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AN INVESTIGATION INTO HOW A SPORTING NATIONAL GOVERNING BODY UTILISES TWITTER AS A POTMOTIONAL MARKETING TOOL TO ENHANCE GRASS ROOT PARTICIPATION

(Dissertation summited under the discipline of Sport Management area)

KELLY JADE MILLER

AN INVESTIGATION INTO HOW A SPORTING NATIONAL GOVERNING BODY UTILISES TWITTER AS A POTMOTIONAL MARKETING TOOL TO ENHANCE GRASS ROOT PARTICIPATION

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Name: Kelly Miller

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<u>ABREVIATIONS</u>

DCMS – DEPARTMENT OF CULTURE, MEDIA AND SPORT

NGB-NATIONAL GOVERNING BODY

UK-UNITED KINGDOM

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, the growing trends of the internet and rapid developments of social technologies have provided organisations, particularly non-profit organisations in the sport sector, with the opportunity to promote and communicate with participants. The study intends to explore the impacts and influence of Twitter within two National Governing Bodies of sport to evaluate their promotional methods.

A review of the existing literature identified that organisations are predominantly using social technologies for two-way communication, marketing and promotion, thus, allowing organisations to directly govern their own marketing platforms to effectively promote and communicate. However, there is limited research exploring Twitter as a promotional marketing tool to enhance grass root sport participation. Therefore, this research aims to provide a greater understanding

A quantitative method approach was used to obtain raw data from two sporting National Governing Bodies (NGBS) using Twitter pages. This was done primarily through content analysis, as tweets were analysed and coded within a 4-month period. Additionally, a qualitative content analysis coding framework was used to discover the use of promotional language to enhance participation.

The studies' results highlighted key themes which were coded (a) Grass root and elite sport, (b) Promotional Strategies, (c) Gender equality of sport, (d) Promotional language. The discoveries from the research revealed a large focus towards elite sport promotion (n= 651) furthermore; the trickle down effect of elite sport was used to encourage mass sport participation. The findings exposed recognition and awareness of grass root sport, (n=354), although a lack of perceived opportunities was discovered to counterbalance the awareness. Finally, the study revealed the promotion of female (n=84) sport was greater than male (n=19) followers, affirming the efforts to further develop women's and girl's sport at a grass root level.

CHAPTER I:

Introduction

1.0 Introduction

Today, sport plays a significant role in modern contemporary society, as it was estimated in England the sport sector is worth £20.3 billion supporting 400,000 sport and leisure activity jobs (Sport England, 2013). Since 2004, the UK Government has invested £550 million in developing grass root sport, as well as an additional £2.8 billion have been donated by the National Lottery funding, in the effort to increase participation and regenerate public sport facilities (Trimble, 2010). While the bid for the London Olympic Games in 2006, was expected to produce a high influx of participants (Olympic Report, 2012), recent participation numbers have recorded an emerging plateau (Sport England, 2015). Trimble (2010) argues that despite the investment in global events, barriers to participation is an on-going battle that the Government and sport organisations face when aiming to increase participation numbers. As the Northern Ireland Assembly (2010) identifies that it is crucial to understand and manage these issues, in order to create strategies to overcome the practical barriers and dominated notions of elitism. According to the DCMS (2015) the UK Government, the future of sport will realise a shift in focus; from international and elite sport towards participation. As the DCMS (2015) key message includes how sport can engage and support non-participants.

As the sport industry has evolved, the use of the internet has become a destination for participants to expand their sporting knowledge (Constantinides & Foundation, 2008), as it has shaped the sport industry and forced sports' marketers to reconsider the delivery and consumption of sport (Beech & Chadwick, 2007). In just a few years, internet usage has rapidly increased, as in 2006 16.2 million, 35% of UK's population accessed the internet, compared to 39.3 million, 78% in 2015 (Office for National Statistics, 2015). According to (Chui *et al.*, 2012) traditional marketing methods are still being utilised by organisations. However, there is a growing trend for social technologies, creating a social, cultural and economic phenomenon. Ryan (2014, p. 170) comments that 'social media offers a wealth of opportunity for consumer engagement and building brand awareness'. Therefore, organisations have enlisted social technologies to 'crowdsource' products and services, as these platforms have the potential to reach 1.5 billion users globally (Chui *et al.*, 2012).

These platforms are cost effective tools that support the exchange of information and communication (Hollomon & Adyeri, 2012, Mayfield, 2008; Ryan, 2014). Specifically, social media sites are recognised within the following: social networking sites (Facebook), blogs and micro-blogs (Twitter), and online communities and forums (Shank & Lyberger, 2015).

Despite the rapid adoption of social technology by large sport corporate organisations, smaller organisations such as National Governing Bodies of Sport (NGBs), lack the resources to regularly update and engage (Eagleman, 2012). Therefore, this research intends to explore Twitter as a promotional marketing tool, to evaluate whether Twitter aids NGBs in the process of increasing participation of grass root sport. Smith & Stewart, (2014) recognised that although there has been a rise in the number of sport organisations using social platforms, there is still confusion about how these platforms should correctly be managed. Additionally, there is far more opportunity ahead for organisations using social technologies. Therefore, the research intends to explore the impact of Twitter as a promotional tool to enhance grass root participation within NGBs.

1.1 Aims and Objectives

The overall aim of the research was to explore the influence of Twitter, as a marketing promotional tool within two sporting nation NGBs in the UK, drawing upon similarities and differences. Secondly, the study aimed to identify promotional methods that may enhance or encourage grass root participation through the means of Twitter. The following key objectives have been developed in order to achieve the overall aim of the study:

1. To conduct a thorough review of the literature to understand the previous academic knowledge regarding Twitter as a marketing/promotional tool, specifically related to non-profit sporting organisations, NGBs.
2. To identify specifically the audience in which NGBs are currently promotion towards, to therefore understand how to overcome particular barriers within grass root sport.
3. To explore, the study will investigate and evaluate the specific ways NGBs use Twitter to promote and engage individuals concerning grass root sport as well as understand the meaning and promotional language of the tweets.

CHAPTER II:

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The objective of the literature review is to 'provide an outline of the relevant theories and concepts important within the research of the project' (Gratton and Jones, 2010, p. 55). The literature review aims to focus on a range of academic literature established within the subject area, such as peer review articles, referenced online sources and journals. The literature review will focus on key topics, relevant theories and issues surrounding the topic area of the study. These topic areas will introduce NGBs and the current challenges they face. Furthermore, general marketing within a generic organisational environment as well as specifically sports marketing. A brief introduction of promotion will be presented to understand the promotion of sport. The main body of the literature will be constructed around the three main subject areas; social media, Twitter and NGBs. These topic areas aim to build understand of the use of Twitter as a promotional or marketing tool to increase participation at a grass roots level. To conclude, a summary will draw upon the key themes and findings identified within the literature review.

2.2 National governing bodies

At a policy level, the DCMS is responsible for setting the agenda for sport and recreation in the UK. At a delivery level, home nation NGBs such as, Sport England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, provide links with sports organisations and sport NGBs (Taylor and O'Sullivan, 2009). NGBs, are non-profit organisations that are independently operated, which governs sport through limited funds, volunteers and participants (Sport England, 2015), for example, England Golf and Welsh Rugby Union.

Findings upon previous research demonstrates that NGBs should move towards a business approach, as board members should obtain specific key business skills (Taylor & O'Sullivan, 2009). Therefore, allowing NGBs to acquire the skills and the resources necessary to be able to become sustainable. From a recent document published Sport England (2015), the sports council recognition of an NGB does not necessarily mean that funding will be provided, specific aims and objectives have to be achieved.

DCMS, (2015) have recently warned that funding will be given to NGBs that demonstrate an increase and awareness of participation as well as driving the legacy. As founded by Houlihan & Green (2009) recent modernization reform of sport in the UK, is causing the objectives of elite and grass root sport to overlap and become blurred. As Houlihan & Green (2009) continues to discuss, that commercialization is being pushed upon NGBs in result objectives have become 'narrow', as objectives have become one word or number used for 'bottom line' accounting. Moreover, elite sport has the potential to increase grassroots sport participation, through the promotion of hosting major sporting events and role models; this called 'the trickle-down effect' (Wicker & Sotiriadou, 2013).

The dominance of males in sport and physical activity is widely apparent in society (Women, Gender Equality & Sport, 2007). Recent report, from Sport England (2015), recognises that men actively take part in sport and physical activity more than women, as 40.7% of males and 31.4% women are physically active at least once a week. Messner & Sabo (1990) research propose that sport was designed and created for men only. Furthermore, women's sport continues to be underrepresented, as a lack of media coverage and publicity is apparent (Sherry *et al.*, 2015). Therefore, Trolan (2013) acknowledges that men's and women's roles in sport are different, as a debate whether women should compete in similar physical sport activities to men.

Hylton & Branham (2008) conclude that social influences, such as relatives and social groups can either empower or discourage participation in sport. Furthermore, it is important for NGBs to engage in social media, as research on Mintel (2012) suggests that a higher number of women are socially active on these social media platforms than men. Therefore, social media may be an effective tool to create attention and change for women's sport (Creedon, 2014).

There are recognised challenges facing NGBs such as volunteer recruitment, a lack of recognition and securing funds to operate (Sport England, 2002). These challenges may affect the operation and extent to which social media can be effectively used correctly. Therefore, Eagleman (2012), explains that NGBs must seek innovative methods, as well as traditional marketing methods, as this will increase awareness and reach potential consumers.

