SOCIAL MEDIA, FUTBOL, AND CRISIS: AN EXPLORATORY CASE STUDY EXAMINING THE FIFA WORLD CUP ADDRESSING PLAYER CONCUSSIONS

SAMANTHA HUGHEY*

ABSTRACT

Social media strategies and practices continue to be integrated across various athletic sports, particularly futbol. One of the recent global athletic events that occurred where social media played an important role was the 2014 Fédération Internationale de Football Association World Cup in Brazil. While social media brings forth great opportunities for teams to engage with fans and share real-time updates, it also allows active fans to voice concerns around particular issues like player safety i.e. concussions, which could lead to a crisis situation. This particular incident in question involved futbol player Christoph Kramer, who suffered a blow to the head that left him slumped over during the Germany versus Argentina championship match. Fans are linking the lack of concern for player safety to the FIFA brand, making an outcry for protocol to be adapted to tackle the growing issue surrounding players who have suffered from concussions. The FIFA organization waited until September 9, 2014 to address the public and provide a plan for future occurrences of this kind. Based on the theoretical framework of Coombs’ Situational Crisis Communication Theory, the FIFA commission did not properly assessing the crisis at hand and actually implemented the denial posture of crisis response instead of taking proactive actions to address this situation with their stakeholders.

Keywords: crisis communications, situational crisis communication theory, sports, social media

INTRODUCTION

This case study will look at how the sporting world has been impacted by social networking sites, as well as how the stakeholders of such organizations (which have been defined as the fans, commentators, players, and coaches) have used the medium to express their opinion on various matters. This particular case will be examining the incident of player safety, specifically concussions, through the lens of Coombs’ Situational Crisis Communication Theory (Coombs, 2014) and examine emerging themes appearing on social media during the 2014 FIFA World Cup.

* Graduate Student, Department of Communication, University of Louisville, 2301 S 3rd St Louisville, KY 40292, United States of America, samanthamhughey@gmail.com
After neglecting this particular concern, the organization will need to repair its image, reputation and try to restore confidence and trust among fans in order to have a strong community perception before sponsoring future athletic events. This case study will also discuss best practices and implications for further social media research and applied strategies within athletics along with recommendations for what needs to be done before the upcoming FIFA Women’s World Cup.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

History of global sporting events
The first Olympic Games were held in Athens, Greece April 6, 1896; this coming together of countries and nationalities for the sportsmanship that surrounded the conceptual ideology of the common ground allowed for the world to put aside differences and unite under a common sporting arena. Throughout history these events, summer and winter Olympics alike, have allowed citizens to have an opportunity to compete, and cheer, for their country on an international level.

Georgios Kavetsos and Stefan Szymanski did a study in 2009 addressing how hosting a major sporting event, whether it is the World Cup or the Olympics, can have a financial positive impact, as well as providing the host country a “feelgood” factor, otherwise known as happiness. The study provided four key areas that can lead to both the economic rise of the home country, but also can assist in the happiness by hosting such an event to the locals; these four include: employment and wages, sports stadiums and their legacy, tourism, and infrastructure investments and urban regeneration. “Our findings suggest a significant and positive short term feelgood effect across all gender-age groups.” (Kavetsos & Szymanski, 2010)

This particular competition amongst the nations is one of a kind – rivaled only by the World Cup. While the Olympics is noted as one of the most popular global sporting event fans flock to the pitches every four years to watch countries compete in the international futbol tournament.

Origin of FIFA and the World Cup
Founded in 1904, the Federation Internationale de Football Association, otherwise known as FIFA, “it was the beginning of a new era in world football and the inaugural event proved a remarkable success, both in a sporting and a financial sense” (History of FIFA - The first FIFA World Cup™, 1994).

“Over the past 25 years football has enhanced its status as the world’s leading game, reaching into other branches of society, commerce and politics. Football, more than any other factor, has enveloped whole regions, people and nations. With approximately 200 million active players it now constitutes a substantial chunk of the leisure industry, having opened up new markets for itself and for the rest of the business world. The potential has yet to be exhausted, especially in Asia and North America. As of mid-2007, FIFA has grown to include 208 member associations, thus making it one of the biggest and certainly the most popular sports federation in the world.” (History of FIFA - Globalisation, 1994).
Uruguay hosted the first World Cup in July of 1930; and since there have been 19 tournaments held in various countries across the globe. Thirty-two teams qualify for the sporting event representing various locations in the world. Thus, those wanting to tune into the matches are doing so from different global sites and are using a variety of mediums of media to do so.

