

**THE USE OF FACEBOOK AND TWITTER IN SPORTS PUBLIC RELATIONS
IN THE 2012 OLYMPICS**

BY

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DECLARATION

I, Carol-Anne Cash, hereby certify that:

- The content of this dissertation is my own original work.
- The sources that have been used have been acknowledged and documented by means of complete references.
- The dissertation has not been previously submitted for assessment to another university.

SIGNED: CAROL-ANNE CASH

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Carol-Anne Cash', written in a cursive style.

DATE: 27 NOVEMBER 2013

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to provide professionals practising sports public relations in South Africa with insight into the use of social media platforms Facebook and Twitter.

The secondary data from this study was drawn from the fields of communications, public relations, new media, social media, sport and marketing.

South African Paralympic swimmers Kevin Paul and Shireen Sapiro were selected as the case studies and their Facebook and Twitter sites were analysed. The data was analysed leading up to, during and after the 2012 London Olympics and Paralympics. Content analysis using quantitative and qualitative data was utilized to conduct this study. During the period 27 July to 30 September 2012, the study was able to evaluate data by identifying the reach, frequency, interaction of the stakeholders and the positive or negative impact social media had on these athletes.

The study established that there were correlations between the secondary and primary research that was undertaken. The findings revealed that social media platforms Facebook and Twitter can be useful tools to communicate with stakeholders. Social media can also create support for the athletes, create two-way interaction, create unity and enhance reputation.

It was identified that social media could only be effective if it enticed stakeholders to engage with the brand and create two-way communication. Immediate feedback by responding to comments as soon as possible to build and maintain relationships with stakeholders is essential. This can be done through comprehensive planning, monitoring and proactively seeking ways to satisfy stakeholder needs.

Chapter 1 – Introduction to Research

1.1 Introduction

Social media has become an increasingly popular medium to many stakeholders in the sports industry including organisations, participants, coaches, sport journalists and spectators, allowing users to construct public or semi-public profiles to connect with a geographically unhindered plethora of users cultivated through some common interest (Boyd and Ellison: 2007). Social-networking amalgamates sociology with technology to form a bond between people that may have otherwise never have connected (Galimore and Leonard: 2009).

Mass media traditionally favours one-way communication whereas digital media promotes interaction from not only one individual to-many but from many-to-many. According to Lister & Colleagues (2003) 'old' media is passive consumption and the 'new' media allows more interactivity and a more powerful sense of user engagement.

When a sport organisation utilizes social media, it can serve as a line of communication that encourages direct consumer contact, focused information, and constructive feedback from their customers (Galimore and Leonard, 2009). Instant feedback can produce relationships that are more meaningful with their fans (Peck, 2009). Social network sites satisfy fans' thirst for a closer connection to top athletes (Gregory, 2009).

Social media is now a significant tool to access information regarding favourite teams, events or players (Blaszka, 2011). Rapid changes in technology have allowed stakeholders to share news, information and content with potential consumers. New media allows fans to access any sport, any event, any time, using many devices. The list of technology includes; HDPVR, smartphones, iPads, web streaming, walkers, digital radio, Youtube, games consoles and social media sites.

Facebook and Twitter have become practical sports marketing tools but the role of social media has not been studied extensively in terms of the impact it has had on South African athletes. Exploring the value of social media in hallmark events such as the Olympics can be valuable for sport organisations and individuals to assist them in developing and integrating successful marketing and corporate communication campaigns.

This study investigates the role that social media such as Facebook and Twitter has had on the sports public relations industry and South African athletes during the 2012 Olympics and Paralympics.

This treatise seeks to determine a viable corporate communication and branding strategy to build rapport between sports bodies and their respective stakeholders by investigating two South African athletic professionals' –Kevin Paul and Shireen Sapiro – use of social networking platforms Facebook and Twitter over a period of two months leading up to and during their respective participation in the 2012 London Olympics and Paralympics.

Facebook and Twitter, being relatively new sports marketing tools with potentially positive and negative influence on individual brands, have not been studied extensively in terms of their impact on South African athlete exposure. Exploring the value of social media in a hallmark event such as the Olympics can be valuable for sport organisations and individuals to assist them in developing and integrating successful marketing and corporate communication campaigns.

The study is in a field that has been explored although not within the South African context and not with specific reference to sports Public Relations and social media.

Chapter 1 sets out the research questions and the aims of the research study. A preliminary literature review will be discussed in the field of communications, new media, public relations and sport. The preliminary literature review's purpose is to gather information from existing secondary sources to provide further insight. An outline of the research methods will be introduced including the time frame, case studies and how the data will be analysed.

1.1.1 Research Question

The research question is to determine the extent to which networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter can be used in sports PR with specific reference to two South African athletes Kevin Paul and Shireen Sapiro during the 2012 London Olympics and Paralympics.