2.3 An Introduction to Marketing

There is a debate amongst academics as marketing is difficult to define. Even though strong opinions of marketing are held, it is difficult to pinpoint a clear definition for marketing (Randall, 2001). According to Schwarz *et al* (p.5, 2012), the 'true definition of marketing is simply functions involved in the transfer of goods and services from the producer to the consumer'. However, there has been an increased awareness of customer relations within marketing as organisations are now interacting with consumers in order to create the notion of perceived value, in turn meeting consumer expectations (Armstrong *et al*, 2015). Therefore, marketing is recognised as a business component that allows organisations to enhance their products or services through the means of communication (Fill, 2009).

Research (Kotler *et al*., 2014) has recognised that there are two main objectives of organisational marketing. Firstly, the attraction of new consumers by presenting value and an efficient service (Kotler *et al*., 2014). Secondly, to retain the interest of existing consumers through satisfying and surpassing customer expectations (Moore & Pareek, 2010; Kotler *et al*., 2014; Molenaar, 2012). Furthermore, research has indicated that engagement has become a key part of an organisation as the Weber & Kim (2015) findings within multinational businesses display that understanding organisational relationships require active management to regularly engage new and existing consumers. The concept of marketing has shifted; previously foundations of marketing were solely product or service based, however, modern technological advances have evolved marketing methods (Kotlet *et al*., 2014). The contemporary notion of marketing is established around the customer and the organisational relationships (Armstrong *et al*., 2015). Therefore, organisations are deviating from traditional marketing methods, such as newspaper ads and advertisement posters, to an innovative marketing approach. For many organisations this may be the case, but arguably, small businesses that did not operate traditional marketing methods to begin with, are expected to invest money on the creation of a efficient and professional website. Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, (2012) outline primary custom is generated online. Therefore, an unprofessional website or social media platform may impact the buying decisions of consumers.

To some extent general marketing techniques are transferable through a variety of industries (Chui, 2012). Though, sector specific critics contest that generic marketing theories cannot be crudely imposed on highly specialised industries such as sport (Chadwick, 2012; Pitts & Stotlar, 2007).

2.4 Sport Marketing

The emergence of sporting marketing is relatively current, yet the unique nature of the sports is rapidly developing the dynamic sport industry (Pitts and Stotlar, 2007). Sport marketing is defined as 'the specific application of marketing principles and processes to sports products and to the marketing of non-sports products association with sport' (Shank & Lyberger, 2015, p. 5). Within the sport industry, the concept of marketing has shifted over the years from production and sales focus to an emphasis on fan and customer relationships (Smith & Stewart, 2014), which is also similar to mainstream marketing. Sports academics argue that sport marketing differs from main stream marketing as sport itself is a unique product or service as fans and psychological identification with sports teams goes beyond mere consumer loyalty (Shank & Lyberger, 2015; Smith & Stewart, 2014). As Vamplew (2016), outlines the variations between sports products and traditional consumption goods, warning that sport is non-predictable thus the result or quality cannot be guaranteed. Therefore, sport itself is unpredictable and unique which creates the notion of excitement as sport outcomes are rarely repeated (Smith & Stewart, 2014).

At present, the sport industry is extremely competitive (Vamplew, 2016). However, the success of an organisation is measured differently, where as for-profit organisations are likely to be measured by increased market share and growth of sales. Non-profit organisations are driven by promoting charitable contributions or raising participation within sport (Beech & Chadwick, 2007). Therefore, organisations should devise specific marketing strategies and the correct tools to maintain the performance of specific organisation in order to succeed (Smith & Stewart, 2014).
Also, sport organisations need to understand the customers in order to select the correct marketing methods to influence their purchasing behaviour or their demographic (Armstrong *et al.*, 2015).

This may refer both to elite and grass root sport, where the methods may be the same. Therefore, Beech and Chadwick (2007) suggest that creating and maintaining relationships with fans is crucial for the success of the organisation, as marketing communications is shaping the sport industry.

2.5 An overview of Promotion

Promotion, also known as marketing communications, is an element of the marketing mix that has potential to influence behavioural changes (Fill, 2009). Thus, promotion is a part of an organisation's marketing mix, which consists of price, product, place and promotion (Clow and Baack, 2013). Hence, marketing can exist without promotion; however, promotion can not exist without marketing. Promotion is defined by Pitts and Stotlar (2007, p. 250), as 'all corporate activities aimed at influencing customers purchasing attitudes and behaviour.' Additionally, the aim of marketing communications is to raise awareness of the product or service, increase the appeal thus creating competitive advantage (Fill, 2010). Therefore, marketing communications is essential to the success of an organisation as it attracts new consumers whilst retaining current consumers. Furthermore, Schwarz *et al.*, (2012) highlights the six communications tools which include; advertising, public relations, personal contact/selling, sponsorship, sales promotion and publicity. These components make up the marketing mix, which are a set of controllable methods which an organisation can use to influence customer buying patterns (Fill, 2010). In recent years, marketing communications is quickly evolving due to the increased availability of technology and social platforms (Chui, 2010). An effective marketing communications strategy requires three key elements; tools, messages and media (Twitter, 2015). According to Zarrella (2010, p. 5), 'more consumers are connected than ever before, and every second your company is not engaging in social media is a wasted opportunity'.

2.6 Social media and Organisations

Social media has altered the way in which organisations interact with consumers (Evans, 2012). Therefore, the use and range of social platforms have instantaneously grown within an organisation's internal and external environment (Thoring, 2011), to effectivity retain and attract consumers. As recent statistics indicate, 61% of adults are actively using social media platforms with 79% accessing these social media sites daily (Office for National Statistics, 2015). Therefore, indicating that these sites have become mainstream, and organisations should be taking advantage of these mass market social platforms. However, Smith *et al.*, (2011) highlight that beyond the early adopters, many organisations are battling to address the significant challenges social media faces. These challenges include organisations losing control to consumers, as well as social media becoming an expressive yet a functional tool, through the function of becoming viral (Smith *et al.*, 2011). Thus concluding that on social media, organisations may be vulnerable as there's no protection on worldwide social platforms.

Social media has become the primary means of communication (Cardon & Marshall, 2014), through the use of two-way communication, where organisations and consumers are conversing with one another (Evans, 2012). Social media has revolutionised the way in which organisations converse. Traditional communication and marketing methods have been replaced by innovative social platforms (Smith *et al.*, 2011). The effective use of social media as a communication tool allow business to efficiently share and access messages in real-time when compared to traditional marketing methods (Smith & Stewart, 2015). Furthermore, these platforms are cost effective marketing tools (Michealidou *et al.*, 2011; Boyd *et al.*, 2010), which allow small organisations to attract prospective customers, with the potential of retaining their consumers. Burton and Soboleva (2011) acknowledge the importance and value of social platforms within an organisation, however, argue that these social pages have hidden costs that may cause organisations further marketing expenses. For example, having to employ a large team of analysts to monitor blogs, conversations and social media performance to ensure consumers don't receive bad press about the product or service.

The cost of social media tools are concerning 80% of marketers as worries of measuring the returns on investments are apparent (Ogilvy & Marther, 2011). In turn, this could affect smaller or non-profit organisations as they may not have the funding or resources necessary to monitor social media (Price *et al.*, 2013). This allows an organisation the opportunity to market their brand in real-time, responding to consumer's questions and concerns thus cultivating a consumer-brand relationship. However, the social phenomenon has also been labelled as disruptive (Pegoraro, 2014), as consumers now shape a business, which leaves organisations with no control regarding product image as the internet is public domain (Smith *et al.*, 2011).

2.7 Social Media and Sports Organisations

In terms of the sport industry, Shank & Lyberger, (2015) propose that social platforms have broadened the potential for sport organisations to interact with stakeholders, consumers and fans in real-time. Rothschild (2011) research regarding Fortune 500 companies, reveal that those organisations that use a social media strategies report an increase in revenue, then those organisations without a defined strategy. There is little, to no structure or framework, for organisations with regards to successfully operating social media (Holloman & Adeyeri, 2012). Furthermore, research has

Therefore, non-profit or small organisations with small marketing budgets or small workforce may lack the resources required to train staff to correctly manage these complex social media sites (Price *et al.*, 2013). Therefore, Smith & Stewart (2015) propose that within a sporting environment, organisations need to strategically operate social media within their marketing strategies as well as provide the correct online training, as consequences of incorrect use may damage their reputation. However, in order to be successful on social media applications, organisations must ensure they follow these social marketing steps; observe, recruit, evaluate platforms, engage, promote, measure, and improve (Weber, 2009). Following these steps should in turn allow business success as well as the opportunity to collect valued customer feedback that will strengthen an organisation (Smith *et al.*, 2011).

