves New Copyright Rules that could be ‘Catastrophic’ for the Internet,” *The Independent*, Accessed 24 October 2018, <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/gadgets-and-tech/news/eu-parliament-copyright-memes-latest-vote-internet-article-11-13-a8534121.html>.

19. “NFL Thursday Night Football”, Twitter, Accessed 24 October 2018, <https://twitter.com/i/events/768633364911788032?lang=en>.

20. “Eleven Sports to Stop Showing Live European Matches at 3pm Saturdays,” *The Guardian*, Accessed 24 October 2018, <https://www.theguardian.com/football/2018/oct/17/eleven-sports-stop-european-football-on-saturdays>.

those disruptors be seen as epitomising this new global digitally connected and technologically savvy audience who wants to be 24/7 connected?

One of the main consequences on consumers is undoubtedly the opportunity given to the fans to interact openly with their favourite clubs and, above all, athletes. Not surprisingly, among the most followed people on social media, there is a very significant presence of sport athletes, and the footballer Cristiano Ronaldo is the personality with the highest number of social followers.²¹ Athletes are more popular than clubs and governing bodies themselves, as they are the protagonists running the show: is it sufficient to have the presence of a superstar to generate huge traffic of interactions around a single event? Are athletes bigger than the sport? If that is true, then the higher the number of world-class athletes involved in a sport event, the easier its promotion and the higher its visibility, boosted by social media network platforms.

This case study aims to analyse the emerging issues related to the use of broadcasting and social networking focusing on the Twitter accounts of a sport association, the Qatar Football Association, and a mega event to be hosted in Qatar, the FIFA 2022 World Cup. The study is structured as follows: the next section reviews the main literature on media and broadcasting, showing how the landscape has been changing by advances in new ICTs. Then, we will turn our focus to the case study, which will be thoroughly analysed and discussed in relation to the previously presented theories, and provide points for debate about the current and future panorama of sport broadcasting.

21. "Cristiano Ronaldo overtakes Selena Gomez to become the most followed person on Instagram," *Daily Mail*, Accessed 30 October 2018, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-6331283/Cristiano-Ronaldo-overtakes-Selena-Gomez-followed-person-Instagram.html>.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A Brief History on Media(tion)

It is argued by different academics that what makes us – humans – unique is our ability to communicate between ourselves and construct shared meanings, cultures, values and rituals.^{22 23} Besides this apparent unique feature of our *humanity*, it can be argued that we are also unique by the fact that we can communicate with others without the need of sharing the same common physical space. Since antiquity, our ancestors sought to communicate with others through depicting historical feats as through cave paintings or as with the hieroglyphs found across the world. In a sense, what our ancestors were trying to do was to communicate with others without a need of the ancestors being in direct physical contact with them, and also leave a legacy of their history. This is the basis for understanding what media – or medium (the singular) – is and what are the processes involving in producing, transmitting, and *indirectly* receiving information. Fast forward some centuries, with some concomitant processes as urbanisation, education/literacy, industrialisation/ commercialisation,²⁴ we commence to observe that histories and stories instead of flowing mostly between individuals through *simple* face-to-face conversations, they started to be more and more mediated by the different available media like newspaper, magazine, film, radio, TV, photograph, advertising, and so forth. As argued by Niklas Luhmann,²⁵ “whatever we know about our society, or indeed about the world in which we live, we know through mass media”. In a way, all media is social as it allows individuals to communicate with others and construct a shared way of

22. Steven Jackson, “Reflections on communication and sport: On advertising and promotional culture,” *Communication & Sport* 1, No: 1-2 (2013): 100-112.

23. David Rowe, *Sport, Culture and the Media: The Unruly Trinity*. Maidenhead (McGraw-Hill, 2004).

24. Ibid.

25. Niklas Luhmann, *The reality of the mass media*, Stanford (Stanford University Press, 2000).

understanding society and our world at large. So, how did the Internet revolution, and particularly, social media have changed the landscape of sport broadcasting?