1.1.2 Aims

The aims for this research study are:

- To contextualise social media and demonstrate online platform development with specific reference to Facebook and Twitter.

- To examine the Facebook and Twitter communications of two individual professional athletes over a two month period.

1.2 Preliminary literature review

In the last six years social media has grown substantially, the latest social media statistics released by STATS SA (2011) said that there are 1.1 million Twitter users and 4.8 million Facebook users in South Africa.

Dick Costolo, the current CEO of Twitter said that most users of Twitter do not Tweet, but rather use Twitter as a form of media consumption. With the evolution of smart phones, Twitter has become a user-friendly application to help stakeholders get updated information, as well as a great mechanism for breaking news. Many professional sports organizations are utilizing this type of media to provide information and connect to their fans (Kassing and Sanderson, 2010).

The emphasis in communicating effectively with stakeholders lies in the immediacy of the message (Stoldt, Dittmore and Branvold, 2010). It is vital that public relations practitioners have a clear understanding of new forms of media and effectively use them to communicate a sports entity's message to its target audiences. Tassiopolous (2005) argues that public relations is the promotional discipline of forming what your audience thinks or feels about the value of your organisation as a whole. It is a broader, more time consuming approach to building continuing allegiance to your cause and participation in events. This theory applies to creating an affiliation with stakeholders in the sports industry through effective and immediate two-way communication.

To identify the pros and cons of social media such as Facebook and Twitter this study will investigate the background and development of the networks.

Social media is defined as the sharing of information, experiences and perspectives through community oriented websites (Weinburg, 2009), that have grown exponentially over the last ten years. The rapid growth is a reflection of the advancement from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 technology. Web 1.0 technology is characterized by one-way communication through a web designer who provides content for people to visit or communicate through e-mail, message boards or forums (Pegoraro, 2009). Web 2.0 is defined by user-generated content shared with others through interaction. The technological

shift from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 has influenced society and changed the way individuals use the Web. “Technology has allowed users to become participatory, conversational, social, and decentralized with individuals controlling their own websites, blogs, and using social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter. These applications can be accessed via personal computer, phone, and game consoles. Twitter is one of the fastest growing Web 2.0 applications in the new media age (Clavio and Kian, 2010), and companies often use it for marketing or branding purposes. The sports industry is an area participating in this growing phenomenon.” (Weinburg, 2009).

To further understand online social media, the study will investigate why social media users are drawn to following and interacting with South African athletes such as Kevin Paul and Shireen Shapiro. The study will endeavour to investigate why users identify with the athletes and their respective sport.

Dr Sherry Turkle’s book - Identity and the Age of the Internet written in 1997 predicts that the rapidly expanding networks will continue to link millions of people in new spaces that are changing the way people think, the nature of sexuality, communities and core identities. “It offers a new medium on which to project our ideas and fantasies. In cyberspace we can talk, exchange ideas, and assume personae of our own creation. We have the opportunity to build new kinds of communities, virtual communities, in which we participate with people from all over the world, people with whom we converse daily, people with whom we may have fairly intimate relationships but whom we may never physically meet” (Turkle, 1997).

Tajfel and Turner’s (1985) social identity theory explains that people identify themselves in relation to their society, and it is described as people being classified into social categories. Personal identity consists of one’s attributes and interests while social identity is one that can be based on demographics (e.g., race, gender or age) or organizational membership characteristics (educational, religious, team). Consumption choices are determined by the social group or groups that they belong to (Turner, 1982). Social identity is the individual’s self-concept derived from perceived membership of social groups (Hogg and Vaughan, Fink, Trail and Anderson (2002) and James and Trail (2008) have examined sport literature to explain the phenomenon of an individual’s identification with a team, sport or athlete. These areas have been specifically defined as points of attachment. These attachments have been studied by researchers as a way for marketers to understand what draws a particular fan to an event or team. Robinson and Trail (2005) determined seven points of attachment: player, team, coach, university, community, sport and these points of attachment directly relate to why people support them.

Researchers including Kwak, Kim, Zimmerman and Fink (2002) have focused on team identification when assessing consumers and determined the following:

The points of attachment have been split into two categories; player, coach, university, community, and team identification all directly relate to a sport organization, while sport and level relate directly to the sport identification. The organization and the sport identification can be directly related. For example, a consumer may be an avid fan of the Springboks while being a fan of the Bulls with his / her favourite player being Francois Hougaard. The sport consumer is a fan of the sport and level and has identified with both the team and a player. It is assumed that point of attachment would play a particularly big role in who consumers follow on social networks such as Twitter and Facebook. “Fans that are highly identified with their team are likely to behave differently than lowly identified fans. For example, highly identified fans spend more money on team merchandise and tickets and stay loyal to their team during losing periods” (Trail, Anderson and Fink, 2000; Wann & Branscombe, 1993).

