Full Length Article

Experimenting with dialogue on Twitter: An examination of the influence of the dialogic principles on engagement, interaction, and attitude

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ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

Much of the public relations research on online relationship building has examined social media content for the use of the dialogic principles outlined by Kent and Taylor (1998). These studies, using content analysis as the primary methodology, have found that the dialogic capabilities of social media are under-utilized. However, there is limited research on the effectiveness of these methods. Therefore, the goal of this study is to examine the influence of social media content utilizing these principles on engagement, interactivity, and attitude. Results of this study indicate that usefulness of information can have a significant influence on engagement and attitude.

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1. Introduction

Research in public relations has lauded the use of social media as a means of facilitating two-way communication and relationship building. Waters and Williams (2011) argued that while scholars and practitioners alike have praised social media for its role in helping to connect stakeholders and organizations through engagement and interactivity, the research is not currently available to support a commitment to this kind of strategy. Additionally, to date, there is limited research that actually accounts for the effectiveness of social media as a relationship-building tool (Saffer, Sommerfeldt, & Taylor, 2013).

Nearly twenty years ago, Kent and Taylor (1998) proposed a framework for building relationships with the public using the Internet, specifically websites, which has guided much of the research on online relationship building. The central thesis of their framework was the use of dialogue to facilitate two-way communication between organizations and publics. Five principles for achieving dialogue using websites were proposed: (1) intuitiveness/ease of interface, (2) the dialogic loop, (3) useful information, (4) generation of return visits, and (5) the rule of conservation of visitors (Kent & Taylor, 1998). As time and the Internet evolved to include various forms of social media, so did scholars' interest in applying these principles to various organizational and social media settings.

Much of the recent research in this area, guided by this seminal framework, has sought to determine how organizations are using the two-way communication capabilities of social media to build relationships with key stakeholder groups (McAllister-Spooner & Kent, 2009; Rybalko & Seltzer, 2010). The majority of this work has been done using content analysis methodology (Men & Tsai, 2013), which provides an indication of how organizations are using the platforms but does not

provide as much indication of the effectiveness of these strategies in relationship building efforts. Therefore, this project is an attempt to extend the research on the dialogic principles through experimental analysis to determine the effectiveness of the application of dialogic principles on social media, specifically if employing these principles leads to increased engagement, interaction, and positive attitudes.

The context for this research is the Twitter activity of professional athletes. The author(s) acknowledge that most public relations research is conducted in the context of organizations, but in this paper it is argued the celebrity of professional athletes make it an appropriate and interesting context for public relations research. Similar to organizations, athletes and celebrities must maintain relationships with fans and many use social media to connect with fans, keep fans up-to-date with information, and at times, interact with fans (Lim, Witkemper, & Waldburger, 2012). Brazeal (2008) noted that sport public relations is a growing area within the field, with many practitioners taking on the task of managing the image of professional athletes. Additionally, the accessibility, whether perceived or real, that fans feel when following athletes on social media leads to increased levels of fan identification (Sutton, McDonald, Milne, & Cimperman, 1997), which can have positive affects on a team's overall brand equity (cite withheld for blind review).

This paper begins with an overview of the dialogic principles and a synthesis of the recent research in this area. This is followed by an overview of the three main variables under investigation: engagement, interactivity (operationalized as parasocial interaction), and attitude. Results of an experiment of dialogic principles used by professional athletes on Twitter are reported. The paper ends with a discussion of the implications of this research and suggestions for future research.

2. Literature review

2.1. Reviewing the dialogic principles

The dialogic principles evolved out of the use of websites as a public relations tool to connect the organization with the public. During that time, according to Kent and Taylor (1998), the Internet was still in its early adoption phase and had not received much scholarly attention. Using dialogic communication theory as a guide, the dialogic principles were born out of the relationship between two-way symmetrical communication and dialogic communication. Two-way symmetrical communication provides an outlet for an organization and its public to seek mutual benefit, whereas dialogue is a product of that interaction (Kent & Taylor, 1998). In this case, the Internet (websites or social media) provides the outlet for interactivity between the two parties and dialogue is the result of that interaction. The end result is a dialogue between the organization and the public, which aids in relationship building efforts (Bruning, Dials, & Shirka, 2008) and is transparent and ethical (McAllister-Spooner & Kent, 2009).