Media and its Most Important Content

The concomitant processes mentioned above – urbanisation, education/literacy, industrialisation/commercialisation – have unintentionally created what we understand today as commercial media.^{26 27} With the rapid urbanisation, we started to see larger groups of individuals now sharing a common space, and thus a common interest for what was going on in their surroundings. With the impossibility of talking to everyone and knowing all the news about their surroundings via either living those experiences or talking to someone who saw it, media came in and bridged that gap. This could only happen if those urbanised individuals were able to follow the news through the upcoming powerful medium – newspaper – which means that they had to be able to read, and not only read any language, but the *official national* language. Here education and literacy helped in creating this avid readership, and also a sense of *imagined community* around the same customs, values, and language.^{28 29 30} For the last concomitant process, if it were not for the invention of the printing press and the ability to mass produce newspapers more cheaply, then most likely this medium would have become inaccessible for those urbanised masses. Above that, as those early newspapers were privately owned and ran as business enterprises, the ability to turn up profit was a requisite and thus two other processes that are integral for the understanding sport as a content

26. Jackson, “Reflections on communication and sport,” 100-112.

27. Rowe, *Sport, Culture and the Media*.

28. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (Verso Books, 2006).

29. David Rowe, “Reflections on communication and sport: On nation and globalization,” *Communication & Sport* 1, No: 1-2 (2013): 18-29.

30. Garry Whannel, “Reflections on communication and sport: On mediatization and cultural analysis,” *Communication & Sport*, No: 1-2 (2013): 7-17.

evolved. Newspaper editors and owners started to sell parts of their pages to advertisers to make larger profits, and those would, in turn, want to reach wider audiences/readers for their advertisements. To get more readers, and thus sell for more their pages' spaces, owners and editors turned to one sort of content that had unique characteristics that attracted the masses: sport.

In order to attract readers, the content on those pages had to not only inform them but entertain them.³¹ At the same time that the concomitant process of forming commercial media was taking place, we have another by-product that is the invention of what we understand today as modern sport. As such, both commercial media and sport are part of the wider processes of invented traditions that took place in the mid and late 1800s Europe.³² While sport can be considered to be entirely physical – in a sense that it happens through bodily co-presence – the complete opposite is true for media – it is mostly symbolic and, in its essence, carries the notion of mediating co-presence.³³ In a way, sport needs media as much as media needs sport in a strong symbiotic relationship. Media needs sport, mainly because sport serves to both inform and entertain the masses. As argued by Jackson,³⁴ sport has six distinct characteristics that make it the ideal content for media: it attracts large crowds; it is easily translatable to other cultures; it is less expensive to produce; it involves human drama; it involves real people, and it provides pleasure. It is common to see on distinct media reports the number of people attending the live event, as with sport mega-events. The FIFA 2018 Men's World Cup managed to attract over three million people to its 64 matches, nevertheless this number gets dwarfed when compared to the overall (mediated)

31. Rowe, *Sport, Culture and the Media*.

32. Eric Hobsbawm, "Mass-producing traditions: Europe, 1870-1914," *The invention of Tradition* 215 (1983).

33. Rowe, *Sport, Culture and the Media*.

34. Jackson, "Reflections on communication and sport", 100-112.

audience – over 7.5 billion engagements across their different digital platforms (FIFA.com as the website with the most traffic worldwide, the FIFA app as the most downloaded app in 128 countries), over 3 billion watching games on the different platforms, and around 1 billion watching ‘live’ the final game between France and Croatia.³⁵

In a sense, the crowds attracted by sport are not only related to the in-stadia attendance. One should focus on the mediated consumption of the on-field action and all the ancillary programs as talk shows, videos, best moments, commentaries, etc. According to Jackson,³⁶ this is only possible because sport has this inherent characteristic of being easily translated to other cultures, in a sense that rules, values, and cultures tend to be universally found across different places. Again, using the 2018 FIFA Men’s World Cup as example, from the issued Fan IDs by the organising committee, one can see that half of the people attending were foreign (non-Russian) fans, coming from all corners of the world with China (68,000), USA (52,000), Mexico (44,000), Argentina (37,000), Brazil (35,000), UK (31,000), Colombia (31,000), Germany (30,000) and Peru (27,000) among the top 10.³⁷ In respect of the third characteristic, it might sound counter-intuitive to claim that sport as a content is cheaper to produce than other forms of entertainment (movies, series, etc) when we are constantly bombarded by the media with facts and figures highlighting the costs for securing the rights to broadcast mega-events as the FIFA Men’s World Cup. Yet when analysing all the ancillary programs, talk-shows, commentaries, documentaries, etc., that sport allows media outlets to develop, then we can understand how a one and a half hour live game can