The life blood of any sport organization is their fans. Social media users who are highly identified with a team may follow all the team’s players, coaches, sports journalists and the team accounts. It is assumed by Trail, Anderson et al (2000) that users who follow their favourite team would be considered highly identified.

There is a difference between a fan and a spectator. A spectator merely watches the game or sport but does not have a vested interest or concern with the outcome of the game. “Fans are considered enthusiastic devotees of a given diversion” (Sloan, 1989 and Trail et al, 2003). A win is usually much more important than seeing a great game. They have high emotion toward their team and make a major financial commitment to the organization. It is assumed that fans identify with sport organizations and athletes at a far higher level than spectators do.

Sport organizations should be aware of the fans that are following them on Facebook and Twitter. Highly identified fans are seeking as much information as they can consume.

Studies done by Robinson and Trail (2002) and Trail et al (2003) suggest that fans will be looking for ‘insider’ information or breaking news on players, coaches, and the team.

The study will include a corporate communication campaign for social network groups Facebook and Twitter for an individual sportsman or sportswoman to enhance competitive brand advantage.

1.3 Research Methodology

This study sets out to analyse what stakeholders say on Facebook and Twitter with regards to SA athletes Kevin Paul and Shireen Sapiro during the 2012 Olympics and Paralympics in London. Content analysis methodology will be used to determine what consumers say and with what effect.

The case studies selected were based on the following background information:

Paralympic swimmer Kevin Paul won gold in the 100m breaststroke at the age of 17 at the Beijing Olympics in 2008 and is the world record holder in his category. Paul was diagnosed with Poland Syndrome which means that he has no pectoral muscles on the left side of his chest but has adapted his swimming style to overcome the disability. Paul qualified for five events and won the silver medal in London 2012 for the 100m breaststroke.

Paralympic teammate Shireen Sapiro qualified for the 2008 Beijing Olympics and broke the world record by winning the gold medal in the 100m backstroke. Sapiro was the flagbearer for the South African delegation at the 2009 Maccabiah Games in Israel. As the only paralympic athlete at the games, Sapiro brought home three medals against able-bodied athletes. Sapiro suffered horrific injuries in a boating accident on the Vaal Dam in 2004. The propeller shattered Shireen's pelvis into nine pieces, ripped nerves out of her spinal cord and left the quadriceps on her left leg paralysed. She spent a month in a coma and four months in hospital during which time she underwent eighteen reconstructive operations. Sapiro's latest achievements include qualifying for five events in London and winning the bronze medal in the 100m breaststroke (Shireensaprio.com, n.d).

Quantitative and qualitative research methods will be used in this study to determine the impact on SA athletes participating in this year's Olympics and Paralympics. The data will be analysed from Friday 27 July to Sunday 30 September 2012.

During this period the comments and postings on Facebook and Twitter will be evaluated as follows:

- Reach through number likes, followers, shares, tweets, replies and comments.
- Frequency (traffic) of likes, followers, shares, tweets, replies and comments.
- Evaluate athlete and stakeholder interaction.
- The comments will be analysed to determine positive or negative impact.

1.4 Conclusion

This chapter highlighted the research questions and the aims of the research study and included a preliminary literature review that outlined communications, new media, public relations and sport. This chapter also included an introduction to the research methodology including the outline of the case studies and how the data would be analysed.

Chapter 2 will provide an overview and analysis of existing secondary data related to this study including the changing public relations environment, social media and sport with attention to the Olympics. The following chapter aims to contextualise social media platforms Facebook and Twitter and their uses for South African athletes.

Chapter 2 – Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Chapter 2 introduces key concepts related to this study by discussing existing literature in the field of communications, social media, public relations and sport. By gathering the information from researchers and field experts, this chapter aims to provide insight into the ever-changing public relations environment. This chapter contextualises social media platforms Facebook and Twitter and their uses for South African sports men and women.

The evolution of communication will be looked at and how the power of communication has shifted from the organisation to the public. This will be done by discussing the mass communication models proposed by Lasswell in 1948 (Duncan and Moriarty, 1998: 2) and Shannon and Weaver in 1949 (Grunig, 1992: 285). To gain further understanding of how public relations has changed over the last six decades, the Hunt and Grunig four models of public relations will be discussed. Argenti recommends a consolidated framework for communications that not only integrates various groups but enables organisations to improve relationships with stakeholders (Argenti, 2013: 31).

The shift in power has been largely due to the changes in the technological environment, where the impact of Web 2.0 is evident in the way stakeholders communicate. One of the most significant advances has been the development of social media and this study will utilize platforms Facebook and Twitter to gain understanding of the new tools available to promote organisations and individuals.