Figure 1. Social Media Management Processes
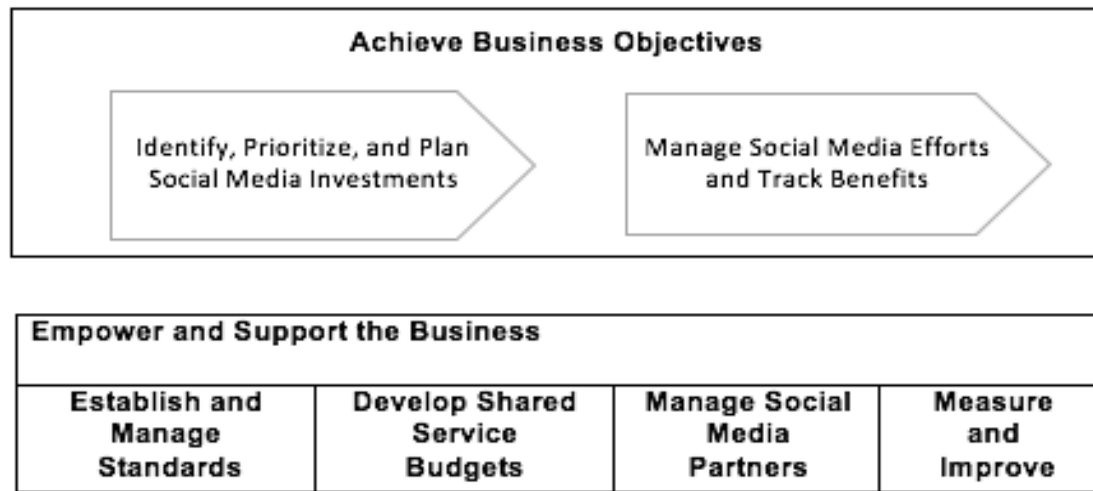
(Smith *et al*., 2011, p26).

2.8 Sport Organisations and Twitter

Twitter is an online microblogging site that allows users to communicate, engage and share information in 140 characters or fewer by posting short messages known as a 'tweet' (Boyd *et al*., 2010, Mollett *et al*., 2011). Twitter has a global audience of over 320 million active users following its launch in 2006, from which generate and share tweets daily (Twitter, 2015). Therefore, organisations, specifically within the sport industry, have realized the potential of Twitter as it offers the potential to reach mass audiences through public opinion and social movements. As Twitter has unlocked an avenue of marketing that did not exist through the means of producing 'now moments', where information and events are shared instantaneously (Beninger *et al*., 2014). Sport organisations have adopted the use of Twitter to instantly interact, share content or break news with both fans and stakeholders (Smith & Stewart, 2014).
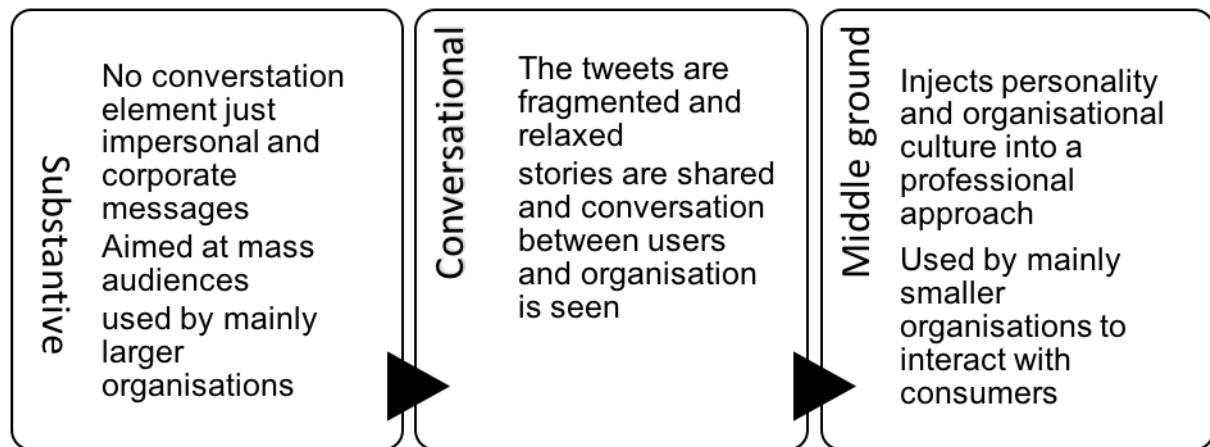
In terms of fan engagement, O'Shea & Duarte Alonso (2011) advocates that marketing communication tools such as Twitter are employed to build relationships with fans as well as sell merchandise, deliver the latest club news and share pictures to engage fans. However, this research is based on large corporate sporting companies that have the following and the fan base. Therefore, smaller organisations such as NGBs may not have the resources to become distinctive (Price *et al.*, 2013), they must strategically manage their pages to enhance their following and create brand awareness.

Traditional media has been replaced by new methods of innovative communication, as consumers are using social media sites have transformed the way in which organisations search for information and communicate (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Research has estimated that 80% of their active Twitter users are accessing the platform from mobile devices and tablets (Twitter, 2015). In a sport context, Smith & Stewart (2015) research discovered that 85% of fans use social media within a game to share current scores, updates and pictures. For example, the breaking news updates and scores are instantly connecting consumers to their affiliated teams/clubs. Technology has shaped the way that fans perceive a game, as social media has allowed fans to express their identities, feelings and thoughts about a particular sport event (Ko *et al*, 2016).

Twitter is a recent phenomenon, thus research is currently emerging describing the framework for content and meaning of tweets, which organisations should consider when posting viral messages (Twitter, 2015; Mollet *et al.*, 2011). *Table 1* introduces three types of tweeting styles for all types of organisations; substantive, conversational and middle ground (Mollet at al., 2011). Twitter messages or information may be inconsistent as tweets are limited to 140 characters (Mocanu *et al.*, 2013). In regards to creating and drawing individuals into sport through the medium of Twitter, the tweeting styles' conversational and middle ground styles would be useful for the NGBs to use as these will allow understating. All three styles have negative and positive components when producing content for tweets. Mollet *et al.*, (2011) suggests that there is not a 'one size fits all' when tweeting information and messages as organisations need to be aware of the message they want to display, and keep it consistent, so consumers can regularly engage.

Figure 2: The three types of tweeting Styles.

Substantive
No converstation element just impersonal and corporate messages
Aimed at mass audiences
used by mainly larger organisations

Conversational
The tweets are fragmented and relaxed
stories are shared and conversation between users and organisation is seen

Middle ground
Injects personality and organisational culture into a professional approach
Used by mainly smaller organisations to interact with consumers

(Mollet *et al*., 2011).

Lomborg (2014) believes that active users regularly get disinterested with Twitter; when engagement on their twitter feed is lacking. Consequently, this indicates that the simplest way to become noticeable on Twitter is to pay attention to the Twitter community thus tweet regularly. Interestingly, the Kinney & Ireland (2015) research recommend that corporate sporting organisations using Twitter, regular use of activity declines during the winter months. In regard to sporting NGBs, this may effect participation as the winter months in the UK may be linked with barriers to participation such as lack of motivation or cold weather (GUW, 2014). Therefore, Chadwick *et al*., (2013) advocate that engagement is the overall key to success on Twitter, as it builds a relationship with the consumer through the means of communication. To fully engage consumers, organisations need to generate meaningful content, specific to the target audience, whilst also delivering certain key messages that follow the business aims and objectives (Twitter, 2015).

In the context of smaller non profit organisations, Twitter can be used to 'raise awareness' of a certain topic or allow for an inspiring story to be shared, which will create interest (Twitter, 2015). As Twitter has become popular amongst a variety of organisations, Twitter themselves have provided keys to success on the platform based upon real-life case studies. An example, non-profit organisation named, 'Clean Air' in London, recognize success on Twitter as their campaign has increased Twitter following and also saw a peak of 19.4% in Twitter engagement with followers (Twitter, 2015). Table 1 indicates the three keys to a successful non-profit promotional plan on twitter compared to a for-profit organisations. Twitter (2015), suggests that non-profit organisations need to carefully manage their platforms and engage followers where as for-profit organisations should aim at driving traffic through targeting niche audiences.

Table 1: Steps to success on Twitter

	Non-profit Clean Air London - Charity	**For-profit** Core150 – gym suppliers
Objectives	Increase awareness of their their vision to gain new, relevant followers.	To drive website traffic and increase online sales.
Keys to success	(1) Develop a strong message. (2) Experiment and manage. (3) Acknowledge, engage and communicate.	(1) Use keyword targeting to reach a niche audience at the right time. (2) Create multiple Website Cards to test and optimise.

(Twitter, 2015).

As Twitter has developed into an interactive social platform, organisations seem to be developing tactics to deliver brand or image related messages via Twitter. Although, research acknowledges that 40% of account holders do not tweet directly, but instead use twitter as a viewing device (Twitter, 2015).

However, although this may appear to be a disadvantage as consumers are not actively engaging on the platform, Billings (2014), views this as an advantage to organisations as this presents that Twitter is influential whether users engage by tweeting or just view content.

2.9 NGBs and Twitter

Twitter has become a recognised social media platform in the sport industry, as most sporting organisations, such as NGBs, have adopted Twitter to communicate with consumers and stakeholders (Smith & Stewart, 2014). However, Price *et al*., (2013), propose the nature and extent to which organisations use social media is dependent on the size, workforce and resources of an organisation. Furthermore, Bayle & Robinson (2007) research indicates that NGBs have poor knowledge of their consumer market, therefore, may fail to identify and take advantage of opportunities. This presents a concern for NGBs, as mentioned previously a lack resources may cause a poor understating of the market thus losing competitive advantage. However, Eagleman, (2012) research indicates that NGBs are engaging social media to increase brand awareness and increase the awareness and exposure of sport.