35. “2018 FIFA World Cup Tickets: Facts and Figures”, FIFA (website), Accessed 24 October 2018, <https://resources.fifa.com/image/upload/2018-fifa-world-cuptm-tickets-facts-and-figures.pdf?cloudid=uovvofswmbk28x69dknj>.

36. Jackson, “Reflections on communication and sport,” 100-112.

37. “The 2018 FIFA World Cup in Numbers, FIFA (website), Accessed 24 October 2018, <https://resources.fifa.com/image/upload/the-2018-fifa-world-cuptm-in-numbers.pdf?cloudid=vej99mubas9idvf47rl>.

37. Jackson, “Reflections on communication and sport,” 100-112.

become over four hours of content – the same is not true for movies, TV series, etc., as they normally tend to end on itself. Moreover, what makes sport unique as a content is that distinct media outlets fight for it; the content is the genuine, in the sense that it puts real individuals in real situations of contest where drama can unfold. In a way, our interest in sport relies on the fact that we are unaware of the final results – the uncertainty of outcome^{38 39} and by involving real people we become interested in all the surrounding stories and histories of those athletes as human beings, or what Luhmann⁴⁰ and Rowe⁴¹ conceptualised as the ‘dirt’, ‘scandals’, and ‘norm violations’ that are so keen for mass media.

In summary, sport can be said to be the ideal content for media as it complements media’s predominantly symbolic existence by providing content created by real people, who have their own real background histories and stories, which can prolong in unimagined fashion the length of the on-field performativity that is considered the core of sport as a mediated product. Yet, how does the new ICTs as social networking platforms come to complement and compete against the traditional media outlets like TV, newspaper, and radio? How has those new platforms reshaped our consumption and production of sport as primary content? Do we still engage in a mediated fashion with athletes and events as is connecting to media channels? Who has the *power* to shape and re-shape the narratives about the events?

The Changing Landscape of Media Broadcasting

As argued in the introduction, the development of new ICTs has the power to change the current media broadcasting landscape, and especially the way we as audience consume

38. Simon Rottenberg, “The baseball players' labor market,” *Journal of Political Economy* 64, No: 3 (1956): 242-258.

39. Walter C. Neale, “The peculiar economics of professional sports,” *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 78, No: 1 (1964): 1-14.

40. Luhmann, *The reality of the mass media*.

41. Rowe, “Reflections on communication and sport.”

and produce sport as a content⁴² to the point we should be characterising consumers as prosumers.⁴³ To understand those changes we need to trace historically the roots of broadcasting to the two concomitant motives for mass media existence: creating a sense of national identity, and entertainment.^{44 45 46} Intuitively, we might assume that sport essentially fulfils just the latter function of media. Nevertheless, it is also part and parcel of the former, not only by its characteristics as providing a shared and common cultural element for individuals to speak about, but especially by the ways media represent sport, athletes, and fans.^{47 48} In a way, media can be considered the Fourth Power as in the figure of one of the ideological apparatuses identified by Louis Althusser,⁴⁹ and thus having control of the production and distribution of content becomes paramount in shaping our interpretation of the world.⁵⁰ As identified in Billings & Hardin,⁵¹ the disruption brought by new media in the figure of further digitisation, connectivity and mobility of media production and consumption, are reshaping both the locus of control and interactivity when compared to traditional media. To comprehend how those two concomitant elements have disrupted media consumption and production in the following section we will discuss how new media both

42. Petersen-Wagner, "Cultural consumption."

43. Ritzer and Jurgenson, "Production, consumption, presumption."

44. Anderson, *Imagined communities*.

45. Rowe, "Reflections on communication and sport."

46. Whannel, "Reflections on communication and sport."

47. Stuart Hall ed., *Representation: Cultural representations and signifying practices* (Sage, 2nd Ed, 2013).

48. Renan Petersen-Wagner, "Symbolic Footprints: Media Representations of Host Countries," 2017, <http://eprints.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/4063/>.