This chapter will look at the impact that Facebook and Twitter have had on sport with specific reference to the London 2012 Olympics and Paralympics and two South African athletes Kevin Paul and Shireen Sapiro.

Public Relations and effective communication is important in any industry, be it education, entertainment or tourism, sport is no different. This study will investigate the nature and importance of public relations in sport.

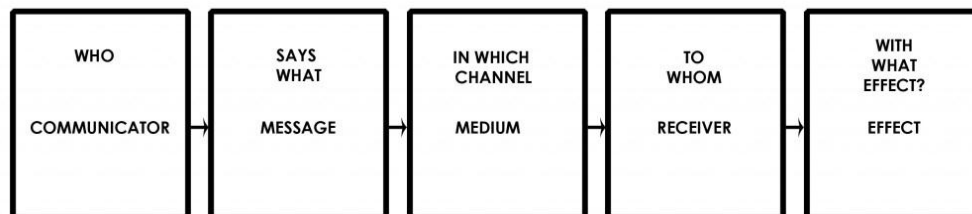
Finally, this study will discuss why media users are drawn to interacting with sport celebrities on social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter.

2.2 Communication

Before the development of new media, traditional media was used to reach spectators through radio, television, newspapers, magazines, direct mail, cinema, theatre and outdoor advertising. Traditional media is often referred to as the ‘older’ way of disseminating information and usually means that one-way communication is achieved. In other words the message is sent from the organisation to the spectator and does not necessarily mean that interaction between the parties will take place. According to Q. Consulting (2011), traditional media is considered to be conventional and used to persuade an audience to take desired action. Organisations and individuals use mass communication methods to reach large audiences.

Lasswell proposed a mass communication model in 1948 (see Figure 1) to explain communication. Lasswell described the model as the organisation that sends a message to the audience. This is done by selecting a media channel, directed at a specific audience with the intention of getting a response from the audience (Duncan and Moriarty, 1998: 2).

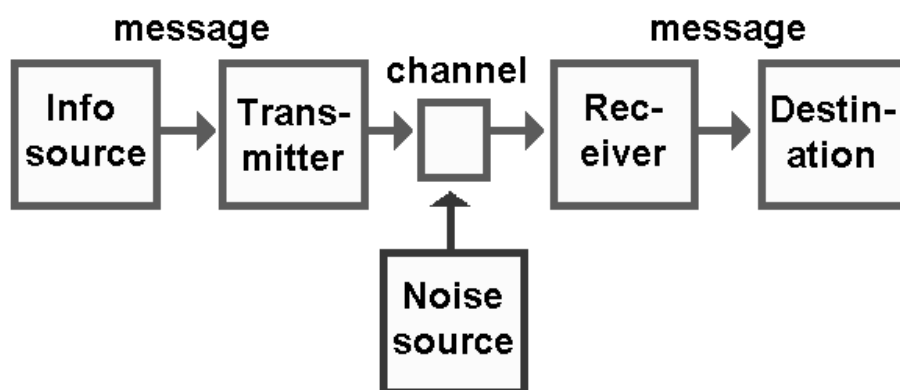
Figure 1 – Lasswell’s Mass Communication Model



(Source: <http://communicationtheory.org/lasswells-model/>)

The disadvantages of the Lasswell model are that it is linear and does not include ‘noise’ as an element. The Shannon and Weaver model (see Figure 2) however that was developed in 1949 features ‘noise’ which means that interference with the channel may lead to the message not being received.

Figure 2 – Shannon and Weaver’s Model of Communication



(Source: <http://www.aber.ac.uk/media/Documents/short/trans.html#B>)

Although Shannon and Weaver’s model of communication has included the noise element, it has not identified the feedback from the receiver.

Grunig and Hunt proposed four models (see Table 1) of public relations in 1984 which have since been widely publicised namely: press agency / publicist, public information, two-way asymmetric and two-way symmetric (Grunig and Hunt, 1984: 22). These models mark the development of communication styles and how they have changed over time.

Table 1 - Grunig and Hunt’s Four Models of Public Relations

Model name	Type of communication	Model characteristics
Press agency / publicity	One-way communication	Use persuasion and manipulation to influence audience to behave as the organisation desires.
Public information model	One-way communication	Uses press releases and other one-way communication techniques to distribute information.
One-way asymmetrical	One-way communication	Uses persuasion and manipulation to influence audiences to behave as the organisation desires. Does not use research to find out about stakeholder expectations

Two-way symmetrical	Two-way communication	Uses communication to negotiate with stakeholders, resolve conflict and promote mutual understanding and respect between the organisation and its stakeholders.
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(Adapted from source: <http://iml.jou.ufl.edu/projects/fall99/westbrook/models.htm>)

The aim for most organisations is to be guided by Hunt and Grunig's two-way symmetrical model but they often integrate other models such as the public information model to send out media releases for example (Grunig et al, 1995: 170). According to Grunig et al (1995: 171), the models are based on the progression of the PR profession. Some organisations have not yet adopted the principles of two-way symmetrical communication as the ideal public relations model. Although it may be considered the ideal, it is important to note that the elements from each model are often used by organisations when considered appropriate (Grunig et al, 1995: 285). The key to the two-way symmetrical model is the fact that stakeholders become equal players in the communication process. The organisation communicates messages through various channels by using platforms such as social networks and stakeholders who are able to communicate in return.