As previously mentioned, five principles for dialogic communication emerged from this research. The first principle was the dialogic loop, which as Kent and Taylor (1998) put it should "allow publics to query organizations and, more importantly, it offers organizations the opportunity to respond to questions, concerns, and problems" (p. 326). Having a dialogic loop includes having a mechanism for the public to ask questions and for the organization to respond to those questions. For websites, it was the responsibility of the organization to include such mechanisms, but as social media sites like Facebook and Twitter became important public relations tools, those sites had their own built-in dialogic loop through comments and "@reply" features (Rybalko & Seltzer, 2010). The second principle is the usefulness of information principle, which asserts that organizations should provide information that meets the publics' need for information. To cultivate a mutually beneficial organization-public relationship, the public must find value in the information provided by the organization that goes beyond information available in the average press release. Similarly, the third principle, the generation of return visits rests on the same tenet – that there must be some attractive feature available to motivate visitors to return to the website (or the social media feed). Information available on websites and social media should be not only useful, but also updated regularly. The fourth principle, intuitiveness/ease of interface suggests that website interfaces should be easy to navigate. While this is an important principle for website design, this principle has largely been left out of studies focusing on social media (Rybalko & Seltzer, 2010). Finally, the fifth principle is the rule of conservation of visitors. The idea behind this principle is that organizations should attempt to keep the public engaged in their online spaces rather than link out to other websites. In the social media context, this includes integrating social media platforms (cite withheld for blind review).

Since the conceptualization of these principles for online relationship building, scholars have applied these principles to various research settings and Internet platforms. Early studies examined their use on websites (see Gordon & Berhow, 2009; Park & Reber, 2008; Taylor & Kent, 2004; Ingenhoff & Koelling, 2009). As practitioners adopted more online public relations tools including blogs and social media, so did the research. Beginning with their use on the social networking site Facebook, scholars examined the use of these principles in a number of settings including political candidates (Sweetser & Lariscy, 2008), environmental advocacy groups (Bortree & Seltzer, 2009), nonprofit organizations (Waters, Burnett, Lamm, & Lucas, 2009), and university health centers (Waters, Canfield, Foster, & Hardy, 2011). And more recently, the microblogging site Twitter has received attention from scholars examining the dialogic principles (see Rybalko & Seltzer, 2010; Lovejoy, Waters, & Saxton, 2012; Linvill, McGee, & Hicks, 2012; cite withheld for blind review).

The recurring theme through all of these studies is that the two-way dialogic capabilities of these platforms were being under-utilized (Bortree & Seltzer, 2009; Linvill et al., 2012; Lovejoy et al., 2012; Waters et al., 2009). Levenshus (2010) echoed these findings ". . .scholars have reported a gap between public relations practitioners' beliefs in the Internet's potential for relationship-building and their actual use of the Internet to build relationships with publics" (p. 317). Of the collective

findings of studies of the Internet and dialogue, Waters and Williams (2011) noted that information sharing tends to be the primary use of social media among public relations practitioners. Thus, instead of using social media to engage in two-way communication with key publics, practitioners are using Facebook and Twitter as a means of communicating one-way messages.

2.2. Re-conceptualizing relationship building on social media

As the previous review of research has indicated, the two-way dialogic capabilities of social media have to date been greatly under-utilized by organizations. However, as Taylor and Kent (2014) argued "the biggest flaw in how dialogue has been examined in web-based public relations has involved treating the features of dialogue as a series of categories that had to be present for the potential for dialogue" (p. 388). Perhaps, there has been too much emphasis on two-way communication as necessary components of dialogue especially on social media. Himelboim, Golan, Moon, and Suto (2014) cite a lack of understanding of how organizations define dialogue and interaction as it relates to social media as a factor in the discrepancy in the research. Similarly, Waters and Williams (2011) have suggested that scholars "broaden their theoretical perspectives" when examining communication strategies on social media (p. 355). As such, the field is entering a new phase where the theoretical foundations and methodological approaches to understanding relationship building on social media should shift to reflect current industry practices. Therefore, this study has two goals: first this study uses a different methodological approach, an experiment, to determine the influence of the use of dialogic principles to engage the public in relationship-building activities. Second, this study examines the influence of Twitter content utilizing these principles on engagement, interactivity, and attitude.