Previous research by Chadwick *et al*., (2013) considered the integration of Twitter into the strategic operations of sporting organisations. As the organisations in this study referred to nine sporting NGBs within the UK this research is gave a clear indication of social media usage. The research found that organisations are aware of social media as a marketing tool, with several admitting the use of social media for marketing purposes only, which would suggest a one-way communication tool (Chadwick *et al*., 2013). Therefore, signifying that social media adopts one-way communication, just marketing and promotion, and two-way communication, marketing, promotion and communication.

Eagleman (2012) research investigated the internal use of social media in regards to NGBs in the United States. The study revealed that employees use social media as a communications tool to a greater degree than that of a marketing tool (Eagleman, 2012). This research indicates that NGBs need to gain greater knowledge and understanding of the power which social media holds as a promotional marketing tool, which promotes sport thus increasing participation.

Lovejoy & Saxton (2012) study investigated the use of Twitter within 100 non-profit organisations based in the United States. This study examined 23,000 tweets, where results suggest that social media comprised three types of functions; information sources, promoters and community builders (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012). This research produced evidence that when using Twitter, non-profit organisations need to consider the correct way to communicate with consumers, and not just use Twitter as it may be a 'trendy thing to do'. Therefore, it is clear to understand the gap in knowledge when exploring Twitter as a promotional marketing tool for sports organisations, specifically NGBs. As opinions on the effectiveness use of Twitter have yet to be explored in depth, further research would provide non-profit organisations with reliable, supportive and accurate information and evidence to successfully operate Twitter.

2.10 Rationale

In conclusion, the literature acknowledged the importance of social technologies, such as Twitter, as these social phenomena are shaping the way in which organisations market, promote and communicate with consumers. The research revealed that organisations have adopted Twitter to effectively communicate, internally and externally. However, although the literature of social media within NGBs is emerging, there is currently limited research that applies to the use of Twitter as a promotional tool to enhance grass root participation. Furthermore, NGBs face clear obstacles, which may effect their online or social presents such as lack of resources or untrained workforce, as most are predominately volunteers.

The objective of the study is to identify key themes through answering the studies four objectives: (a) community or elite focus, (b) promotional strategies on twitter, (c) identify gender of the tweets, (d) understand the meaning behind the tweets, which would be an in-depth analysis about the language used to enhance participation.
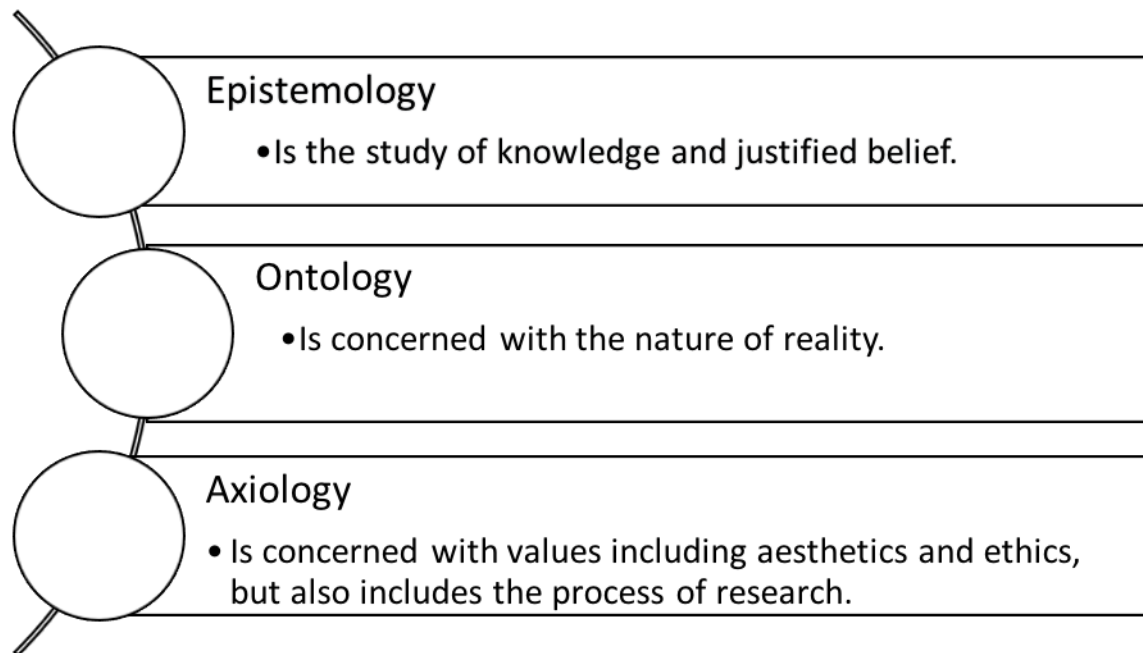
CHAPTER III:

Methodology and Research Design

3.1 Introduction

Within this section, the research methodology will be outlined and discussed to distinguish a clear justification as to why the research approach and method was chosen. A research methodology is usually influenced by the researcher's philosophical beliefs as well as the resources which are available to conduct the research (Skinner *et al.*, 2015). To begin, an introduction of philosophies and approaches will be introduced to explain the different theories of research. A section on the methods used within this research study will then be described and justified with regards to the uses of qualitative and quantitative research techniques through content analysis. A description of the data collection process will then be looked at with focus on the framework for the study which in turn will provide the research with a strong foundation. To conclude, a summary of the confidentiality, anonymity and ethical considerations that surrounded the research study will be discussed.

3.2 Research philosophies and approaches

The term 'research philosophy' is known as the researcher's systematic beliefs and assumptions regarding the development of knowledge. During data analysis, whether researchers are aware of it or not, Wilson (2012) suggests that the researcher will always unconsciously make a number of assumptions. With this in mind, these assumptions will inevitably shape how the researcher interprets and presents the findings. Additionally, Wilson (2012) suggests that a well thought out, logical and consistent set of assumptions will contribute to a credible and worthy philosophy which in turn will underpin the researcher's methodological choice. Moreover, the fundamental approach of the researcher is based on core research philosophies and approaches; epistemology, ontology and axiology. Figure 3 defines the three approaches research should consider when conducting research as these methods affect how the researcher comes to a conclusion (Gratton & Jones, 2010).

Figure 3. Three main approaches based on research philosophy.

Epistemology
• Is the study of knowledge and justified belief.

Ontology
• Is concerned with the nature of reality.

Axiology
• Is concerned with values including aesthetics and ethics, but also includes the process of research.

Collins (2010, p36-37) Creative Research.

Furthermore, researchers will also look at research in different lights, for example, whether the researcher has a positivist or interpretivist belief (Walliman & Baiche, 2001). The argument of positivism versus interpretivism is a well covered debate due to the vast differences in interpreting data. Similar to research philosophies, these will effect the way in which knowledge is perceived (Walliman & Baiche, 2001). It has been distinguished that positivism is a scientific approach which provides clear facts where concepts such as emotions, feelings and beliefs have no place in this research (Gratton & Jones, 2010). For example, this method would be proven scientific experiments. On the other hand, interpretivism is subjective, with the need to explore deeper within the meaning and understanding of reality (Ozanne, 1989). Therefore, an interpretivist would argue that good research comes from human interactions, and developing relationships including the persons' actions, emotions and feelings providing greater understanding and knowledge (Gratton & Jones, 2010). Therefore, it is crucial that research studies consider an individual's assumptions and beliefs which may differ within the research process (Ozanne, 1989). However, the way in which the knowledge was interpreted should not consume the study.

Instead research should be aware of the issues (Gratton & Jones, 2010). By combining both of these theories will in turn ensure validity of the data when transcribed, allowing for concise and reliable results.

3.3 Research Methods

Social media is an incredibly useful source for researchers to collect and understand human interactions through the use of naturally occurring data (Beninger *et al*., 2014). This study implemented data mining which involved examining large quantities of pre-existing data from the social media site Twitter, which will then produce new and informative material (Beninger *et al*., 2014). Gratton & Jones (2010) suggested the use of questionnaires to measure the human interaction. However, this research study utilised a content analysis method as this process allowed for consistence when measuring the constant changes within social media (Riff *et al*., 2014). As Jones (2015), states that content analysis is an effective approach to understanding certain features of sporting information. In the study, the researcher chose a pragmatic approach, using a method known as content analysis. Content analysis refers to the process of systematically assigning each transcript specific codes, number or words, to identify key characteristics within the collective data (Dawson, 2009). Furthermore, 'content analysis generally involves the researcher determining the presence, meaning and relationships of certain words or concept within the text' (Gratton & Jones, 2010, p185). Content analysis of Twitter has been used in previous research to determine the way in which organisations engage with consumers (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012). Qualitative research methods attempt to understand the behaviours of the persons involved as well as their values, beliefs and emotions (Skinner *et al*., 2015). Given the nature of this study, a pragmatic approach was taken as content analysis used quantitative and qualitative research methods.

3.4 Data Collection

Due to the nature of the study and the development of social media, it was crucial to investigate whether the two home nation NGBs actively use their twitter accounts, as some smaller organisation are still yet to convert to Twitter. Following this, it was important to the research study that the organisations had full ownership of their Twitter account (Beninger *et al.*, 2014). This, therefore, indicated that the tweets that were published were of the NGBs own consent regarding their visions, mission and values.

