Twitter Reflection Paper

 Since its launch in 2006, Twitter has emerged into a widely popular social media outlet. Users can log on to Twitter and get the latest news, and they can even get tweets delivered straight to their mobile devices. Reporters, sports organizations, teams, and even athletes now have their own personal Twitter accounts that they use to disperse information to their fans, or in this case, followers. In addition, the followers obtain information by reading the tweets from these users. Twitter allows everyone access to the latest information, and it even allows its users to share their own news stories.

 Sports journalist Ben Grossman describes the dangers of Twitter being widely accessible in his article, “How Sports Producers Are Becoming Twits.” Grossman states that “Twitter constantly beats the announcers…during a broadcast” (10). This can spoil information to those who do not have access to the announcers at the time.

 Twitter has a very broad target audience. In general, the target audience of Twitter accounts consists of the followers of the respective user. There are millions of users across the globe. For the most part, Twitter users are technology savvy. For our Twitter assignment in particular, we as students were the target audience. Most of the members in our class have an interest in sports. We had tweets from athletes and other professionals in the sports industry on our news feed. We became the target audience for sports information.

 Our class used Twitter to spread our ideas. We could instantly share our ideas by logging in to the Twitter account and posting our thoughts. This allowed our classmates and our professor to see our ideas on a topic. It also allowed us to interact with one another, and we were able to reply to our classmate’s tweets. We could also re-tweet information from accounts that our class followed. We were able to search on Twitter for relevant information to the course and report on it. When accounts re-tweet information from another account, they are sharing information that might not have been seen by other users. This is a great way to share information.

We can see how Twitter aggregates information by looking at our class account. On our home page, we found our own tweets as well as the tweets from sports professionals, media industry members, and athletes. Professor McDuffie chose the accounts that our class followed, and this allowed the information on Twitter to be clustered due to the interests of the course. I found this to be very convenient, as the information was right there on our home page. If we had not followed outside accounts, we would have been limited to the tweets made by our classmates, but instead we were fortunate to gain information from outside sources. We can also find information we are interested in by the trends, or by searching what people hash tag. For example, if someone wanted to find information on March Madness on Twitter, they could type in #MarchMadness on the Twitter search bar. This allows the user to see popular tweets about March Madness.

Organizations and individuals can be portrayed several different ways on Twitter. When we followed commentators on our class account, the Twitter account of the commentators reflected the opinions of the commentators themselves, but the commentators also represented the company that they worked for. For example, if Tim Tebow tweets something from his personal Twitter account, he is also representing the New York Jets with his tweet since he is an athlete for their organization. Pennsylvania State University scholar Marie Hardin describes Twitter’s portrayal of individuals and organizations in her article, “The Synergy Between Sports and Social Media: Opportunities for Research.” Hardin states that Twitter allows people to “impulsively share opinions” (5). This can be either positive or negative when it comes to reputations. For example, some of our classmates tweeted about positive experiences they had at sporting events or venues. This was good because it created a positive association. On the other hand, the impulsiveness of tweeting can be very hazardous. Hardin says that some student athletes bash their school’s coaching or athletic programs online, and this can affect the reputation of the universities (7). Some athletes can use Twitter as a way to vent, and this can be very detrimental to the reputation of the athlete and the university.

 Twitter can generate revenue in several different ways. Twitter can be used by organizations as a method of advertisement. Whenever we watch a commercial, the company usually tells the viewers to “follow us on Twitter.” In an online blog, it is stated that Twitter generates revenue by “sell[ing] the rights to publish live tweets” (“Twitter”). This can be beneficial if an athlete tweets something of importance. There are several tweets that appear on SportsCenter, so ESPN has to pay Twitter to own the rights to have the tweets appear on their show. In addition, Twitter “sells its tweets…to…search engines,” and companies “pay Twitter to show their tweets in top search results” (“Twitter”). This is a great way for Twitter to gain money and for companies to get their names out there.

The 140-character limit has both advantages and disadvantages. In some cases, you cannot say all that you need to say in just 140 characters. For our class assignment, I had trouble limiting my tweets to 140 characters, as I wanted to say enough about the topic to explain it as well as relate it back to our course content. In other cases, the 140-character limit can be an advantage. Lindsay Jones, a beat reporter for the Denver Broncos, explains the advantages of the 140 character limit in her article, “The Sports Tweet: New Routines on an Old Beat.” Jones states that the Denver Broncos organization “break(s) news first on Twitter…with the understanding that the beat reporter also files this news to our website. This way the link we send out gives our readers instant access to a story that takes them deeper than 140 characters allows” (56). This is something that I did not think about, as this media outlet can use Twitter to give a preview of the story and generate interest. If a Broncos fan reads something that is only 140 characters in length, this can be enough to spark their interest and make them eager to learn more about the topic by reading the full article. This is advantageous to the Denver Broncos organization as they “draw sought-after eyeballs to the Post’s website” (56).

I think that Twitter can enhance consumer interest, but I also think that it can make consumers bored or irritated with the information. If you are constantly hearing the whistling tone from your phone, it can get old quick. Consumers might start following Twitter accounts with a great deal of interest, but the interest can fade as the consumer gets constant notifications from the accounts they follow. Some organizations send out several tweets a day. In Lindsay Jones’s article, she said she sent out over 100 tweets per day on game day for the Broncos (57). This can be frustrating if you are subscribed to tweets and watching the game on television at the same time. However, this can increase consumer interest if the follower does not have access to the game. My best friend is a Green Bay Packers fan, and since she lives in Missouri, she does not have access to the Packers games. Since my friend relies on her Twitter account to get updates on the Packers, Twitter enhances her interest in the Green Bay Packers.

All in all, Twitter is very important in the scheme of sports media. It has come a long way since its launch in 2006. Twitter is being used just about everywhere, even in universities.

Works Cited

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