2.2.1. Engagement

Engagement is a concept closely related to relationship building and dialogue. Taylor and Kent (2014) wrote, "Engagement is part of dialogue and through engagement, organizations and publics can make decisions that create social capital" (p. 384). Engagement is a process of involving the public in the activities of an organization (Devin & Lane, 2014; Sloan, 2009). Similar to relationship building, engagement with stakeholders is an essential component of relationship building (Devin & Lane, 2014; Johnston, 2014). The main notion of stakeholder engagement is to "create a network of mutual responsibility through relationships" (Devin & Lane, 2014; p. 438). While often used interchangeably with dialogue, engagement is often thought to go beyond two-way conversation and represent a commitment to dialogue and relationship building on the part of the organization (Johnston, 2014).

Similar to dialogue, social media provides public relations practitioners with a new tool for engaging publics (Kang, 2014). Kang (2014) argued that in addition to the dialogic communication, the adoption of a human-like voice on social media sites is a key component for facilitating engagement. Additionally, actions on social media including "liking" or "retweeting" a post, leaving a comment, or tweeting to a company are considered forms of engagement (Kang, 2014; Lovejoy et al., 2012; Men and Tsai, 2014). Men and Tsai (2014) added that social media allow publics to directly engage with the organization and each other. By engaging with organizations on social media, publics become part of the organization's community (Men & Tsai, 2014).

It is important to note that the conceptualization of engagement here do not necessarily require a response on the part of the organization, but the opportunity for the public to have a voice. According to Taylor and Kent (2014), most of the research has found engagement is still mostly one-way communication. Even though these interactions are sometimes one-sided, Gummerus, Lilijander, Weman, and Pihlstrom (2012) suggest through engaging with an organization on social media, the public receives different relationship benefits. Men and Tsai (2014) found that publics that engaged with organizations on social media were more committed, trusting, and satisfied with the organization. Men and Tsai (2012) suggest that organizations can create social media content that is entertaining and useful with multimedia elements, interactive polls, and games to increase engagement with publics. Therefore, using the dialogic principles as a guide for creating content (i.e., creating content that is useful or using the generation of return visits principle in posts) could have influence the likelihood of having the public engage with content. The following research question is proposed:

RQ1: How does the use of the dialogic principles on Twitter influence the likelihood to engage on Twitter?

2.2.2. Parasocial interaction

Parasocial interaction (PSI) is not typically associated with public relations research; however, it is argued here that the tenets of PSI and its application to social media research are consistent with the current state of online relationship building research. Interaction on social media in this study, then, is operationalized through PSI. PSI research began with studies on how audiences interacted with media personalities (Frederick, Lim, Clavio, & Walsh, 2012). Rubin, Perse, and Powell, (1985) conceptualized PSI as "interpersonal involvement of the media user with what he or she consumes" (p. 156). More recently, from a marketing perspective Labrecque (2014) defined PSI as "an illusionary experience, such that consumers interact with personas (i.e., mediated representations of presenters, celebrities, or characters) as if they are present and engaged in a reciprocal relationship" (p. 135). Even though most PSI work is grounded in traditional media and "interactions" with media personalities, from a marketing perspective Labrecque (2014) adds, PSI can also be useful for explaining how the social media environment can bring a person closer to a brand or celebrity and enhance the relationship between the two. It is argued here that PSI can also be extended to the organizational context in public relations.

Research from a variety of disciplines has applied PSI in social media research. Frederick et al. (2012) examined PSI in the context of following professional athletes on Twitter. Ballantine and Martin (2005) provided a framework for understanding how PSI can contribute to relationship building in online communities. Labrecque (2014) used PSI to look at how social media can be used to maintain consumer-brand relationships. Findings from this study revealed that having a sense of connectedness with a brand could increase feelings of loyalty and encourage more open communication. Similarly, Tsiotsou (2015) found that PSI and social interactions on social networking sites could increase consumer loyalty and intentions to recommend the site to others.

Social media has potential for two-way communication, but as previously discussed most of the communication on social media is still mostly one-way. In fact, the activity on social media resembles the one-way communication found in other media (i.e., TV or radio). Parasocial relationships and interactions are largely one-sided (Rubin & McHugh, 1987; Frederick et al., 2012; Perse & Rubin, 1989). Stever and Lawson (2013) add that even though social media allows the public to have more access to media figures (or organizations), they (the media figure or organization) still control the level of response and reciprocation in the relationship. Despite the lack of two-way communication, through PSI people still feel connected to a public figure (or organization) and perceive a friendly relationship with them. Therefore, it is argued here that examining the one-sided nature of social media relationships through PSI could be beneficial for public relations scholars. The following research question is posed:

RQ2: How does the use of the dialogic principles on Twitter influence the likelihood to engage in parasocial interaction on Twitter?