**Transition from traditional media to social media**

As the years have progressed and technological advancements have surfaced the enjoyment of being a spectator or even how one watches a sporting event has significantly evolved with the times. From radio broadcasting to sports specific television networks to social media – content and checking for results of various matches has changed. Drew Hancherick studied how the times have changed and how the medium that audiences have used have shifted from radio and newspapers in the 1920s to magazines and television in the 1930s to the internet in the 1990s. “In the world of sports, services like Twitter might be the beginning of the end for traditional journalism.” (Hancherick, 2011)

Social networking sites were defined by Nicole Ellison in a 2008 study “as a web-based service that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system.” (Ellison, 2008)

Since the inception of the World Wide Web many social networking sites have come into play, generated a following of users, and then, with a few in particular, have phased out. Within the last five years, however, it has been seen that social media, especially that of Facebook and Twitter, were going to be around for the long-haul; Facebook having turned ten in 2014 and Twitter, having been created in 2006, turning eight. Mashable has noticed the trend of social media playing an active role in the viewership and engagement of fans on the sites particularly during sporting events. “More than 80% of sports fans monitor social media sites while watching games on TV, and more than 60% do so while watching live events. Players have capitalized on social media and fueled massive buzz as well.” (Laird, 2012)

**2014 World Cup fan engagement**

Twitter, with its inception in 2006, created a shared community of which account holders could follow various people, ranging from brands, to scholars, to athletes and celebrities. This platform created a place to have a dialogue and quickly receive updates from those that one followed.

These trends were prominent in the 2014 FIFA World Cup when Twitter launched a rebranding of the popular social networking site. This allowed users to create an interactive experience; they could choose their team, recommendations on who to follow then appeared, along with a live stream of matches and official hashtags to follow to ensure none of the action was missed. Players also offered fans a unique behind the scenes perspective from their own personal Instagram and Twitter accounts. (Twitter, 2014) Ryan Baucom, a staff writer for Sports Business Journal,
compiled the numbers of followers that the United States of America’s soccer team has, along with key international players and various properties that also have a voice in the conversation. These can be seen in figure one. (Baucom, 2014)

According to Mashable “this year’s championship is more digitally interactive than ever before. With apps and beefed-up streaming services.” (Desta, 2014) There were multiple ways to watch the event in Brazil. Schiltz and Sheffer contributed a piece for the Web Journal of Mass Communication Research in which they did a study on how people were consuming sports and “results suggested that the social media are playing an increasingly important role in sports consumption.” (Schultz & Sheffer, 2011)

Twitter shared with its users on their blog that in the first match against Brazil and Croatia there were 12.2 million tweets during the actual time of play, 150 countries had been a part of the conversation, and that Brazil’s top player, Neymar Jr., gained ten-times the amount of followers on his normal growth average – equating to approximately 165,000 followers following the 3-1 Brazil win during the first game of group play. (Rogers, 2014)

Social media, Twitter in particular, provided a platform of which fans, commentators, players, and coaches could engage and interact surrounding the 2014 World Cup. From this arose fans reaching out to players, commentators weighed in on every game - no matter if they were in Brazil or not working exclusively with ESPN. Hashtags were created; games could be followed simultaneously by the click of #USAvsURG and as the #GroupOfDeath trended so did other popular aspects of the event #ThingsTimHowardCouldSave. A meme according to dictionary.com is “a cultural item that is transmitted by repetition and replication in a manner analogous to the biological transmission of genes or a cultural item in the form of an image, video, phrase, etc., that is spread via the Internet and often altered in a creative or humorous way.” (meme, 2014) Particular memes were exclusively created for this event ranging from the Italian biter to the beating that Germany gave Brazil in the final four match up.