49. Louis Althusser, *On the reproduction of capitalism: Ideology and ideological state apparatuses* (Verso Books, 2014).

50. Luhmann, *The reality of the mass media*.

51. Andrew C. Billings and Marie Hardin, eds., *Routledge handbook of sport and new media* (Routledge, 2014).

complement and compete with traditional media, and the distinct roles played by audiences on both types of media.

Legacy and New Media and Sport

As argued above, the main distinction between legacy media and new media is the reshaping of the locus of control – who controls the ownership of production and delivery of content – and the further interactivity possible through a two-way communication style. Those concomitant processes need to be read as both complementing the way traditionally audiences consumed sport, but also complementary in a way that it allows different ways of attaining sociality. In Billings & Hardin,⁵² it is discussed the complementarity through the different reasons audiences use distinct platforms – think about the multiple social media platforms you engage with every day (i.e., YouTube, Twitch, Instagram, WhatsApp, Facebook, Weibo, etc.) – to access different type of content and on different time and places. Nevertheless, we need to understand those platforms as competing for our already full and busy schedule as there is only a certain amount of time we can devote per day to media. As such, new media by its complementary/competitive nature has the power to destabilise the once monolithic grasp that legacy media used to have by providing an alternative space where audiences can produce and engage.⁵³ Moreover, new media is normally associated with two different technologies – some would even equate new media to those technologies – that are mobility and digital (Internet^{54 55}). Those technologies further enhance the ability of new media to complement and compete with legacy media for our attention.

52. Ibid.

53. Ibid.

54 Brett Hutchins, “Mobile Media Sport: The Case for Building a Mobile Media and Communications Research Agenda,” *Communication & Sport* (2018): 2167479518788833.

In Billings & Hardin,⁵⁶ six different characteristics are identified that differentiate legacy from new media in respect of how audiences select the platform they wish to use in order to follow their favourite sport, event, or athlete. Those characteristics are locus of control; the level of interactivity; temporal constraints; fidelity; screen size; and accessibility. Audiences decisions come especially by how those six characteristics relate to their overall intention as when they are seeking eustress or entertainment most likely the chosen platform will be the one that provides the most similar experience of being there in the stadia, so one platform that can combine all audio-visual elements in the most authentic way: TV, and especially large screen TVs. Nevertheless, audiences also seek learning as an intention to engage with media, especially by finding and understanding different stats and historical figures and thus TV stops to be the main medium for accessing it and written information takes prominence as newspapers and magazines. However, both the legacies above media are monolithic in their temporal constraints, as news that appear on printed versions usually are already ‘old news’ and thus new media – think about the instantaneity of Twitter for following a sport event – comes to both compete and complement the mediated consumer experience of this information seeking audience. As argued at the start of this section, our desire for mediated consumption comes from our necessity to be with others, and thus our decision to use different media outlets also sits on how we can use them to create different group affiliations. Those affiliations can be read as both intra-audience – when audience engage with other audience – and also parasocial interactions – normally when the audience engage with famous athletes, managers, journalists.⁵⁷

55. Holly Thorpe, “Action sports, social media, and new technologies: Towards a research agenda,” *Communication & sport* 5, No: 5 (2017): 554-578.