Argenti (2013: 31) presented a consolidated framework that includes the above models into an integrated model to manage communications.

The consolidated framework is no longer linear but circular which proposes that the process is ongoing rather than a beginning and an end (Argenti, 2013: 31). The framework also promotes constant feedback from stakeholders by gaining an understanding of their expectations through constant two-way communication.

Communication is crucial to the effective practise of public relations. Organisations should aim to establish understanding with their stakeholders but their specific intention is to persuade, inform and influence attitudes. From a contemporary theory perspective Steinberg (1997: 13) regards communication as not merely a dynamic process of important messages but also an opportunity to forge a relationship between parties. "Communication is a transactional process of exchanging messages and negotiating meaning to establish and maintain relationships," (Steinberg, 1997: 13).

With the advent of new media platforms, organisations and individuals integrate new media together with traditional media to promote and sell their brands.

2.3 New media

New media is comprised of computerised electronic publishing using a multimedia combination of print, audio, video and digital images on the Internet (Clear, 2012: 128).

Previously, coverage of events appeared mostly in traditional media such as newspapers or on investigative television shows such as 60 minutes. This allowed organisations and individuals to disseminate information known to the public. Now organisations and individuals have additional platforms to promote their brand with the advent of the Internet and mobile technology. These developments have transferred the power into the individual's hands (Argenti, 2013: 160-161). "The Internet is a very effective new weapon for the consumer. Digital communication platforms have enabled consumers to seize control of corporate messages and reputations and, in effect, have their way with them" (Argenti, 2013: 161). But Argenti also highlights the benefits by saying that new media provides incredible opportunities for communicating messages in more creative and effective ways. Argenti (2013: 161) recommends that media strategies need to be integrated with plans on how to approach these new dimensions, including creating forums for stakeholders to share and a proactive effort to scan information about the organisation.

Adapted from Clear (2012: 130-131), the advantages and disadvantages of new media are discussed below:

ADVANTAGES	DISADVANTAGES
Access to enormous amounts of information from home or office base or from mobile devices. New technology facilitates communication between various stakeholders.	Potential health risks associated with electromagnetic radiation. Piracy of electronic information and growing social fragmentation.
Information is gathered and distributed much faster.	The issue of the digital divide.
Pictures and video available.	The lack of control of messages that appear on new media such as Facebook and Twitter .
The ability to target specific audiences.	
Cheaper to reach audiences.	
More user friendly and interactive	

(Table 2 – Advantages and Disadvantages of New Media)

Web 2.0 technologies have paved the way for new media platforms, giving organisations new tools to promote their brands. According to Lesame, Mbatha and Sindane (2012: 6), Web 2.0 enables Internet users to directly engage with and construct communities in which they live by drawing all types of people and information they are interested in.

Bagui and Parker (2009: 2-3) view Web 2.0 as “a social media of social networks which are websites which offer features such as a profile page, a network of friends, a public commenting system and a private messaging system.” This new technology has had an effect on the marketing and branding of individuals and organisations.

Social media is a new media tool that organisations use to create awareness, build brand reputation and drive sales and support for a product or service.

2.4 Social media

Social media is defined as the sharing of information, experiences and perspectives through community oriented websites (Weinburg, 2009), that have grown exponentially over the last ten years. This rapid growth is a reflection of the advancement from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 technology. Web 1.0 technology is characterized by one-way communication through a web designer who provides content for people to visit or communicate through e-mail, message boards or forums (Pegoraro, 2009). Web 2.0 is defined by user-generated content shared with others through interaction. The technological shift from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0 has influenced society and changed the way individuals use the Web. “Technology has allowed users to become participatory, conversational, social, and decentralized with individuals controlling their own websites, blogs, and using social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter. These applications can be accessed via personal computer, phone, and game consoles. Twitter is one of the fastest growing Web 2.0 applications in the new media age (Clavio and Kian, 2010), and companies often use it for marketing or branding purposes. The sports industry is an area participating in this growing phenomenon” (Weinburg, 2009).

