Peyton Manning and Budweiser: A Case Study of Fan Buzz and Sentiment expressed through Twitter

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Introduction
Since 2010, the Super Bowl has averaged more than 100 million viewers per live broadcast (Statista, 2016). Despite experiencing a slight viewing decline compared to the previous year, Super Bowl 50 was still the third most viewed television program in history (Pallotta & Stelter, 2016). In response to record viewership, brands are willing to pay exorbitant fees for a 30-second commercial slot. As reported by CNNMoney.com, the average 30-second commercial slot was estimated to cost approximately $5 million for Super Bowl 50 (Schwartz, 2016). For this reason, experts projected that Peyton Manning’s two mentions of Budweiser during Super Bowl 50 post-game interviews were equivalent to $3.5 million dollars in free advertising (Knowlton, 2016).

While the pairing of an athlete and brand to promote products has become standard practice, there is little research examining the impact of impromptu athlete-brand association on consumer buzz and sentiment generated through social media. Traditionally, brand-athlete associations are conceptualized as a reciprocal relationship grounded in commercial objectives. However, it was later acknowledged that a commercial relationship between Manning and Budweiser did not exist (Knowlton, 2016). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate consumer generated buzz and sentiment on Twitter, created by an athlete’s mention of a brand during an event.

Literature Review
A traditional theoretical framework for examining consumer to consumer interaction is Word-of-Mouth (WOM) Marketing. However, in response to the extensive adoption of Web 2.0 technologies (e.g. social media) and mobile devices, researchers extended WOM to Electronic Word-of-Mouth (eWOM) marketing (Danniasa, Tomita, Stuparu, & Stanciu, 2010). Defined as consumer sentiment that is disseminated through online mediums (Henning-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, & Gremler, 2004), eWOM represents a trusted consumer-to-consumer communication channel that can impact a consumer’s perceived brand image (Gruen, Osmonbekov, & Czaplewski, 2006).

In order to measure social media generated eWOM, the constructs of buzz and sentiment are frequently used. Buzz is often measured by the total number of social media posts generated about a topic or brand (Meenaghan, McLoughlin, & McCormack, 2013). Additionally, the creation of a buzz marketing campaign has the ability to create a viral message or discussion that potentially has a “multiplicative spread through an ecosystem” as consumers discuss and spread the message (Mills, 2012, p.163). The second measurement type investigates consumer sentiment, as a positive or negative attitude, toward a brand or product. Implementing sentiment analysis of social media posts can give marketers immediate insights into consumer’s reactions, perceptions, and preferences (Pak & Paroubek, 2010).

Traditional marketing campaigns continue to leverage athletes to promote a wide array of products. Previous studies show that the formation of brand-athlete associations relies on a certain level of athlete source credibility in relation to the brand or product (Han-Xia, Guang, & Gang, 2015). However, once source credibility and marketing content merge, trust in promotional material increases and consumers become more interested in the brand’s product (Lee & Koo, 2015). Despite extensive extant literature, there exist a gap concerning unsolicited brand-athlete associations, and consumer generated buzz and sentiment through social media. Therefore, the following research questions were constructed:
RQ1: What was the total consumer-generated buzz, the day after Super Bowl 50, concerning Peyton Manning and Budweiser on Twitter?

RQ2: Did the Twitter posts contain more positive or negative sentiment concerning Peyton Manning and Budweiser?

Method and Contribution
A purposive sample of tweets concerning Peyton Manning and Budweiser was collected. The data collection tool DiscoverText mined tweets during the 24 hour period of February 8th, 2016 to February 9th, 2016. The DiscoverText scrape was conducted using the keyword search for Budweiser and yielded a sample of n = 28,150 tweets. After data collection was complete, a keyword search for the terms Peyton and Manning was performed. Tweets not containing a direct mention of either name were excluded. After data cleaning, the final sample contained n = 11,357 tweets.

To analyze user response, the researchers will analyze data through the eWOM measurement typologies of buzz and sentiment (Meenaghan et al., 2013). Results for user generated buzz will be reported by total tweets generated per hour. User sentiment will be analyzed using the data analytics tool Leximancer. For this study, researchers will adopt the three-step sentiment schema proposed by Wilson, Weibe, & Hoffman (2005). The schema includes the processes of tokenization, normalization, and identifying parts of speech for each tweet. Finally, sentiment results will be reported through the classification of either positive or negative sentiment.

The proposed study will contribute to the current body of literature in two ways. First, understanding buzz trends could help practitioners generate buzz on Twitter. Second, a better understanding of brand-athlete associations during a live television broadcast of a mega-event could inform new strategies for paid athlete endorsement contracts.