56. Ibid.

57. Ibid.

In respect of the latter, in Billings & Hardin⁵⁸ it is argued that “[...] sport audiences can evade the constraints of both media companies and sports organizations through more direct communication with athletes,” meaning that their mediated relationship with athletes or their favourite managers and journalists are now to be more authentic and direct – without the interference of a further medium (i.e. the broadcaster). Moreover, Vincent & Kian⁵⁹ understand that “the athlete-fan interactive experience was redefined by Twitter as many Olympic athletes bypassed the traditional meticulously scripted public relations releases and tweeted directly to their ‘imagined community’ of followers throughout the 17-day duration of the Olympic Games” in a way that legacy media would be unable to do. In respect of this parasocial interaction between audience and their favourite athlete, journalist or manager, Sauder & Blaszk⁶⁰ uncovered that what enhanced this mediated connection was the ability of audiences to see backstage the athletes’ lives. In a way, social networking spaces provide a space for athletes to share their insider perspective of the event, both complementing and competing for our attention regarding the front-stage (the main sporting event). As such, it is important to ask how our desire for the mundane, the drama, and the real lived life of athletes through this voyeuristic perspective might come to disrupt our traditional engagement with legacy media broadcasting of sporting events. Would we be more interested in the backstage or on the frontstage? What is driving our attention to the event?

In respect of the former – intra-audience effect – social networking platforms aligned with both digital and mobile technologies provide the ideal space for fans to congregate and

58. Ibid.

59. John Vincent, and Edward Kian, “Sport, New Media, and National Identity,” In *Routledge Handbook of Sport and New Media* (2014): 299-310.

60. Molly Hayes Sauder, Molly and Matthew Blaszk, “23 Players, 23 Voices: An Examination of the US Women’s National Soccer Team on Twitter During the 2015 World Cup,” *Communication & Sport* 6, No: 2 (2018): 175-202.

experience their shared and communal passion with their favourite event⁶¹. In a way, the audience even being physically alone (i.e. in their living room watching on TV) can be together via digital platforms like Twitter and Facebook. The experience of watching sport through legacy media (i.e. TV) is complemented by a second-screen – also known as screen stacking – where audiences can engage with others who are also watching around the world. Thus, new media provides the preferential platform for building this sense of a global community of followers who share the same passion for a particular sport or event. It is important to ask if this so-called second screen – our mobile phone or our tablet – where we are engaging with others via social networking platforms is not becoming the primary screen (i.e. we are devoting more attention to it), and TV thus becomes just the background noise – the second screen – that allows us to bond.

The questions that can be raised by the disruption caused by new media to the sport broadcasting landscape are: How are audiences engaging with local and global events? How are audiences using social networking platforms (i.e. Twitter) to build parasocial relationships and intra-audience communities? Who are the individuals whom audiences connect on both parasocial relationships and intra-audience communities? Are traditional broadcasters (the right owners) losing audience engagement because of new media? Are traditional broadcasters using new media to complement their legacy media approach? How can traditional broadcasters co-opt new media?

CASE STUDY

This case will mainly analyse the Twitter accounts of a sport association, the Qatar Football Association (@QFA), and a mega event to be hosted in Qatar, the FIFA 2022 World

61. Petersen-Wagner, "The Football Supporter in a Cosmopolitan Epoch."

Cup (@roadto2022), using KeyHole,⁶² a software specifically designed to measure, in precise detail, a brand or trend's impact on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.

To begin, we can run an account analysis (Table 1), which allows us to compare different Twitter accounts. In this analysis, we will consider also the Qatar Tennis Association (@QatarTennis), the Commercial Bank Qatar Masters (@CBQatarMasters) and the Doha's Diamond League (@dldoha) Twitter accounts. Clearly the Qatar Football Association have the most followers, yet it is the major/local event Doha Diamond League which garners the highest engagement rate. This suggests that those who follow the @dldoha, engage with the account more than the mega and major events.