2.2.3. Attitude

A positive attitude toward an organization is a desirable outcome of organization-public relationships (Kang, 2014). Attitudes are an evaluative reaction to an organization (Thomson, MacInnis, & Park, 2005). A positive relationship with the organization can lead to a positive attitude, which can be an important indication of likelihood to interact or engage with the organization on social media. Particular to websites, Yang and Taylor (2010) suggest that positive interactions with organizational websites can result in a more positive attitude and motivate users to engage with the organization. As publics interact with the organization and one another through social media sites, this can have an influence on their overall attitude (Abeza, O'Reilly, & Reid, 2013). Studies have looked at consumer attitude toward retail websites to determine likelihood to shop online (Elliott & Speck, 2005). Bellman, Porter, Treleaven-Hassard, Robinson, and Varan (2011) found that using mobile apps resulted in positive attitudes as well as purchase intention. This study investigates the influence of the dialogic principles on attitude. The following research question is proposed:

RQ3: How does the use of the dialogic principles on Twitter influence attitude?

Similarly, since a positive attitude is often an indicator of engagement and interactivity, then this study also seeks to investigate this relationship further. The following research questions are proposed:

RQ3a: How does attitude influence likelihood to engage on Twitter?

RQ3b: How does attitude influence parasocial interaction on Twitter?

3. Method

This study examines the influence of the dialogic principles on engagement, interactivity, and attitude with professional athletes on Twitter. Scholars have suggested that the use of dialogic principles were important to the development of mutually beneficial relationships. This study is among one of the first to empirically test the use of these principles on different online activities.

3.1. Research setting and stimulus development

This study builds on previous research examining how professional athletes employed dialogic principles on Twitter (cite withheld for blind review). A content analysis of tweets from professional athletes revealed athletes primarily used one-way communication on Twitter, specifically the generation of return visits principles and useful information principle was found the most in the sample (cite withheld for blind review). As such, this study empirically tests the use of the dialogic principles on social media for enhancing attitude toward athletes, encouraging engagement, and improving the overall relationship between the athlete and audience.

The aforementioned content analysis provides the basis for the development of stimulus material for the current study. Stimulus material included a fabricated Twitter feed from two professional athletes – tennis player Serena Williams and NASCAR driver Danica Patrick. Serena Williams is one of the most popular female athletes on Twitter with 3,931,636 followers. Williams' popularity and frequent activity on Twitter made her an appropriate subject for this study. Tweets from NASCAR driver Danica Patrick were used as a control. A second popular female athlete was selected to prevent duplication of stimulus material.

Tweets selected for use in the stimulus were coded using the same coding scheme used in the (cite withheld for blind review) study. A total of five Twitter profiles were constructed using actual tweets from the athlete's profile for use as stimulus material (four experimental groups and one control group). Each of the four experimental groups featured tweets from Serena Williams that primarily employed one of the four dialogic principles under investigation. For the control group, a random selection of tweets from Danica Patrick was provided to participants.

The author(s) contend that the use of professional athletes is one of many possible contexts for this research including for-profit organizations, nonprofit organizations, education, and entertainment industries among others. This project is a continuation of previous research conducted by the author(s) and as such; Twitter activity of professional athletes was used for the development of stimuli material. Decisions made by researchers can result limitations to the study and generalizability of the research. Results should be interpreted in light of the context of the study.

Responses were collected via online surveys. After completing the necessary consent forms, participants were asked to read a series of tweets from a professional athlete and then answer questions based on attitude, engagement, and parasocial interaction.

3.2. Independent variables

Four of the five dialogic principles (usefulness of information, dialogic loop, conservation of visitors, and generation of return visits) were used as the independent variables in the study. The fifth principle, ease of interface, was omitted from the study since the Twitter interface is the same for all users. Respondents, randomly assigned to one of five conditions, were instructed to read a series of tweets and answer questions about the tweets. There were four experimental groups where respondents read tweets from Serena Williams that employed the aforementioned dialogic principles. The control group included a random selection of tweets from Danica Patrick.

