Understanding Professional Athletes’ Use of Twitter: A Content Analysis of Athlete Tweets

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The online social network Twitter has grown exponentially since 2008. The current study examined Twitter use among professional athletes who use Twitter to communicate with fans and other players. The study used content analysis to place 1,962 tweets by professional athletes into one of six categories: interactivity, diversion, information sharing, content, promotional, and fanship. Many of the tweets fell into the interactivity category (34%). Athletes used Twitter to converse directly with their followers. Those with the most followers had more interactivity tweets. A large percentage of tweets (28%) fell into the diversion category, because many of the tweets involved non-sports-related topics, and relatively few of the tweets (15%) involved players discussing their own teams or sports. In addition, only 5% of the tweets were promotional in nature, indicating that professional athletes may not be taking advantage of the promotional opportunities Twitter may provide.

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