	@QFA	@QatarTennis	@roadto2022	@CBQatarMasters	@dldoha
Type	Assoc	Assoc	Mega Event	Major Event	Major/Local
Total Posts	38,199	3,887	7,704	2,036	1,457
Total Followers	116,671	9,107	93,080	4,247	2,858
Total Following	274	119	296	494	231
Avg Likes	29	9	180	9	20
Avg Retweets	12	2	57	3	6
Avg Engagement Rate	0.03%	0.12%	0.25%	0.28%	0.90%

Table. 1. Account Analysis; *Source:* Twitter

However, this does not ascertain much about who is involved in the engagement and where it is taking place. Therefore, we can run bespoke engagement analysis for the sport association (@QFA), mega event (@roadto2022), major event (@CBQatarMasters) and

62. Keyhole Software, Accessed 10 November 2018, <https://keyholesoftware.com/>.

major/local event (@lddoha). This has been done by taking a weekly average of engagement for each account; this includes tweets (original posts), retweets and replies.

1. @QFA – Qatar Football Association

Posts	Users	Engagement	Reach	Impressions
443	303	79	100,000+	100,000+

Source: Twitter

The Qatar Football Association are quite active, tweeting on average 443 times over a 7 day period, 303 users on average post using the @QFA handle, but the level of engagement generated is modest, with 79 people on average interacting with each post.

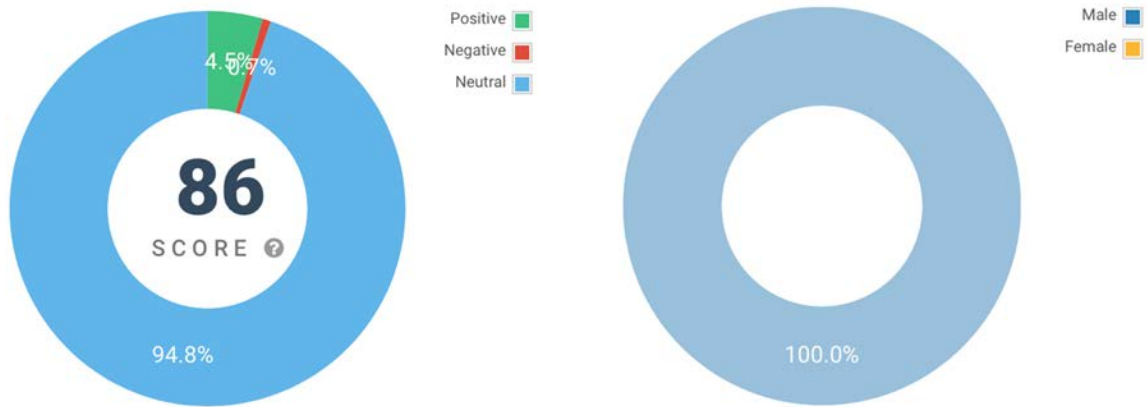
1.1. Top Influencers



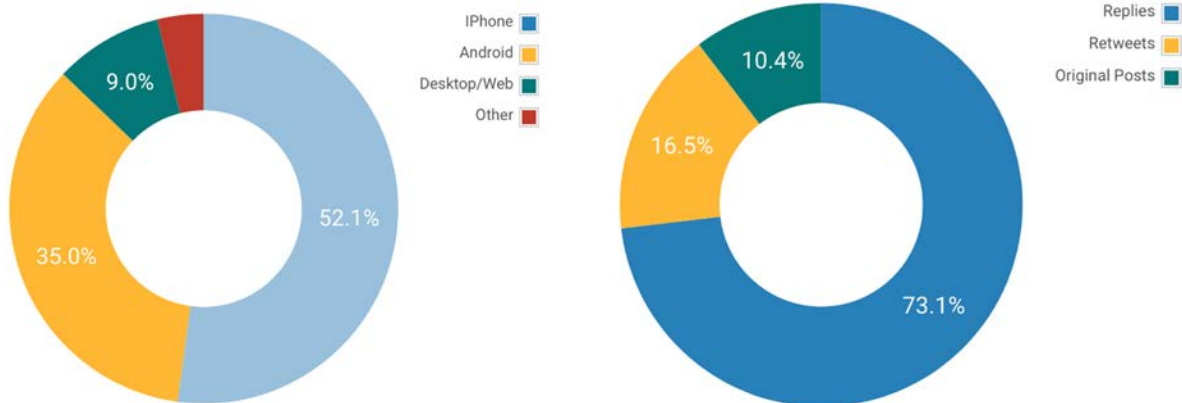
Not surprisingly, when identifying who are the top influencers – those accounts which are integral to the social media performance of the @QFA Twitter account – we can see a prevalent presence of media and journalistic accounts such as Fox Sports Asia and Singapore and FourFourTwo. This is linked to the fact that most of the @QFA account activity focuses on the national team and their international games, so that, in the week preceding the friendly match against Ecuador, InfoCancha, an Ecuadorian news outlet, turned out to be the top influencer. It is not easy, for national associations' social accounts, to generate a significant traffic around their activity that is more discontinuous compared to the clubs', in addition it is also more informative than creative.