3.3. Dependent variables

This study evaluated the influence of tweets employing the dialogic principles on three components of relationship building: engagement, interaction, and attitude. Measures for engagement were developed from Kang (2014). In previous work, engagement was measured with three dimensions: affective commitment, positive affectivity, and empowerment. Empowerment was not relevant to the current study and those scales were omitted. Engagement was measured with a total of eight items on a 7-point Likert scale (three items measured affective commitment: I feel emotionally attached to the athlete, I feel like part of the athlete's inner circle, and I feel a sense of belonging with the athlete's fans; while positive affectivity was measured with five items: I am interested/attentive/excited/enthusiastic/proud when the athlete posts to Twitter). Finally, interactivity was used in this study as an indicator of being a relationship with the athlete and was operationalized through PSI. Measures for PSI were adopted from Rubin et al. (1985). The original 20-item scaled was modified to 16-items relevant to the study. Attitude was measured on a 7-point semantic differential scale adopted from Thomson et al. (2005). Four items measured attitude (bad/good, unfavorable/favorable, dislikable/likable, and disagreeable/agreeable).

4. Results

Overall, 271 participants completed the survey. Participants were recruited from the communication department of a large university in the eastern United States. Their avid use of social media and consumptions of sports make this an appropriate sample for this type of study. The data indicated that respondents were prolific social media users, with the majority of respondents using Facebook ($n = 251$, 92.6%), followed by Instagram ($n = 218$, 80.4%), Snapchat ($n = 226$, 83.4%) and Twitter ($n = 172$, 63.5%). Respondents were asked to indicate if they considered themselves to be a sports fan. The majority of respondents identified themselves as sports fans ($n = 202$, 74.5%). Respondents identified most as football fans ($n = 182$, 67.2%) followed by basketball ($n = 118$, 43.5%), baseball ($n = 73$, 26.9%), hockey ($n = 49$, 18.1%), and tennis ($n = 35$, 12.9%).

The average age of respondents was 20 years old ($SD = 1.71$). The majority of respondents were female ($n = 186$, 68.6%) and 30.6% were male ($n = 83$). Two respondents preferred not answer. Nearly 80% of the respondents identified themselves as white or Caucasian ($n = 216$), respondents who identified as Asian ($n = 26$), African American ($n = 12$), Hispanic ($n = 10$) and Native American ($n = 2$) made up the remaining 20%. Five responded preferred not to answer.

For the five conditions, 51 participants viewed tweets that employed the usefulness of information principle (18.8%), 43 participants viewed the tweets with the conservation of visitors principle (15.9%), 74 participants viewed the tweets with the dialogic loop (27.3%), 52 participants viewed tweets with the generation of return visits principle (19.2%), and 51 participants were in the control group (18.8%).

After exposure to the stimuli, respondents were asked (1) if they were familiar with the athlete, (2) if they followed the athlete on Twitter, and (3) to rate themselves on their level of fandom for the athlete. Results indicated that 87.8% of respondents were familiar with the athlete ($n = 238$), but only eight respondents followed the athlete on Twitter. Therefore, it is likely that the first exposure to the athlete's tweets is through the stimulus material. Respondents were asked to indicate on a scale of 1–7, how they would rate themselves as a fan of the athlete. Results indicated that respondents had a moderate level of fandom for the athletes in the study ($M = 3.25$, $SD = 1.530$).

4.1. Exploratory factor analysis

To assess measurement of the constructs of attitude, engagement, and PSI, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted using the maximum likelihood estimation with oblimin rotation. The EFA showed that some of the PSI factors merged with the engagement factors, resulting in three total factors accounting for 55.48% of the variance. A principle component factor

Table 1
EFA and CFA Results.