Crisis communication within athletics
Coombs defines a crisis as “the perception of an unpredictable event that threatens important expectancies of stakeholders and can seriously impact the organization’s performance and generate negative outcomes.” (Coombs, 2012)

In a 2012 study of the University of Miami’s scholarship scandal involving athletic booster, Nevin Shapiro, Brown and Billings addressed the rise of social media usage within the sports fans demographic and how crisis communication was being altered from traditional sources. Based on the social media platform Twitter, there are 271 million monthly active users with 500 million tweets being sent out each day (Twitter, 2014) The authors of the piece analyzed various fan tweets through programs such as Twazzup and searching for key words, or hashtags, which were attributed to the crisis surrounding the university. “The growing presence of Twitter as a venue for sports
fans to interact with athletes, sports journalists, and other fans makes it an ideal location to express these reputation repair strategies.” (Brown & Billings, 2012) The one issue that arose - leading to a public outcry on the social networking site was that of player safety and concussions.

**Crises arise in the World Cup**

The 2014 World Cup’s crises included the stadiums not being completed in time for group play to commence, the jungle humidity that required water breaks. Twitter, along with other social networking sites such as Facebook and blogs, provided an outlet for spectators to voice their opinions on the controversies that were surrounding the international tournament. During the 2014 FIFA World Cup there were five reported concussions. The most notable being on July 13 when Germany and Argentina met in the championship match; 23 year old midfielder Christoph Kramer suffered a blow to the head that left him slumped over. Those officiating the match allowed play to continue, as well as let him reenter the pitch after having stumbled over. Kramer reported later during an interview with Agence France-Presse that he had no memory of the World Cup Final (France-Presse, 2014).

Fans, as well as commentators, took to Twitter to express their surprise that Kramer was still allowed to be playing, as well as their anger that he should have been examined much more thoroughly. Fans are linking the concern of player safety to the FIFA brand, making an outcry for protocol to be adapted to the growing issue surround players who have suffered from the injury. The FIFA organization waited until September 9, 2014 to address the public and provide a plan for future issues surround this issue. In addition to this announcement, the medical commissioner for FIFA has requested that in order to adequately assess the severity of head injuries the referees stop play for three minutes. (Associated Press, 2014)

**Stakeholders take to Twitter**

“Twitter gives highly identified fans a medium to express the connection they feel with their chosen team and allows them to defend their team when a crisis arises.” (Brown & Billings, 2012) The public used this social media platform as a place to ask for reform and for FIFA to make a change in their policies in order for player safety. This, however, was not the case. FIFA did not respond to any of the tweets that were being sent out – with a following of 7,938,900 and with close to 45,997 tweets (as of October 8, 2014) spread across three of their main accounts (@FIFAcom, @FIFAWorldCup, and @FIFAmmedia).

The overall lack of communication between the organization and the public on the issue of player safety and concussion was an improper way for handling the crisis at hand. In Coombs’ Situational Crisis Communication Theory he highlights key means that can be used when addressing a predicament known as his crisis response strategies: denial posture (attacking the accuser, denial, scapegoating), diminishment posture (excusing, justification), rebuilding posture (compensation, apology), and bolstering posture (reminding, ingratiation, victimage). (Coombs, 2014)
Based on the theoretical framework of the SCCT, the FIFA commission was not properly assessing the crisis at hand and actually implemented the denial posture of crisis response instead of taking proactive actions to address this situation with their stakeholders. In the text it’s noted that there are certain recommendations that one must do when a crisis emerges within their organization. One being “all victims should be provided an expression of sympathy,” (Coombs, 2014) this concept was not used by FIFA; especially via tweets responding to the public who reached out to the corporation by the social networking site Twitter.

The crisis of the players during the World Cup who were concussed during the tournament were an issue of themselves, however, the real issue on hand is the fact that when the stakeholders were ignored by FIFA. A stakeholder is anyone who has invested value of the organization, for this specific case a stakeholder is considered a player, a fan, or a commentator, and in this instance these key members’ voices were perceived as not being heard.

Now FIFA must repair their reputation, as it has been perceived that the organization does not care about the safety of their players, as well as also creating a strategy to combat the negativity that has been geared towards them on social media. By following steps of action highlighted by Coombs the organization can not only have a more positive influence on their Twitter audience but it will also create a plan of action for when the women’s World Cup takes place in the summer of 2015.