According to Shapshak (2009: 4), social media is about individuals sharing content, for example blogs carrying articles, insights and news from amateur and professional writers alike. Shapshak adds that social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter have revolutionised how people interact and communicate with each other. These networks have ensured that people connect with each other based on shared ideas and opportunities. Shapshak highlights however that individuals and organisations should be careful what they say as this information is for public consumption. “What people say on the sites cannot be controlled” (Shapshak, 2009: 4).

Eric Schmidt, CEO of Google, says that social websites such as Facebook and Twitter are communication tools that allow people to interact with each other on any topic

on a global scale. These networks enable people to join or visit these discussion forums and also socialise with old and new friends (Barrett, 2009: 10). Schmidt added that social networking allows collaboration between various stakeholders but some of the challenges faced include transparency, privacy and governance (Barrett, 2009: 10).

Social media allows for instant on-the-scene witnesses with mobile devices. It is immediate and effective since it reaches audiences all over the world. According to Argenti (2013: 161) there is an 84% usage of social media platforms for Fortune Global 100 companies. 77% of these companies have an active Twitter feed and 61% have Facebook pages.

Fourie (2009: 392) highlights that media use is explained by the way media satisfies individual media users' social and psychological needs. The degree of gratifications will determine media choices and experiences in the future (Fourie, 2009: 392). On the basis of this assumption, Bulmer and Katz (1974) developed a typology of needs. This was reaffirmed and adapted by McQuail (1987: 73). One of these needs is referred to as Social Integrative Needs which means that an individual is driven by desire for affiliation and social contact. "People use cyberspace to make friends and become members of a selected group with the same interests" (Fourie, 2009: 394). Social networking sites enable people to become part of a cyber –community, giving them insight into people's lives. "The media create opportunities to get involved in pseudo-relationships, that is, substitute experiences for real-life companionship" (Fourie, 2009: 394).

Manuel Castells identified the network of society as being "the outcome of a historical trend where dominant function and processes in the information age are increasingly organised around networks" (Flew, 2008: 80). Castells continues that these networks constitute the new social morphology in our society and that these sites change the operation and outcomes in processes of production, experience, power and culture (Castells, 1996: 469).

According to Podolny and Page (1998: 59), organisations are networks as they require continuous exchange between two or more people.

The latest independent research on social media statistics for South Africa were released in April 2012 (Chatterbox Digital Social Media Statistics – South Africa, 2012) as follows:

Twitter

There are 1.1 million registered Twitter users in South Africa with 470 000 tweets per month.

Facebook

There are 4841380 Facebook users in South Africa - a 9,86% penetration of the population but a 91% penetration of the online population. The largest age group of Facebook users is 18 – 24 years of age. The average Facebook user spends 700 minutes each month on Facebook. 50% of Facebook users access it via their smartphones. Smartphones are handheld devices that integrate mobile phone capabilities which are typically associated with the normal features of a handheld computer. Smartphones allow users to store information, e-mail, install programmes and use the device as a cellular phone at the same time (Webopedia, 2013). There are 925000 smartphones being activated every day and currently 31 million internet-capable cellular phones in South Africa. According to Chatterbox Digital (2012), there are more cellular phones in South Africa than there are taxis, televisions and radios combined.

2.4.1 Uses of social media

Adapted from contributor Brent Beshore (Forbes, 2013), there are four daily uses of social media as follows:

To monitor trends and dig deeper

Social media provides a variety of breaking news stories, detailed commentary and points out trends and topics that matter.

To keep tabs

Social media platforms enable organisations or individuals to keep tabs on competition, keep up with stakeholders and get content from various mediums.

To find out what your stakeholders are talking about

According to Beshore (Forbes, 2013) it is “important to keep up with what is being said about you, your friends, or key topics.” Social media can help signal developments to that could affect your reputation.

To optimize posts and track clicks

By tracking social media platforms, organisations and individuals are able to keep up to date and respond to posts and activity on their pages to enhance interactivity.

To be active and efficient

Social media allows you to be active and efficient; in other words real-time data can be scanned, tracked and organisations or individuals are able to engage effectively with their stakeholders.

2.4.2 The Olympics and social media

The summer Olympics in Beijing in 2008 was the first Olympic event that demonstrated the effectiveness of Web 2.0 capabilities in which online digital media had a dominant presence (Miah et al, 2008). The International Olympic Committee (IOC) sold separate internet and mobile advertising rights. This platform was used in Beijing as an enhanced form of communication (IOC, 2008). The decision saw a shift towards digital networked communications by installing 260 computers located in six internet lounges built within the main Olympic village. Lenovo, a Chinese-based company that manufactures computers supported this initiative by sponsoring the 'Voices of Summer Games' campaign. The promotion featured more than 100 athletes from various countries blogging about their experiences in Beijing (Humphreys and Finlay, 2008: 290–295). Statistics provided by NBC Television (Nbcolympics, 2008) reflected an estimated 1.3 billion page views, 53 million unique users, 75.5 million video streams and 10 million hours of video consumption during the Beijing Games. The progressive move to digital platforms highlight a paradigm shift towards the reconstruction of media sport content (Hutchins and Rowe, 2009).