Factor/items	EFA			CFA	
	Factor Loading	Variance%	Alpha	Factor Loading	Variance%
Factor 1: Engagement		41.39	0.92		23.45
I am attentive to what the athlete has to say	0.87			0.80	
I feel a sense of belonging with other fans of the athlete	0.83			0.77	
I am proud to say I'm a fan of the athlete	0.82			0.76	
I am excited when the athlete posts to Twitter	0.78			0.75	
I am enthusiastic about following the athlete on Twitter	0.72			0.70	
I think the athlete is like an old friend	0.58			0.64	
I am interested in what the athlete has to say	0.74			0.63	
I feel like I'm part of the athlete's inner circle	0.56			0.59	
I feel sorry for the athlete when she loses	0.49			0.57	
The athlete makes me feel comfortable, as if I am with a friend	0.47			0.55	
I miss seeing tweets from the athlete when she is not on Twitter	0.45			0.53	
Factor 2: Attitude		8.78	0.88		15.14
I think the athlete is unfavorable/favorable	0.86			0.84	
I think the athlete is dislikable/likable	0.77			0.79	
I think the athlete is disagreeable/agreeable	0.76			0.78	
I think the athlete is bad/good	0.74			0.56	
Factor 3: PSI		5.30	0.90		21.51
I see the athlete as a natural, down-to-earth person	0.88			0.84	
Reading the athlete's tweets is like interacting with a friend	0.81			0.80	
I would like to meet the athlete in person	0.79			0.76	
I sometimes tweet messages to the athlete	0.79			0.77	
The athlete tweets about things I'm interested in	0.57			0.67	
Reading tweets from the athlete on Twitter shows me what she is really like	0.54			0.64	
If there were a story about the athlete in a newspaper or magazine, I would read it	0.48			0.58	

analysis with varimax rotation confirmed these findings. Three items from the PSI scale did not load and were removed from the analysis (see Table 1).

A one-way ANOVA was used to answer RQ1, which examined the influence of the dialogic principles on engagement. Results indicated a statistically significant difference between the groups ($F(4, 266) = 6.618$, $p < 0.001$). A Tukey post-hoc test revealed a significant difference between usefulness of information ($M = 3.41$, $SD = 1.08$) and the control group ($M = 2.55$, $SD = 1.12$).

4.2. Research questions

RQ2 examined the influence of the dialogic principles on PSI with professional athletes. Results of a one-way ANOVA did not indicate a significant difference between any of the conditions ($F(4, 266) = 1.176$, $p = 0.322$).

Finally, RQ3 investigated the influence of the dialogic principles on attitude toward the athlete. Results of a one-way ANOVA indicated a significant difference ($F(4, 266) = 3.485$, $p < 0.05$). A Tukey post-hoc test revealed a statistically significant difference between the usefulness of information principle ($M = 5.57$, $SD = 0.986$) and the control group ($M = 4.91$, $SD = 0.924$).

A positive attitude is often an indication of engagement and interaction. RQ3a and RQ3b investigated this influence. Results of a Pearson Correlation revealed a positive, significant correlation between attitude and engagement $r = 0.430$, $n = 271$, $p < 0.001$ and PSI $r = 0.293$, $n = 271$, $p < 0.001$. Therefore, these results support that a positive attitude can have a moderate influence on engagement with athletes on Twitter and a weak influence on PSI.

In terms of the observed difference among the means, attitude ($M = 5.32$, $SD = 1.00$) toward the athlete was higher than engagement ($M = 3.23$, $SD = 1.15$) and PSI ($M = 2.32$, $SD = 1.12$). For each condition, usefulness of information (attitude $M = 5.57$, engagement $M = 3.41$) had the highest mean score with the exception of PSI ($M = 2.46$). See Table 2 for mean and standard deviation for each condition.

5. Discussion

The dialogic principles have been studied extensively as a framework for relationship building between an organization and its publics. The ability of social media to facilitate two-way communication is what sets it apart from more traditional public relations tactics, but most of the research in this area has revealed that these capabilities are underutilized by organizations (Levenshus, 2010). Therefore, the current study attempts to examine the effectiveness of these strategies when used by professional athletes on Twitter. Specifically, this study examined how the dialogic principles influence the likelihood of

Table 2
Mean & Standard Deviation Table.

		M	SD
Attitude	Usefulness of Information	5.57	0.99
	Dialogic Loop	5.39	0.95
	Conservation of Visitors	5.24	1.19
	Generation of Return Visits	5.43	0.90
	Control	4.91	0.92
Engagement	Usefulness of Information	3.41	1.08
	Dialogic Loop	3.50	1.13
	Conservation of Visitors	3.29	1.11
	Generation of Return Visits	3.31	1.07
	Control	2.55	1.12
PSI	Usefulness of Information	2.38	1.16
	Dialogic Loop	2.46	1.16
	Conservation of Visitors	2.31	0.94
	Generation of Return Visits	2.37	1.15
	Control	2.04	1.16

engaging with the athlete, exhibiting parasocial interaction with the athlete, and influencing their overall attitude toward the athlete.