This case study will take a look at how FIFA failed their stakeholders, thus tarnishing their reputation and what proper steps that should be taken to ensure that when a crisis of this magnitude potentially develops again in the future they are handling it appropriately.

2. METHODOLOGY

This is an exploratory case study focusing on analyzing FIFA, the 2014 Men’s World Cup, and the social networking platform Twitter in terms of handling a crisis. The work of Coombs’ was used as an outline and guide to identify the type crisis and gage organization’s response to the crisis, as well as defining the association’s stakeholders. Looking at the history of large globalized sporting events and the way that the fans engagement has shifted in the last decade from traditional media to that of wanting an interactive online interface, it was found to be vital for organizations that house these events to have an active presence on social media in which their stakeholders would be able interact and engage through the utilization of user generated content. The World Cup ran from June 12 to July 13, and the concern of player safety, primarily concussions, arose during the tournament.

FIFA did not acknowledge the growing trepidation that was beginning to surface through social media, Twitter in particular. The case dissected the growing role of Twitter during the world’s focus on Brazil during those 32 days, and a more narrow focus was on the impact from a key influencer’s online presence. A specific look was taken from the influencer’s account during the timeframe of the tournament, and at
tweets that were sent out in conjunction with a player receiving a head injury in direct correlation to what had occurred on the pitch. The tweets of which were considered important to this study, openly referencing FIFA, concussions and/or head injuries, as well as requesting a form of change from the organization.

These components will allow for examination FIFA, as an organization, and how they addressed the crisis of player concussions during the World Cup. As well as providing recommendations on how to proceed in the future to meet the needs of their stakeholders for future events, in particular the 2015 Women’s World Cup.

2.1. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

According to Coombs, SCCT is a theory based on the interaction between the organization and their stakeholders. During the men's 2014 World Cup, FIFA was met with disgruntled stakeholders, fans and commentators alike, who were frustrated at how the organization was handling the issue of when players were concussed during play and then allowed back on to the pitch without the proper medical examination.

The rise of social media in the last ten years has allowed for an easily accessible platform for those stakeholders to voice their opinions in a very public way. The user-generated content has begun to be an avid approach to stakeholders calling out an organization, or company, when said organization or company begins failing to meet the needs and the values of which they stand for in the eyes of the consumer, or in the case of FIFA - the eyes of their fans.

Coombs’ argues “that there four basic rules when using online crisis communication channels: (1) be present, (2) be where the action is, (3) be there before the crisis, and (4) be polite” (Coombs, 2012) during the initial crisis occurring. FIFA, while they were present on Twitter, were not addressing those who were asking for a protocol of when a player was hurt, even though they where were the action was.

Prior to this specific World Cup the issues of concussions were already present in the stakeholder’s eyes; according to FIFA medical committee chairman, Michel D’Hooghe, “a concussion case occurs on average once in every 20 games.” (Harris, 2014, para. 14) While it may be argued that the time in between such cases are infrequent, the concern during the 2014 World Cup was the lack of a plan of action on how to deal, or interact with those talking about, the concern of player safety. In the same regards the post crisis handling of the issue was not evident, as the organization did not address the issue or the public concerning the matter until two months following the championship game.

Coombs’ “SCCT is a stakeholder-focused approach to crisis communication,” (Coombs, 2014) and in this specific case FIFA did not focus on their stakeholders, but rather chose to ignore them and their outcry for a change via the microblogging site Twitter.
The commissioners of this global sporting event did not adequately address the crisis at hand; this can be found evident by taking a closer look at the critical factors highlighting the key concerns in this particular case study. After looking at the theoretical framework of Coombs’ theory FIFA did not take the time to meet the needs of their stakeholders, instead they did nothing. Thus causing the stakeholders to take to social media to voice their ailment with the situation, and key influencers utilized the platform as an opportunity to voice their opinions. Ultimately, FIFA had no say in how the story was told.

In order to prevent a similar case happening in future tournaments, as well as to help restore the organization’s reputation in the eyes of their stakeholders, it’s imperative to take a closer look at what was not done in the 2014 World Cup; and from there come up with an ideology of best practices to put in place.

