Fantasy Sports Usage and Sports Media Consumption Behaviors across Platforms

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Introduction:
Fantasy sports users are continuing to grow. In 2017, there are over 59 million people playing fantasy sports in North America (Fantasy Sports Trade Association, 2017). There is also a growing number of daily fantasy sports (DFS) in the United States (Gouker, 2016). Given the continuous growth of fantasy sports users, understanding fantasy sports participants and their sport media behaviors remain a key issue for marketers, advertisers, as well as properties. This study aims to extend the previous literature by empirically examining the relationship between fantasy sports usage and other media consumption behaviors across platforms. In particular, the study investigates how different media platforms are utilized by the fantasy sports users, considering the platforms' capabilities in offering engagement, information, and mobility.

Research Background:
Playing fantasy sport creates greater demand for sports content. Considering the competitive gaming nature involving game-related statistics (Mills, Kwak, Lee, & Lee, 2015), obtaining up-to-date player information is a critical element of fantasy sports experience. Studies have shown that playing fantasy sport increases demand for media consumption such as television viewership (Nesbit & King, 2010) and second screen (Larkin & Fink, 2016). Nesbit and King (2010) empirically examined whether fantasy sport increases the viewership of the Major League Baseball (MLB) and the National Football League (NFL) games on television. They found that fantasy baseball participants watch between 1.12 and 2.85 more MLB games on television per week than non-participants, and fantasy football participants watch between 0.59 and 1.07 more NFL games on television per week than non-participants. While the numbers indicate the complementary effect of fantasy sport on television viewership, the media landscape is rapidly changing. More consumers are using second-screen while viewing televised programming (Flomenbaum, 2015), and use mobile and tablets to stream live sports events (Nielsen, 2015). The structural approach of audience formation theory suggests that media use is largely shaped by individual needs/situation and media structure/output (i.e., availability and accessibility) (McQuail, 1997). With the increasing presence of social and mobile media and the fantasy sports users' continuous needs for information and interaction, it is likely that the new digital/social platforms would become their primary platforms. To better understand fantasy sport usage and media behaviors across different platforms and to explore the role of social media in the mix, the present study will: (1) to examine the effect of fantasy sport usage on sport media consumption behaviors across platforms (i.e., television, streaming video on mobile/computer, mobile apps, websites, and tablets) and time of the week (weekend vs. weekdays), and (2) to examine the effect of social media usage across SNS platforms (i.e., Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube) before, during, and after the event on fantasy sport usage.

Method:
An online survey was conducted in the fall of 2016 using a national consumer panel. The sample consisted of adults residing in the U.S., representative of the population composition by age, gender, and geography. As part of a larger sports consumer behavior study, the main survey was distributed with a screening question to exclude subjects who do not "regularly" watch, read, or listen to sports-related content. A total of 615 effective responses were collected. Males represent 53% of the sample, and 81% of the sample are Caucasian followed by African American (11%), and Hispanic (7%). Twenty-six percent of the sample are between 18-34 years of age, 17% of the sample are between 35-44, 21% of the sample are between 45-54, and 34% of the sample are 55 and older. Instruments included sport content consumption level (weekday/weekend), sport content consumption media platform (type and level: television, streaming on mobile/computer, mobile apps, websites, and tablets), timing of sport consumption journey relating to Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube (before, during, and after each event), fantasy sport usage, and general consumer demographics. All media consumption-related items used a five-point scale (1= never; 5=all the time). To test the effect of fantasy sports usage on sports media consumption behaviors, we grouped respondents into three
groups based on fantasy sports participation: non-users (52%), moderate users (33%), and heavy users (15%).

Results:
We used ANOVA to examine the effect of fantasy sports usage on various media consumption behaviors. We found media consumption level to be a positive function of fantasy sports usage. Heavy fantasy sports users consume more media across platforms than moderate and non-users (all ps < .01). Contrary to Nesbit and King (2010), fantasy sports usage did not have a significant impact on the level of TV viewership (p > .49), indicating that non-users also consume a similar amount of time on the traditional platform compared to active fantasy sports users. It is noteworthy that the differences were found on all non-traditional media platforms such as using mobile phones, mobile apps, computers, and tablets. In the second part of the analysis, we used a regression analysis to examine the impact of three social media platforms (Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube) usage before, during, and after the event on fantasy sports participation. The entire model explained 35% of the variance on fantasy sports usage. Specifically, we found that using Twitter before (b = .18, p = .051) and during (b = 25, p < .05) the event is significantly associated with fantasy sport usage, while using Facebook before, during, and after the event has no impact on fantasy sport usage (all ps > .22). Interestingly, using YouTube during the event had a significant impact on fantasy sports usage (b = .19, p < .05).

Discussion and Conclusion:
Fantasy sports industry continues to grow and consumers are using multiple platforms to consume sport-related content. Our preliminary findings extend the literature by showing that fantasy sports users consume a greater level of media across platforms except for the television, which is inconsistent with previous findings (cf. Nesbit & King, 2010). Rather, we found that fantasy sports users’ increased demand for sports content is evidenced in other non-traditional platforms such as mobile, mobile apps, online streaming, and tablets. We also found that Twitter seems to be the most useful social media platform that fantasy sports users would utilize before and during the live sporting event. Social platforms seem to provide a critical channel for engagement and information, but there are differences in how they are utilized. Our findings provide empirical evidence on the fast-changing media landscape that television seems to be less useful in complementing fantasy sports experience than non-traditional platforms such as mobile and online for fantasy sports users. The results also contribute to our understanding of the social platform usage journey for fantasy sports users.