Results of the analysis revealed a significant difference between the implementation of the usefulness of information principle and the control group on engagement with the athlete and attitude toward the athlete. This means that respondents tended to engage with the athlete when they found the information they tweeted to be useful, or in the case of the control, when there was a variety of principles present in the tweets. In this study, there was no significant difference for parasocial interaction with the athlete. Additionally, results of the study indicated that attitude had a positive, significant correlation with engagement and parasocial interaction with the athlete.

For both the engagement and attitude variables, the means for usefulness of information were significantly higher than any other condition. In other words, respondents tended to react to useful information from the athlete in positive, relationship-building ways. Even though two-way communication is not present in much of the social media activity, results of this study show that one-way communication (providing useful information) is just as effective in terms of engaging the public in relationship building activities and creating a positive attitude between the public and the organization. This finding supports previous research by McAllister-Spooner and Kent (2009) who found that providing useful information was also a significant predictor for responsiveness to organizational communication efforts.

There are various reasons as to why an organization does not engage in two-way communication on social media. Among them is the practicality and allocation of resources to carry on two-way conversation with potentially millions of followers (Waters & Williams, 2011). Waters and Williams (2011) also suggest that an organization may not want to give up control of the message. Similarly, Lovejoy et al. (2012) note that there may not be enough research to fully support abandoning one-way messaging.

Results of this study indicate another possible reason; perhaps the audience is not primed to engage in two-way communication with an athlete or an organization on social media. Respondents in this study indicated they would be more likely to engage on social media when they read tweets with information found to be useful, more so than dialogic. This is consistent with what Kent and Taylor (1998) said in their original article, "for a dialogic relationship to exist, parties must view communicating with each other as the goal of a relationship," (p. 324). In 2014, Taylor and Kent continued this argument suggesting that dialogue should be treated more as a communication orientation rather than web site design feature.

5.1. Limitations

One limitation of this study is the context for the research. While professional athletes do provide an interesting and relevant context for public relations research, it is a highly specific context that is not generalizable to other areas of public relations work. Future research should examine the effectiveness of dialogue and the dialogic principles in the organizational context within different sectors, such as nonprofit, for-profit, education, entertainment, and hospitality. The context for the study could influence the way that the public responds to and engages with an organization.

This study looked at the influence of the dialogic principles on outcomes related to an organization-public relationship, including engagement interaction (operationalized as parasocial interaction), and attitude, rather than on the perception of the actual relationship itself. While it can be argued that each of these outcomes has potential to have a positive influence on the overall organization-public relationship, this was not specifically addressed in this study.

This study applied a broad treatment to the concept of engagement; however, recent research has indicated that engagement should be considered in a more specific manner. For example, engagement could indicate participation in a Twitter chat or production of user-generated content. These different types of engagement should be addressed in future research. Additionally, this study was not designed to match specific motivations to a particular type of engagement, but this concept

should be explored in future studies. Research on factor analysis indicates that scales with extensive items for factor analysis can be problematic to the accuracy of the model specification. As such, the extensive items used to measure these variables should be considered a limitation to the study.

The use of a convenience sample of undergraduate students should be considered a limitation of this research. For an exploratory study, such as this, a sample of sports fans and social media users is appropriate for establishing a relationship among the variables under investigation. However, a study that investigates perceptions of social media activity of athletes would benefit greatly from having a sample of highly identified fans of those athletes. The likelihood of engagement with the athlete on social media could be higher for identified fans. Future research should attempt to include identified fans of an athlete (or team/organization) to determine if identification influences social media engagement.

5.2. Conclusion

Relationship building begins with the organization and typically is the responsibility of the public relations professional to engage in relationship building activities with key publics (Saffer et al., 2013). Social media provides a unique tool for engaging audiences in relationship building activities, including the capability to respond directly to and interact with the public, but results of this study indicate that two-way communication is not the only factor that can promote relationship building on social media. Perhaps, scholarship should instead focus on a more balanced approach to creating content and engaging with publics on social media. Waters and Williams (2011) summarized "There are times in organizational communication campaigns when one-way messages are preferred and more helpful than taking a symmetrical approach; there are others when conversation and negotiation will yield the most gain for the organization" (p. 359–360). Therefore, it is proposed here that future studies of relationship building on social media should move beyond identifying dialogic strategies in content and two-way communication, and instead look for a more balanced approach that is specific to the social media platform. Specifically, studies should examine structural features of each platform that provide a unique engagement experience for followers.

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