2.2. LIST OF CRITICAL FACTORS

The engagement of the futbol fan base during the men’s 2014 World Cup was at an all-time high in the United States of America. According to the Nielsen Company more that 26.5 million people tuned into the championship game between Germany and Argentina, even with the game going into overtime. Social networking sites also noticed the incline of engagement during the event which lasted from June 12 to July 13; there were 3 billion posts and interactions on Facebook, while Twitter had more than 672 million tweets regarding the international tournament, and more than a billion futbol fans took to a digital platform to access scores, live updates, and talk about the games: “This has been the first truly mobile and social World Cup,” said FIFA President Sepp Blatter. (Bauder, 2014)

Twitter provided the following numbers based around the championship game which generated 618,725 tweets per minute - equating to 32.1 million tweets during the game. While the site does not say how many specifically reacted to Christoph Kramer’s concussion during the first half, he was in the top three of the German players who were most talked about during the match. (Wiltshire, 2014) Timothy Rapp reported on Bleacher Report, however, that upon Kramer’s concussion and he being allowed to return to the pitch caused uproar on Twitter. (Rapp, 2014)

While the main story behind the Germany v. Argentina final game was on Germany clutching the win with a 1-0 lead over the favorited Lionel Messi; Kramer’s concussion was one of the leading stories following the victory. FIFA took to twitter to congratulate the team, as well as thank Brazil for hosting and the fans for watching. But they did not respond to those asking for the protocol to be changed. They ignored those asking for an answer. Not only did FIFA not respond to the fans on the social networking site, but when contacted for comment on the story via traditional media mediums they refused; thus causing their stakeholders to come to the rational that player safety, especially those surrounding head injuries, was not an important subject matter to the organization.
Key influencers of the futbol industry took to social media, utilizing the user generated aspect of the 140 characters that are allocated within a tweet as a platform to frame their perceptions of the crisis at hand and present it with ease to those following them. Taylor Twellman, a former Major League Soccer player who was forced into retirement in 2008 from the impact of a concussion, is now the creator of Think Taylor and an advocate for creating awareness on the issue of head injuries. Twellman, an analyst for ESPN during the time of the World Cup, used the micro-blogging platform to educate, and call out FIFA for their lack of response to the player's who were suffering from head injuries.

His Twitter handle, @TaylorTwellman, has 266,000 followers and he has tweeted 29,500 times since creating his account in 2009. The nonprofit organization that he founded, the handle @ThinkTaylorORG, has 1,794 followers and 1,088 tweets; though through the use of both platforms he is standing behind, and voicing to his followers, the mission statement of his organization: “The mission of the ThinkTaylor Foundation is to create social change in the world of Traumatic Brain Injuries, by generating increased awareness, recognition and education.” (Think Taylor, 2012)

Twellman tweeted out a gif (or an animated image), along with the caption: Any questions about Perriera being unconscious?! This has to stop FIFA. #URUvsENG, which received 367 retweets, and 220 favorites during the June 19 match.

In the July 9 match between Uruguay and Argentina, he tweeted out the following: Speechless how #FIFA continue to turn an eye to the problem of traumatic brain injuries. #URG now #ARG are risking players' lives. #JOKE - this received 1,112 retweets and 855 favorites. He followed that tweet up with: I fear for Mascherano right now. He has no clue what he is doing and because FIFA has no backbone to stand up and legislate its trouble. There were 507 retweets, and 479 favorites.

During the final match when German midfielder took a blow to the head Twellman tweeted out: Here we go again FIFA...#WorldCupFinal and your ineptitude to address the head injury problem is for everyone to see. Kramer was concussed! This particular tweet had 630 retweets, and 570 favorites.

With key influencers, such as Twellman, the story that was unfolding surrounding the player’s head injuries during the World Cup is framed through an individual who believes strongly on one side of the issue. FIFA had lost control of the narrative, and ultimately the crisis, in regards to the aspect that they as an organization refused to comment.