This study used a sample of two sports NGBs over a four-month period from June 20th to October 20th, 2015. Due to the time constraint, time based sampling method was considered as it seemed to offer a prompt and stable solution (Tamma *et al.*, 2008). Therefore, a limitation of the study was a lack of qualitative data, as interviews could have been conducted to gain further understanding. This would have provided to research study with a profound conclusion. The research was collected from a set of 1,497 tweets, where NGB (A) contained 927 tweets and NGB (B) produced 570 regarding the development of community sport and opportunities. The coded sheet for content analysis was formulated from the findings and themes found in the literature review. One main theme suggested that sports marketing is unique, suggesting that fans/consumers are loyal which allows organisations to effectively engage with consumers. The coding sheet was grouped into four tiers. This provided the researcher with a simplistic yet effective framework.

3.4.1 Theme 1 – Elite and Grass Root Sport

As the tweets were collected though the method of content analysis, they were firstly coded into three sections; elite or community focus or not applicable (NA). It is important to establish the difference between the two terms, as both consider different aims and objectives. Elite sport aims to help athletes and professionals reach their true potential in sport, as well as strive for success on an international stage (Hylton, 2013). However, grass root sport is 'a reaction against elitism and inequality; it is person or community centered, allowing sport to be accessible to the wider population' (Hylton, 2013, p. 108).

In terms of the study, elite sport concerned competitive tweets that incorporated international squads, competitions and results. Grass root sport was identified through tweets that acknowledge the barriers of sport, offered solutions around these barriers, as well as tweets that made sport accessible and desirable to beginners or potential participants.

3.4.2 Theme 2 – Twitter Promotion of Grass Root Sport

The second tier of this analysis was broken down into four sections from the results of the grass roots sport from both NGB A and NGB B which included; awareness, engagement, promotion and opportunities. This was derived from the study done by Lovejoy & Saxton (2012) which suggested that analysis of an organisation's micro-blogging identified these uses from 100 non-profit organisations. 'Awareness' refers to a tweet which attempts to raise the profile of the sport through promotional language. 'Engagement' refers to tweets which outline opportunities for beginners by communicating specific information regarding how to get involved. 'Promotion' refers to how the NGB uses promotional and persuasive tweets to enhance participation rates. Finally, 'opportunities' refers to tweets which look to give participants chances to get involved in the sport, whether this be through free trials, events and coaching sessions.

3.4.3 Theme 3 – Gender Equality of Sport

The third section of the analysis specifically focused on understanding the gender equality within NGBs Twitter pages. The categories were sectioned into; female, male or equal gender. This was undertaken as existing research in the literature suggested that there was an apparent gap between genders within specific sports (Sport England, 2015), with the research study looking to understand whether the gender focus had shifted since previous research.

3.4.4 Theme 4 – Meaning of the Twitter Language

Twitter, have provided researchers with a widely accessible database of raw information which is based upon human actions and behaviours (Beniger *et al*., 2012). Therefore, the use of the AIDA model (Figure 4) aims to identity promotional language used by NGBs to create participant's attention and interest. The coding framework was utilised to identify the awareness, interest, desire and action (Rawal, 2013), of the tweets. The model was employed to distinguish the language of the tweets as well as understanding the promotional phrases that grab the participants' attention. '*Awareness'* will refer to tweets that promote grass root sport, and is used to attract the reader's or viewer's attention. This will refer to the images contained within the tweet from the NGB. '*Interest'* will refer to tweets that offer coaching or free taster sessions to gain awareness. *Furthermore,* these tweets include details such as price or availability to create an interest for the audience. '*Desire'* will refer to how the tweets use different types of language to convert Twitter followers interest into the desire to participate in sport. The development of 'desire' can be achieved through creating interesting content that motivates and generates a need for buying into what the organisations is offering (Rawal, 2013). Finally, '*Action'* will measure how the NGB's use promotional language to convince their participants to 'act now', for example, free coaching or prize giveaways.

FIGURE 4. The AIDA model
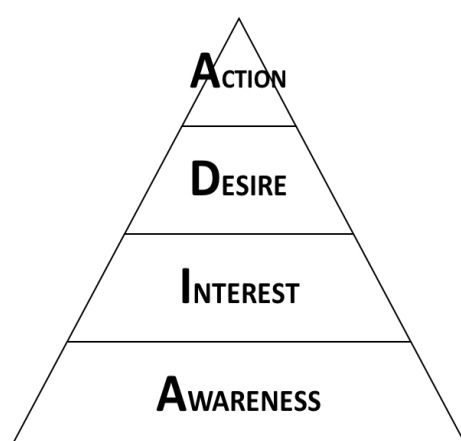
Rawal (2013 p. 41), The AIDA Model**.**

3.5   Validity and Reliability

Validity can be viewed as a problematic concept as it can be affected by various reasons, for instance the way the world may perceive the results outlined, the researcher's position and the procedures the researcher chose to carry out the investigation (Newby, 2014). Kumar (2011) suggests that to ensure validity within a research study, the instruments used in the measurement procedure should be correctly used and appropriately applied to what it is designed to be measured. During the data collection phase, the researcher insured validity by using balanced systematic beliefs and assumptions to collect the social media data. Reliability is described by Gratton & Jones (2010) as the consistency of the results in a research study. Ensuring that this research study is reliable, the investigation used the official Twitter pages of the two NGB's to collect the results. Additionally, the use of the website 'SnapBird' a trusted and well recognised analytical tool, was used to collect the data which would be used within this research study's results.

3.6   Ethical Considerations

The ethical considerations were carefully measured during the process of the the data collection as social media research has been considered as challenging (Gratton & Jones, 2010). As Beninger *et al* (2014) suggested that social media research is relatively current with academic researchers, there is limited guidance on how to apply ethical guidelines and principles. Due to this research study utilising web 2.0, it ensures ethical considerations in areas such as consent, confidentiality and privacy which are important (Skinner *et al.*, 2015). When registering for an account on Twitter, individuals or businesses will be asked to read, then agree to the terms and conditions of the microblogging application. Therefore, no consent form will be needed as social media platforms are a public domain. With this in mind, attaining ethical approval from the Cardiff Metropolitan University Ethical Committee allowed the research study to commence. To ensure the research study was carried out in an ethical manner, referring to Rathi *et al's* (2016) research 2.0 framework would ensure improved confidentiality and anonymity. It is important that the confidentiality of the research study is kept. The research will be securely stored in order to ensure the data stays anonymous.

Secondly, if anonymity is not met, then the concern over damaging a persons' or organisations' reputation or image may tarnish a reputation (Gratton & Jones, 2010). Consequently, the study aimed to ensure anonymity of the two NGBs by not disclosing the name, Twitter username or specific sport. In order to insure anonymity, the organisations were labelled for example, NGB A and NGB B. The researcher ensured that the organisations involved in the research study remained anonymous.

3.5 Data Analysis

Following the data collection, the research findings were listed on a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet to display the results in a clear, concise and chronological manner. The qualitative and quantitative data was carefully analysed by the researchers coding framework in order to identify key themes (Figure 5, 6,7 & 8). It is important to select a data analysis technique that is best suitable to analyse the data collected by the researcher as this will aid with justifying the results and concluding the research (Flick, 2007).

Figure 5 – Elite and Grass Root Sport
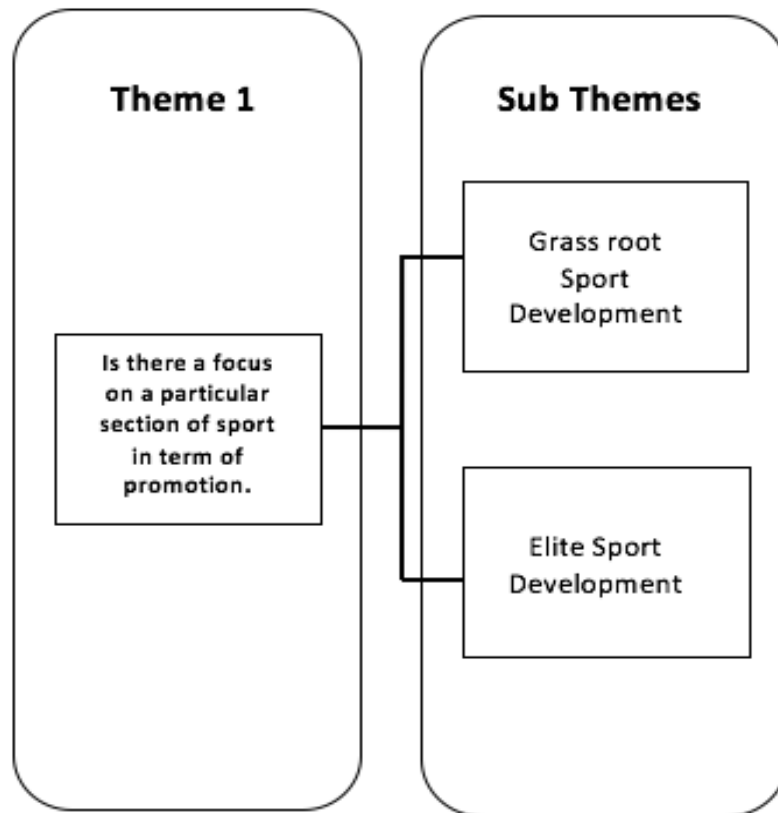
Figure 6 – Twitter Promotion of Grass Root Sport

Theme 1

Is there a focus on a particular section of sport in term of promotion.

Sub Themes

Grass root Sport Development

Elite Sport Development

Theme 2

Discover the correct methods of promotion of grass roots sport on Twitter.