Coverage of major events such as the Olympic Games has changed enormously due to the comparative scarcity of mediums offering limited information of hallmark sport events (Horne and Manzenreiter, 2006; Roche, 2000). The traditional coverage in newspapers, on radio and television has been replaced by 'digital plenitude' (Hutchins and Rowe, 2009). According to Jenkins (2006:) accessibility and affordability of personal computing, internet access and mobile communications in a convergent media culture has significantly multiplied the number of media and telecommunications companies, sports organizations, teams, athletes, spectators and enthusiasts who can both produce and distribute content and comment for online consumption.

According to research done by Momentum (Inside the Games, n.d) the London 2012 Olympics was mentioned 26 million times in social media conversations. Across the social media spectrum including Facebook and Twitter, the overall sentiment towards the 2012 Games was favourable. Gold (2012) stated that 68% of the Olympic-related mentions were positive while 32% were negative. Cadbury was one of the official sponsors of the Olympic Games, Cadbury commented about the benefits and advantages in a press

statement released just after the Games. “Social networks are a place to talk about friends, family and the things that interest you – for an event which interests nations in such a powerful way” (Inside the Games, n.d).

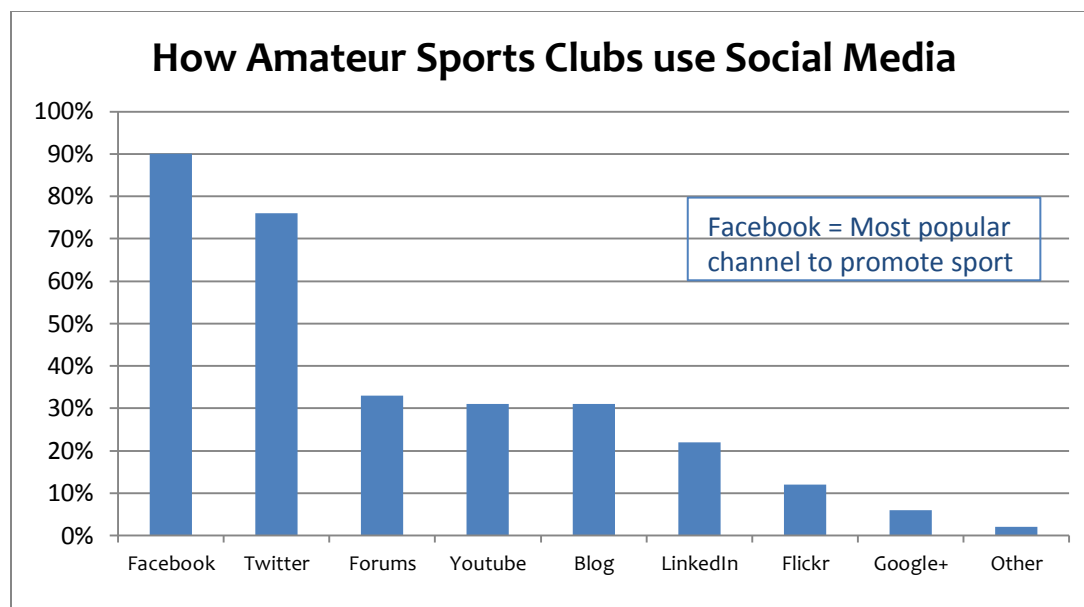
According to Brynley-Jones (2013) “sport and social media are obvious partners, sport provides ‘live’ excitement and social media lets you share the moment with your friends. Brynley-Jones added that “it’s a social marriage made in sporting Heaven (Econsultancy, 2013).

Although social media can have a positive impact on organisations and / or individuals, the negative side is also evident. A recent infograph provided by Eventility highlighted the following athletes who got themselves into trouble as a result of misjudged, foolish or offensive tweets: (Eventility, 2013)

- Mark Cuban, owner of the Dallas Mavericks, was fined \$25,000 for criticising referees on Twitter.
- Chelsea’s Ashley Cole was fined £90,000 for calling the Football Association a ‘bunch of t**s’.
- NFL star Rashard Mendenhall lost a sponsorship deal after tweeting a controversial theory about the 9/11 attacks.
- Triple Jumper Voula Papachristou was expelled from the Greek Olympic team for making a racist remark on Twitter.

A Nielson study for Sport England (Econsultancy, 2013) suggested “that more than 33% of people who participate in sport would do more but only if they could use a web tool to search for sport locally. The study highlights that 76% of sports event organisers use social media to create awareness for their events. Brynley-Jones (2013) said that “it’s surprising that only 50% of smaller sports clubs have adopted social media.” (See Figure 3).