The reputation of FIFA was already tarnished in a few of the commentators and fans' eyes prior to the World Cup concussion fiasco, however, by not responding to this crisis the organization continued to lose the trust of those key stakeholders. While the crisis was that of traditional sense, the spread of the knowledge and the lack thereof response by FIFA was extended to those who are bandwagon futbol fans.
Coombs’ highlights three types of challenges that could be perceived when a crisis arises: organic, exposure, and villain. In this particular case FIFA has been portrayed as a villain in the eyes of their stakeholders; the particular issue of the German player becoming concussed during the championship game “is simply one more battle in the larger war. The stakeholders hope to portray the organization (FIFA, in this particular case study) as a villain that needs to reform its evil ways (the lack of protocol or health assessment when a player gets hit in the head during a match).” (Coombs, 2012, pg. 25)

3. DEFINITION OF ALTERNATIVES

In order to adequately meet the needs of the fans in a suitable and appropriate way via the social media outlet, Twitter, it is recommended for the organization to take the following precautions and steps: educational training to staff surrounding social media, the creation of a dark site, and creating an updated social media crisis plan.

Educational training focused on the social media platforms, and how to address crises that may arise, would allow for the staff at FIFA to understand how to properly send a tweet or respond to an inquiry or comment from a follower. Engagement with the fan base on such sites would help create social relationships that the organization is currently lacking. Also, taking the time to work with key influencers such as Fédération Internationale des Associations de Footballeurs Professionnels and Taylor Twellman, and educating the staff on how to do so. This tactic will ease the minds of those who follow and trust them as creditable sources for information – especially during a time when the stakeholders do not like how FIFA is handling the situation. Collaboration such as this is crucial.

The global association, FIFPro, serves as the support unit and the voice of 65,000 professional players - designed to work alongside FIFA and address concerns related to the well being of players. Following the 2014 Word Cup they released a statement on June 26 regarding a need to change the concussion protocol. FIFA did not provide any form of response to the concussion crisis until September – reference to the piece released by FIFPro was not evident. The player union uses their Twitter handle, @FIFPro, to reach out and engage with their 14,800 followers.

The Twitter handles, while they are a vital instrument to be utilized, they should not only address the crisis and the concern for player safety when it came to the concussions on the field, but should be also used to point their followers to a pre-created dark site. A dark site is defined as “a section of a website...that has content but no active links. When a crisis hits the CMT can activate the link, and the dark site becomes accessible.” (Coombs, 2012, pg. 104)

This site would be housed on FIFA.com, which already has the traffic prior to large events such as the World Cup, and it should contain information regarding the policies that pertain to player safety, the rule book that those officiating the game are required to adhere to, as well timely blog posts that are being created by
professionals in the medical, as well as professional futbol, world. With the creation of such a site the organization will have the opportunity to direct those specifically speaking on the subject to a creditable forum that would be providing real time content, as well as giving the stakeholders a positive image of FIFA and that they are concerned about the player’s wellbeing.

Reworking the current social media plan or even creating such a plan will allow for the crisis team to swiftly, and properly execute, procedure when an issue arises also the organization will be able to restore the integrity that they lost in the eyes of their stakeholders. Creating various protocols and policies for the staff to be trained on to be effective on social networking sites would eliminate disconnect that has been created between the community and FIFA.

**CONCLUSION**

The increase of social media in the sporting world has increased in the last two years, and will only continue to expand as more users create profiles and more networking sites are developed. The trend of more users taking to the medium during international events has found to be evident when sports are taken to a global scale; highlights not only include what was discussed in regards to the 2014 FIFA World Cup but can also be found in the 2014 Sochi Olympics – key moments including the USA beating Russia in the men’s ice hockey game with 72,630 tweets per minute. (Fraser, 2014) In comparison to the World Cup final match-up between Germany and Argentina which generated 618,725 tweets per minute; almost nine times the amount of tweets following such a highly watched event.

In the summer of 2015 the Women’s World Cup will head to Canada; and again, soccer fans will tune into the matches cheering on their respective countries – hoping to bring home the coveted trophy. And FIFA will again be judged and scrutinized for their lack of concern by their stakeholders if they do not prepare for the risk of more concussions.

There will be more concussions, as women are more prone to head injuries – which can be contributed to falling down while trying to head the ball, according to a study done by Dr. Dawn Comstock for the Journal of Athletic Training. She reported to CBS News that “while football still dominated the field for concussions, in high school soccer girls were 64 percent more likely to sustain a concussion... “the fact that women don’t have necks as well developed as men, so that the shock absorber so to speak is not as well developed in the women,” said head-injury expert Dr. Robert Cantu.” (Hughes, 2007) With this being the case, FIFA needs to be prepared for the women soccer players to be more inclined in receiving a traumatic head injury that could result in a concussion.