Sentiment Analysis

Demographic Breakdown



Device Breakdown



Analysing the sentiment, generally the majority is neutral, which is consistent with what we have stated earlier in relation to the informative, and consequently neutral, nature of the @QFA Twitter account.

From a demographic point of view, all those who engage with @QFA tend to be male: again, this result is not surprising, if we consider the general characteristics of football fans, even more evident in the MENA region, and the nature of the content of @QFA posts being male orientated.

The unstoppable trend toward the change in the consumption of media content is confirmed by the fact that 87.1 per cent of those interacting with the @QFA handle use mobile devices, also suggesting that as part of their ongoing social media strategy it is

important to concentrate on mobile content. Most of the engagement comes from replies, which suggests their capacity to start a conversation is higher than that of getting other accounts to tag their account in an external conversation or to create appealing content to be shared with others.

2. @roadto2022 – Mega Event FIFA 2022 World Cup

Posts	Users	Engagement	Reach	Impressions
317	249	1,390	100,000+	100,000+

Source: Twitter

Qatar's official FIFA 2022 World Cup Twitter handle @roadto2022 has a similar profile to @QFA. However they garner vastly more engagement, with 1,390 interacting with post associated with @roadto2022. The global nature of the event, compared to the more local nature of the football association, is the main reason for this higher engagement even if the event will take place only in four years.

Top Influencers



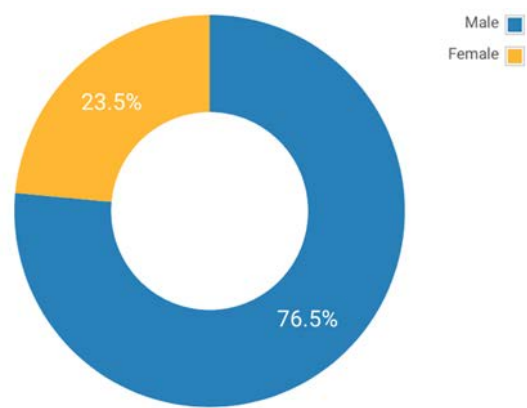
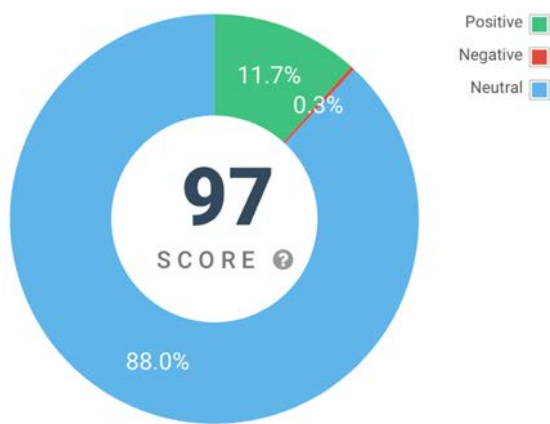
Once again, a sports broadcaster is an influential part of @roadto2022 social media, in Alkass Channel, who operate eight dedicated sports channels 24/7, in Qatar. More interestingly, among the top influencers, we find also Mathieu Baumel, a world rally driver, Dakar winner, three-time World Cup rally raid winner and 4x Middle East Rally champion, who is extremely popular in the MENA region. This can further explain the higher engagement surrounding @roadto2022, and demonstrates the importance of top athletes in driving traffic

to other accounts: it is sufficient that a popular athlete, even if not involved in an event, tweets something in relation of that event to generate significant traffic. Not surprisingly, another top influencer is Mohammad bin Hamad, who chaired the committee that won the bid to host the 2022 FIFA World Cup and is the managing director for the Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy, which is responsible for delivering the 2022 FIFA World Cup.