Sub Themes

Awareness

Engagement

Promotion

Opportunity
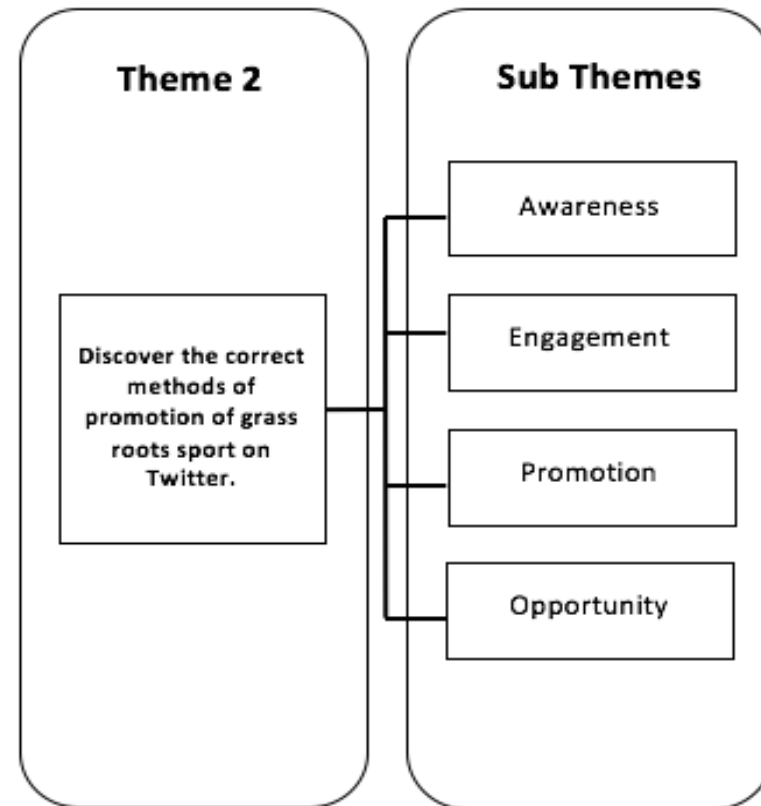
Figure 7 – Gender Equality of Sport

Theme 3

To identify the NGBs promotion of grass root sport regarding gender.

Sub Themes

Male

Female

Equal Gender

Figure 8 – Meaning of Twitter Language

Theme 4

The use of the AIDA model to identify the language of the tweets.

Sub Themes

Awareness

Interest

Desire

Action

CHAPTER IV:

Results

4.1 Introduction

The following chapter presents the research findings from quantitative and qualitative content analysis, which was conducted using two sporting NGBs' Twitter accounts. A random sample of 1461 tweets was taken over a 4-month period from 20th June to 20th October, 2015. Sample ran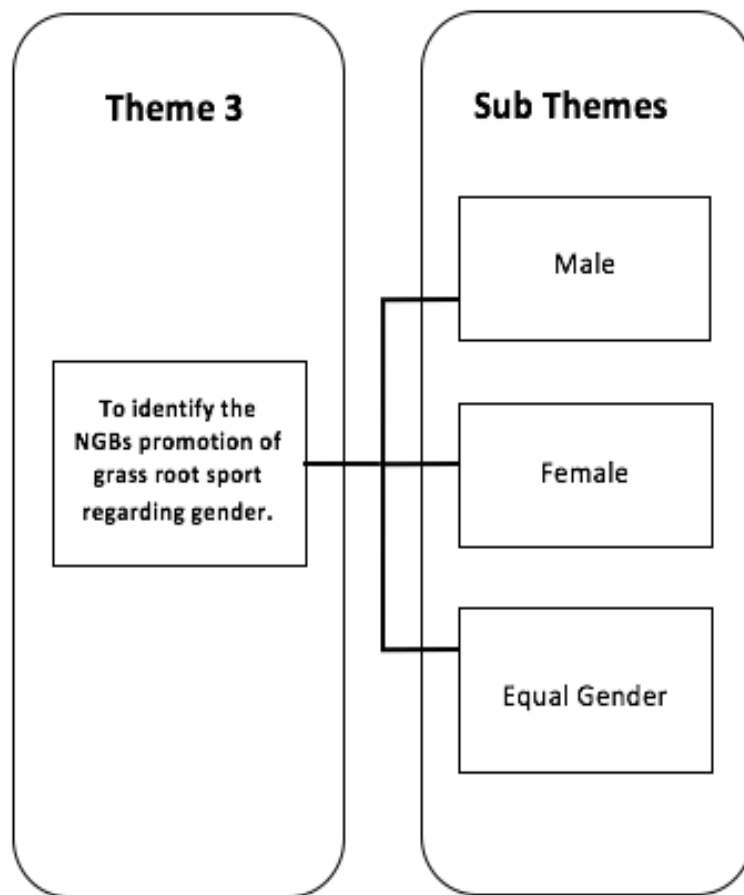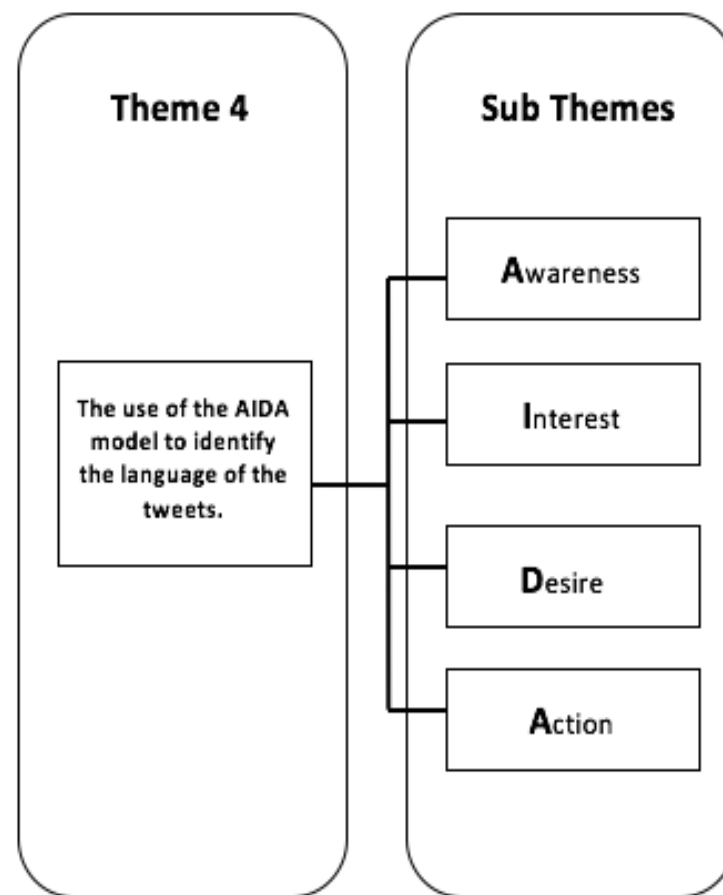ge 'NGB A' contained 892 tweets where as 'NGB B' produced 569 tweets. When evaluating the results, the findings were divided into sections that were positioned to answer the four main objectives of the research study. Theme one aimed at understanding whether sporting NGBs are predominately promoting elite or grass root sport. Secondly, the objective discovered the communication strategies of NGBs to promote grass root sport on Twitter. Furthermore, the study aims to discover if there is gender equality promotion of grass root participation. Finally, the AIDA model was utilised to identify particular key messages embedded within tweets which enhance participation.

4.2 Elite and Grass Root Sport

As previously mentioned, an organisation has full control over the content of the messages (Beninger *et al*., 2014), therefore the objective of theme one's results was to discover the main focus and direction of sport within a specific sector of an NGB; grass root or elite sport. The literature indicates that, although participation has risen since the London 2012 Olympic Games, the overall rise in participation since 2006 has been a minimal at 1.3 per cent, which leaves authorities and NGBs speculating the procedures with which to increase participation (Hayes, 2014). Figure 1 displays the results of the study, which establishes a bias of elite sport, overall 65% (n=651), of the NGBs Twitter feeds discussed elite sport, athletes and high profile events.

The results displayed that 'NGB A' tweeted 49% (n=437) towards the elitist population, as the common pattern for tweets concerned international team results, training squads and success at international competitions. In comparison there were 24% (n=211) tweets recognising grass root sport. There were also 27% (n=244) of tweets that were not applicable to either community or elite which would not effect participation rates.

In comparison to 'NGB A' the results of 'NGB B' were similar as Table 2 acknowledge that 38% (n=214) of tweets were elite focus. The elitist tweets frequently highlighted competitions, teams, results and success of the sporting nation. The overall tweet count of grass root sports presented 25% (n=142). There were 37% (n=213) tweets that were not applicable to the study.

Table 2. Theme 1 - Elite and Grass Root Sport

	ELITE SPORT	GRASS ROOT SPORT
NGB A	437 tweets	212 tweets
NGB B	214 tweets	142 tweets
OVERALL PERCENTAGE (%)	**65%**	**35%**

To conclude, theme one indicated that elite sport saw a high surge of tweets implying that NGBs have strong links and affiliations with elite sport members and teams. These results correspond with the literature as corporate sport is predominantly found (Kinney & Ireland, 2015; Price *et al.*, 2009). As previous attempts to increasing participation have been unsuccessful, research within the literature suggested that DCMS (2015) recognised a shift in objectives from elite to participation based.