FIFA is already being analyzed by those who are considered their stakeholders, the fans, the commentators, the players, etc. Going into the 2015 Women’s World Cup without a crisis plan in place could further tarnish their reputation to the point that it would be detrimental to the organization as whole. Social media will continue to be a
platform that those stakeholders will use to voice their opinions surrounding the matter, a trend that will only continue to rise from one global event to another.

FIFA needs to embrace this form of media, and instead of opposing the method embrace the idea that this form of communication can be used to their advantage, and should be used as such.
REFERENCES


### APPENDIX

FIGURE 1:

**U.S. Men’s National Team**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PLAYER</th>
<th>TWITTER</th>
<th>INSTAGRAM</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
<th>POSITION</th>
<th>CLUB</th>
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<td>498,824</td>
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<td>23,548</td>
<td>219,449</td>
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<td>73,415</td>
<td>142,390</td>
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<td>Aron Johannsson</td>
<td>33,883</td>
<td>10,501</td>
<td>44,384</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>AZ Alkmaar (Netherlands)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DeAndre Yedlin</td>
<td>32,283</td>
<td>10,740</td>
<td>43,023</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Seattle Sounders FC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brad Davis</td>
<td>32,824</td>
<td>4,103</td>
<td>36,927</td>
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<td>Houston Dynamo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fabian Johnson</td>
<td>24,127</td>
<td>12,261</td>
<td>36,388</td>
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<td>Borussia Mönchengladbach (Germany)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris Wondolowski</td>
<td>35,052</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>35,052</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>San Jose Earthquakes</td>
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<tr>
<td>John Brooks</td>
<td>18,020</td>
<td>4,939</td>
<td>22,959</td>
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<td>Hertha Berlin (Germany)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julian Green</td>
<td>20,897</td>
<td>1,504</td>
<td>22,401</td>
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<td>Bayern Munich (Germany)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Bradley</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Toronto FC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timothy Chandler</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>Eintracht Frankfurt (Germany)</td>
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**International Top 10**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Player</th>
<th>Twitter</th>
<th>Facebook</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Country</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cristiano Ronaldo</td>
<td>20,514,143</td>
<td>84,251,254</td>
<td>111,165,407</td>
<td>Portugal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lionel Messi</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>57,924,285</td>
<td>57,924,285</td>
<td>Argentina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neymar</td>
<td>10,812,792</td>
<td>23,422,716</td>
<td>34,235,508</td>
<td>Brazil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wayne Rooney</td>
<td>8,817,902</td>
<td>20,708,310</td>
<td>29,526,212</td>
<td>England</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrés Iniesta</td>
<td>8,068,350</td>
<td>20,026,487</td>
<td>28,094,837</td>
<td>Spain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mesut Özil</td>
<td>5,844,809</td>
<td>19,849,205</td>
<td>25,694,014</td>
<td>Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gerard Pique</td>
<td>8,489,377</td>
<td>12,330,058</td>
<td>20,819,435</td>
<td>Spain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iker Casillas</td>
<td>1,674,126</td>
<td>19,122,185</td>
<td>20,796,312</td>
<td>Spain</td>
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<tr>
<td>David Villa</td>
<td>5,929,530</td>
<td>14,191,710</td>
<td>20,121,240</td>
<td>Spain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robin van Persie</td>
<td>5,118,297</td>
<td>0,219,286</td>
<td>14,337,583</td>
<td>Holland</td>
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**Notable Soccer Properties**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Property</th>
<th>Twitter</th>
<th>Facebook</th>
<th>Instagram</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FIFA World Cup 2014</td>
<td>1,050,904</td>
<td>20,121,949</td>
<td>33,259</td>
<td>21,211,272</td>
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<tr>
<td>FIFA</td>
<td>3,070,708</td>
<td>805,880</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3,862,684</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. Soccer</td>
<td>711,112</td>
<td>1,350,412</td>
<td>237,040</td>
<td>2,304,570</td>
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<tr>
<td>World Cup on ESPN</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1,048,845</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1,048,845</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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