Sentiment Analysis

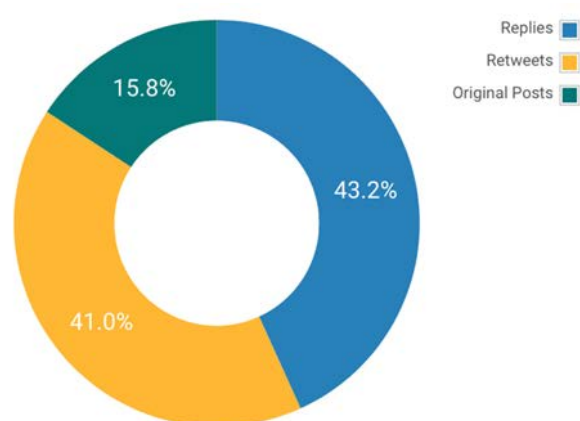
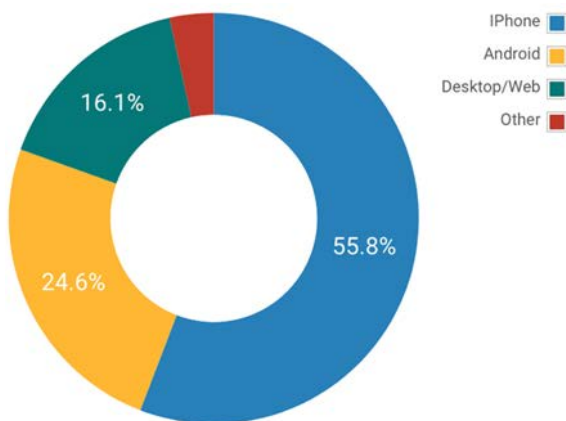
Demographic

Breakdown



Device Breakdown

Engagement Type



Analysing the sentiment, generally, the majority is neutral, with a more significant element of positivity than @QFA, mainly due to the interaction with the celebrities advertising the event. Demographically, those engaging with @roadto2022 are largely male. However there is a larger proportion of females, which again is related to the more global audience of the event.

Akin to @QFA, those interacting with the @roadto2022 handle do so through mobile devices (80.4 percent), which again demonstrates a trend toward the change in the consumption of media content. Finally, there is more engagement in retweets, which suggests that the content posted is more attractive and confirms that engaging with popular influencers is beneficial regarding traffic generation.

Teaching Activity

Major and Local Events

The disadvantage of this type of analysis is it requires data to analyse. Unfortunately, there is not enough data for either the @CBMastersQatar or @DLDoha, suggesting the social media strategy is temporary for the major and local events, compared to the social media strategy employed for the FIFA 2022 World Cup in Doha.

Therefore, in small groups, you need to work as the social media strategists for either @CBMastersQatar or @DLDoha and develop a sustainable social media strategy to raise the online engagement for one of these two events, thinking about content and timing.

Qatar Masters (Golf)

The Qatar Masters, also known by The Commercial Bank Qatar Masters is a golf tournament held at the Doha Golf Club in Doha, Qatar. Established in 1998, it is one of five golf tournaments held in the Persian Gulf, sanctioned by the European Tour. The others include, Abu Dhabi HSBC Golf Championship, DP World Tour Championship in Dubai, Omega Dubai Desert Classic and the Oman Open. The tournament has grown over recent years with the prize money reaching over \$2.5million.

Doha Diamond League

The IAAF Diamond League is a series of track and field elite athletic competitions held annually around the globe. Originating from the IAAF Golden League, the Diamond League Series began in 2010, with the aim to enhance the global appeal of athletics by hosting events locally across the globe, specifically China, Qatar, Morocco and the United States of America. Qatar has currently completed the 10th edition of the League in Doha.

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