4.3 Twitter Promotion of Grass Root Sport

Theme two was solely based on the tweets that concerned grass root development, as these tweets were analysed to realise the ways in which NGBs promote grass root sport. In light of the evidence, Bayle & Robinson (2007) acknowledged that NGBs have a poor knowledge of their consumer market as a lack of experience is involved. Therefore, the second objective of the study was to understand how NGBs utilise their twitter platforms to engage and enhance new participants.

The framework was divided into four main sections; awareness, engagement (Figure 2), promotion and opportunities which derived from Lovejoy & Saxton (2012) research proposing that the correct promotional tools and communication within NGBs is crucial for success and development.

4.3.1 Promotion results of 'NGB A'

The results produced; the '*awareness'* of community sport produced 28% (n=59) tweets, which used messages to attract beginners by advocating that sport is 'fun' and is 'accessible for any age or ability'. Furthermore, '*engagement'* produced 24% (n=51) tweets where NGB A used two-way communication through the form of open questions that aimed to interact and engage followers. For example, 'Where are the best facilities to play in the evening?' or 'Which sports Ambassador would you rather play with?'.

Within '*promotion'*, the highest of the four categories, the tweet count recorded 28% (n=60). Of these tweets, promotion was linked to competitions which promoted grass root sport through the use of rewarding followers with merchandise. NGB A aimed at encouraging participation by promoting low cost deals that offered reduced coaching and facility fees. The '*opportunity'* category was the lowest tweet count; 20% (n=42). This section offered and encouraged 'beginner coaching sessions' and 'taster sessions' however there was a limited selection of perceived '*opportunities'*. A offered a lack of for participants to actively experience sport and physical activity, therefore, reducing attention and interest to engage.

4.3.2 Promotion results of 'NGB B'

The sample size was smaller; however, in comparison to NGB A, the results remained similar. The '*awareness'* section produced 34% (n=48) of the overall tweets, which shaped a positive perspective on participation. The tweets described grass root sport as 'raising the profile' and 'all inclusive game'. Which in turn created the notion of sport becoming inclusive for individuals that do not competitively engage on a regular basis.

The results for '*engagement*' recorded 23% (n=32) of tweets, which was used for two-way communication through prize give ways called 'coaching centre competitions.' These competitions were time limited, which effectively engage the followers through questioning, as well as encouraging followers to act quickly (Rawal, 2013). Furthermore, *'promotion'* recorded 25% (n=35), through the mentions of elite amateurs, international sporting events and professional athletes. This is known as the 'trickle down effect' (Wicker and Sotiriadou, 2013) which was indented to inspire grass root participants to take part in sport and physical activity.

In regards to the *'opportunity'* category, the overall tweet count was 19% (n=27). Although, the '*opportunity'* section was flat, it identified key promotional language such as 'free taster sessions' and 'beginner group sessions', which was intended to captivate further followers thus increase participation. Therefore, the research suggests that although NGBs are promoting participation and the awareness of grass-roots sports, it is not being balanced out by opportunities, therefore participants may be disinterested.

Table 3. Theme 2 results – Twitter Promotion of Grass Root Sport

Grass Root Sport

	Awareness	Engagement	Promotion	Opportunity
NGB A	59 Tweets	51 Tweets	60 Tweets	42 Tweets
NGB B	48 Tweets	32 Tweets	35 Tweets	27 Tweets
Overall Percentage (%)	**30%**	**23%**	**27%**	**20%**

4.4 Gender Equality of Sport

Traditionally, sport is perceived as male orientated (Trolan, 2013). The literature outlined that a further 2 million males engage in sport and physical activity in comparison to females (LGIU, 2015). In recent years, progress has been identified in female participation (Sport Wales, 2012), but clearly barriers to participation for both men and women still exist within sport (DCMS, 2015).

This section aimed to identify if NGB's recognise and offer equal opportunities to both genders, as academics argue that females are under represented within sport (Sherry *et al.*, 2015 & Women, Gender Equality & Sport, 2007). The results of the study indicated that NGB A 'equal gender' category contained 54% (n=115) of tweets, in comparison with NGB B which recorded 80% (n=113). As stated by the researcher, it was expected that there would be a high volume of tweets categorised into 'mixed gender' and 'male'. Interestingly, the results have produced an adverse development to the literature (Trolan, 2013).

The male population tweets were lacking, as NGB A produced 6% (n=12) and NGB B 5% (n=7). This does not concur with the Hylton, (2013) as the literature revealed that males are more inclined to participate in sport and physical activities. However, the evidence in this study supports the promotion of female and girls sport. The 'female' category contained 34% (n=73) of the tweets in NGB A, and 8% (n=11) of tweet for NGB B. The tweets that promoted women's sport participation contained messages such as 'No sex please, we're 'sports participants'. There were also tweets which highlighted the progression of sport suggesting 'former men-only clubs now have thriving ladies' academy'. The results from the study indicate a wide interest in girls and ladies sport development, offering 'free group sessions' to any female participant. Therefore, these results do not resemble the literature (Women, Gender Equality & Sport, 2007; Sherry *et al.*, 2015; Trolan, 2013), as these academics predominately established that sport is male orientated. However, the results of the study indicate a development of women's participation is highly prominent for the analysed NGBs.

Table 4. Theme 3 results – Gender Equality

Grass Root sport

	Male	Female	Mixed Gender
NGB (A) tweets	12	73	115
NGB (B) tweets	7	11	113
Overall Percentage of tweets (%)	6%	25%	69%

4.5 Meaning of the Twitter Language

Theme 4 used qualitative content analysis to examine the language and deeper meaning of the tweets. The coding process consisted of the use of the AIDA model (Rawal, 2013), which was discussed in the methodology, to code tweets into four sections; awareness, interest, desire and attention.

To promote the '*awareness'* of grass root sport, the language used words such as 'fun', 'inspire' and 'life changing' to describe grass root sport. Tweets dynamically described the sport as 'fun' when referring to sessions or elements of the sport. To create 'interest' the language of the tweets was focused towards short phrases to grab the participates attention. Tweet phrases such as 'come and try' and 'don't miss out' were mostly focused towards female sport, as it has been established that the study found a high focus on developing women's sport. The results revealed that these tweets aimed at creating interest through regular open ended questions and competitions. Promotional language was directed towards followers to engage and increase 'interest' of sport activities.

In terms of '*desire',* it was difficult to specifically identify tweets that engaged followers' desires, as results found that tweets were verbose just straight too the point. To create '*attention'*, the NGBs delivered specific messages, that included 'free taster sessions' and 'discounted membership fees'.

Language aimed at catching the participant's attention and offering a clear benefit to individuals participating in grass root sport. However, 'attention' was mainly focused towards specific groups, females and younger individuals. Furthermore, tweets seemed to specifically identify ages and certain demographics.

CHAPTER V:

Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This section will examine the studies' results, compared to the findings and themes which were found in the literature review. This will allow the researcher to discover the studies' findings in comparison to previous literature, thus to conclude if the findings are consistent or inconsistent. Relevant data, results and themes found from the content analysis of the Twitter pages will be discussed in-depth within the chapter. The objective of the study aimed to identify the effective use of Twitter as a marketing promotional method to an increase sports participation. The discussion will address the following sections:

- Elite and grass root sport
- Twitter promotion of grass root sport
- Gender equality of Sport
- Meaning of the Twitter Language

5.2 Elite focus and grass root sport

This section has identified that there is a greater focus of elite sport development than that of grass root sports, as 65% (n=651) of the overall tweets were focused towards performance and excellence. In comparison, 35% (n=354) focused towards the wider community, grass root sport activities and participation. However, the literature surrounding the use of Twitter within the sport industry predominantly focused large corporate sporting organisations such as football clubs (Price *et al.*, 2009). However, recent research within NGBs and social media has emerged (Eagleman, 2012; Chadwick *et al.*, 2013), but not specifically towards the direct promotion of sport.

As expected from previous literature (Smith & Stewart, 2014; Price *et al.*, 2009), the NGB's official Twitter account predominantly focused towards elite sport. However, the findings have also proposed the use of elite events and role models to endorse and encourage participation at grass root level. Wicker and Sotiriadou study (2013), identify this the trickle-down effect. The study revealed there were a number of tweets that used the trickle-down method:

'Listen to '@professionals' and squad members tell us why they play sport. Watch and RT to spread the word. Raising Our Game' (NGB A, 2015).

Moreover, the study established the use of elite sport as a leverage to increase participation through role modelling, ambassadors and benefits of sport. Taylor & O'Sullivan (2009) research promoted the modernisation of NGBs, which has led to 'narrow' sporting objectives as both elite and grass root sport aims and objectives have become blurred. Thus, indicating that since 2009, NGBs are intertwining both levels of sport (Houlihan & Green, 2009), using competitive sport as a catalyst to enhance participation (Wicker & Sotiriadou, 2013), findings are inconclusive as to the effectiveness. The literature indicated sport participation has currently plateaued (Sport England, 2015), which has caused speculation amongst critics as the London Olympic Games bid and legacy was projected to produce a high influx of participants (Olympic Report, 2012). Furthermore, the research suggests that social media was recorded to heavily influence those already involved in sport (Olympics Report, 2012), which is not applicable to the study, but may indicate that sports participants are attracted by social media.

5.3 Twitter promotion of grass root sport

The literature established the importance of the internet and social media, as it changed the way in which organisations communicate (Mangold & Faulds, 2009), transmit information and promote messages to interact with the wider community (Lovejoy & Saxton, 2012). Reflecting upon the study, the results reveal NGBs are promoting and creating awareness of grass root sport. However, there appears to be a slight decline in tweets that offer participants' opportunities 20% (n=69). These tweets were in the form of cost effective trials, coaching and small-scale events. The correct use of promotion will allow organisations to raise awareness of a service, which will increase the appeal of the product thus creating competitive advantage (Fil, 2010). The NGBs are creating *'awareness'* of grass root sport as it was the highest of the occurring tweets, 30% of the NGBs Twitter feed contained messages effectively informing followers of the benefits of grass root sport.

This corresponds with the Eagleman (2012) research suggesting that NGBs are using social media to increase awareness and exposure, in return hoping to create long-term relationships with consumer and stakeholders.

The two lowest categories were *'engagement'* 23% (n=83) and *'opportunities'* 20% (n=69), which according to Weber & Kim (2015) understanding organisational relationships requires active management to regularly engage new and existing consumers, therefore, advocating engagement is an important tool for organisations. Twitter (2015) gave non-profit organisations clear instructions for success which were to acknowledge, engage and communicate. These methods were consistently recognised throughout the twitter messages, as this allowed the researcher to gain a clear indication that NGBs are training and managing Twitter professionally.

5.4 Gender equality of sport

The literature established that there is a gender gap between men and women's sport (Sherry *et al.*, 2015; Trolan, 2013). However, understanding the barriers to participation will allow organisations to understand and identify strategies to tackle these issues (Hylton & Branham, 2008). The results of the present study revealed that NGBs are promoting sport to both male 6% (n=19) and females 25% (n=84) through the use of Twitter. This is the main thrust of tweets focused towards grass root sport promoting gender equality, as 69% (n=228) of the overall tweets were directed at both male and female followers. Moreover, the literature revealed that, although more women use Facebook, the gender count of Twitter users are equal (Mintel, 2012). Therefore, the study provided an insight into the promotional methods of NGBs providing the conclusion that these NGBs are promoting equality.

However, the study established that NGBs were highly promoting sport and physical activity towards females in comparison to the male population. These results were not expected, as Sport England (2015) revealed that males are more likely to engage in sporting activities, therefore, promotion was thought to surround the male population. However, this study revealed the opposite as women's sport was made aware and opportunities were directed towards females.

Furthermore, the study discovered that woman's sport (n=84) was mentioned frequently, compared to males (n=19), which may be due to the apparent change in focus within sport as raising female sport has become a priority for the UK Government (DCMS, 2015; Sport Engalnd, 2015, Sport Wales, 2013). In comparison to Trolan's (2013) research, that argued that men's and women's roles in sport are different. The study proved that NGBs are narrowing the gap with gender equality, as the promotion of grass root sport was focused towards both genders. Therefore, NGBs have direct control over the platform and messages and thus is controlling the balance unlike the criticisms leveled at other traditional media methods.

5.5 Meaning of the tweets

The study identified that NGBs tweets contained organisational personality. Mollet *et al*'s., (2011) research expressed that middle ground tweets are effective for smaller organisations as they allow for injected personality and organisational culture to engage followers. Overall, the NGBs language towards grass root participants was encouraging, and contained personality. The literature proposed that Twitter messages may not 'tell the whole story' as tweets may be unpolished as users only have 140 characters (Mocanu *et al*., 2013). However, the study found that the promotional messages were short phrases that contained external links associated to further web content.

Established from the studies' findings, the '*awareness*' section of the AIDA model was associated with tweets that purported that sport is; 'fun', 'inspiring' and 'life changing'. The tweets dynamically described sport as 'fun' when referring to large taster sessions or specific elements of sport. The 'awareness' of sport in particular grass root sport used basic descriptive language, which aimed to grab the attention of the followers.

The '*interes*t' category identified phrases such as 'come and try' and 'don't miss out' personal, promotional language, which were primarily focused towards female sport participation. The study revealed that these tweets aimed at creating '*interest*' through two-way communication with direct questions aimed at sparking conversation with followers and competitions.

However, Chadwick *et al.*, (2013), argued that NGBs are gradually adopting social media as a marketing tool, rather than two-way communication. Nevertheless, the correct strategy for non-profit organisation to promote is to develop a strong message, experiment and manage, then acknowledge, engage and communicate (Twitter, 2015). Therefore, tweets mentioning competitions were seen frequently throughout the data collection process, with both NGBs aiming to create perceived *'interest'* through giveaways.

In terms of '*desire',* it was difficult to specifically identify tweets that engaged followers' desires, as results found that tweets were straight too the point. Similar to research by Mollet *et al.*, (2014), which identified that tweets may lack personality as the tweet word count is limited.

To create '*attention'*, the NGBs delivered specific messages that included 'free taster sessions' and 'discounted membership fees'. NGBs created 'attention' through persuasive promotional language which aimed to attract attention and persuade participates to take part in sport and physical activity. The study discovered that *'attention'* was focused towards specific gender, age groups and demographics. Therefore, aiming to encourage specific areas of sport as social technologies is proven to create attention for women's sport (Creedon, 2014). The studies NGBs effectively created '*attention'* through the use of acknowledgement, engagement and communication (Twitter, 2015).

5.6 Limitations of the study

It is important to discuss the limitations of the research as, in any study, various limitations exist. The main limitation of study was the time constraint for data collection, therefore researchers with unlimited time constraints could additionally seek a larger sample range. This would have commanded a wider range of tweets from the organisations which offer further supportive evidence to the study. In future research, the sample size of the NGBs may be increased, as a larger sample would have improved the validity of the results and provided a greater understanding of Twitter.

A desk study method was used through the use of content analysis. Although the study used both qualitative and quantitative content analysis, the use of human participants would have provided the study with flexible rich detail of people's personal experiences of phenomena. Therefore, a limitation of the study was lack of human experiences and interpretations. As of yet, research indicates that there is little to no structure or academic framework for social media (Holloman & Adeyeri, 2012), therefore there is no framework to measure the effectiveness of Twitter as a promotional marketing tool. Therefore, the model that was used was based upon general marketing promotional methods.

5.7 Practical Implications and Future Recommendations

A number of practical implication have been considered to improve the value of the research as well as to achieve the objectives of the study. The study was designed to understand how sporting NGBs are strategically using social technologies, specifically Twitter, to promote and enhance participation. Future research could combine the use of several social media platforms, such as Twitter and Facebook, to discover if NGBs are consistent with the promotional marketing strategy. This would provide the study with additional data as well as further validity. The content analysis has indicated key issues, trends and mechanisms to be further explored, as the single method research design has not allowed for further insight. A sequential research design would allow for analysis of the tweets followed by semi-structured interviews with NGB marketing teams, providing further perspective of social technology, from qualitative viewpoint, and will provide attitudes, thoughts and actions of participants (Brown & Brown, 2010).

CHAPTER VI:

Conclusion

6.1 Conclusion

This research study has examined the use of Twitter as a promotional marketing tool, to enhance the awareness and participation levels of grass root sport. The literature review identified the effective use of social media platforms which have allowed organisations to retain and attract consumers through the use of real time communication and promotion. The development of the internet and social media have altered the way in which the sport industry markets its products and services, as sports marketers have reconsidered the traditional way of marketing, as the successful marketing strategies on social media should be tailored to customer demand (Beech & Chadwick, 2007). The literature was focused towards large organisations and corporate marketing and promotion, as research was limited towards NGBs use of social platforms to engage and promote grass root sport.

Specifically, the study discovered that NGBs Twitter platforms are substantially elite focused. However, the trickle down effect was applied to encourage grass root participation. The perceived impacts and influences of Twitter discovered that the awareness of grass root sport is acknowledged by NGBs. However, opportunities and action measures to attract and motivate participants are lacking. Additionally, the study illustrated that female grass root sport is at the forefront of promotional messages, as the results indicated that NGBs are striving to raise the profile of women's sport, which has been set by the UK Government (Sport England, 2015). As participation has plateaued in recent years, ultimately, the Government and National Lottery Funding investments of over a billion pounds' into the development of grass root sport (Trimble, 2010), may have not achieved the perceived impact it was expected. Further research may enhance the understanding of promotional methods on Twitter directly linked to identifying and understating the barriers to participation in grass root sport.

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APPENDICIES

APPENDIX A:

TWITTER POLICY

<u>Twitter Privacy Policy</u>

Tweets, Following, Lists and other Public Information: Our Services are primarily designed to help you share information with the world. Most of the information you provide us through the Twitter Services is information you are asking us to make public. Your public information includes the messages you Tweet; the metadata provided with Tweets, such as when you Tweeted and the client application you used to Tweet; the language, country, and time zone associated with your account; and the lists you create, people you follow, tweets you mark as favourites or Retweet, and many other bits of information that result from your use of the Twitter Services. We may use this information to make inferences, like what topics you may be interested in, and to customize the content we show you, including ads. Our default is almost always to make the information you provide through the Twitter Services public for as long as you do not delete it, but we generally give you settings or features, like direct messages, to make the information more private if you want. The Twitter Services broadly and instantly disseminate your public information to a wide range of users, customers, and services. For instance, your public user profile information and public Tweets are immediately delivered via SMS and our APIs to our partners and other third parties, including search engines, developers, and publishers that integrate Twitter content into their services, and institutions such as universities and public health agencies that analyse the information for trends and insights. When you share information or content like photos, videos, and links via the Services, you should think carefully about what you are making public.