Figure 3 –How Amateur Sports Clubs use Social Media (Adapted from the infograph provided by Eventility (Econsultancy, 2013).



Olympic long-jump champion Greg Rutherford has over 135 000 followers on Twitter and according to the Eventivity infographic, the athlete is the top of the social media winners category. Usain Bolt, 100m and 200m sprint specialist holds the record for the most 'likes' on his Facebook page of over 10.2 million (see Table 3).

Table 3 – Social media statistics for Olympic athletes (Econsultancy, 2013)

Social platform	Athlete	Description	Followers / likes
Facebook	Usain Bolt (Olympic & World Champion)	Most liked in athletics	10.2 million
Twitter	Greg Rutherford (Olympic Champion)	Increased twitter following by 2000% during the 2012 Olympics	138 362 (@GregJRutherford)

2.5 Social media platforms

2.5.1 Facebook

Facebook was started by Mark Zuckerberg in 2004 (Sapa-AFP, 2009: 7). In 2009 Facebook had reached more than 175 million members. According to Sapa (2009:7), by early 2009 Barack Obama had 5000 'likes' on Facebook but now has over 36 million 'likes' (Facebook, 2013). Obama shares his thoughts on issues of interest and receives

feedback directly from followers. “Facebook allows individuals to have their virtual voices heard says Eric Schmidt, CEO of Google (Barrett, 2009: 10). This social platform enables individuals and organisations to promote their products or ideas to people all over the world.

Kate Elphick, Director of Digital Bridges, a South African company that helps businesses build work tools and practises using Web 2.0 technologies says that “Facebook allows companies to select exactly what markets they are aiming for in a cost-effective way. It’s a strategic approach to networking socially” (Scher, 2009: 115). Elphick adds that Facebook pages can be accessed by a world-wide community that offers the opportunity to host pages, feature photos, promote up and coming events or show video material (Scher, 2009: 116).

2.5.2 Twitter

Dick Costolo, the current CEO of Twitter said that most users of Twitter do not Tweet, but rather use Twitter as a form of media consumption. With the evolution of smart phones, Twitter has become a user-friendly application to help stakeholders get updated information, as well as a great mechanism for breaking news. Many professional sports organizations are utilizing this type of media to provide information and connect to their spectators (Kassing and Sanderson, 2010).

Shapshak (2009: 4) states that social network Twitter is the fastest-growing social media service in the world, providing real-time updates using just 140 characters. Many people use it to publicize new blog posts or links to new stories. Huisman (2009: 3) regards Twitter as a hybrid, it both connects people and shares content, which is what gives it its power and makes it so compelling to so many different categories of users. Olivier Toubia, a professor of marketing at Columbia Business School in New York believes that the interest in Twitter is about “status and bragging rights, and being able to say you have X number of followers” (Simpson, 2012).

In an article published in Business Day Sport Monthly (2013: 13) Mark Keohane accuses social platforms such as Twitter of the fact that there is no control over what is said. Keohane said that anybody can create a false identity and post anything they want without any consequence. Keohane’s opinion is that individuals who are not necessarily well informed are given the opportunity to publicly abuse sportsmen and women. Keohane believes that because Twitter has no boundaries, it

has distorted reality. Keohane adds that social media has turned opinion and prejudice into perceived fact.

2.6 Public Relations, Sport and Identification

Public Relations and effective communication is important in any industry, be it education, entertainment and tourism and sport is no different. This study will investigate the nature and importance of public relations in sport and why people identify with sport.

2.6.1 Public Relations

The common denominator for every public relations activity whether it is in manufacturing, insurance, catering or sports, is effective communication. According to Parks and Quarterman (2002: 212) “creating a message that accurately and effectively communicates your ideas to the audience you want to reach is the foundation for success in sports public relations.”

Two-way conversation implies that a message is sent and that a message is returned from a stakeholder and therefore establishing that the message is understood by the receiver. The sender can select a number of channels including social networks to reach the intended target audience (Clear, 2011: 7).

People’s attitude towards business has changed and they have become increasingly intolerant of organisational and individual’s poor behaviour. Public opinions are shaped by what is portrayed by the media (Argenti, 2013: 1-7). Media channels include traditional media and new media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter.

PRISA (Public Relations Institute of South Africa) refers to public relations and communication management as the “management through communication of perceptions and strategic relationships between an organisation and its internal and external stakeholders” (Clear, 2011: 5).

The purpose of public relations is to improve the image of an organisation or a brand by creating effective two-way dialogue channels between the various publics (Clear, 2011: 6).

Public relations in South Africa and every other country around the world is sophisticated, multi-faceted and has the ability to build effective two way symmetrical communication between an organisation and its stakeholders (Skinner, von Essen and Merham, 2004: 3). According to Skinner et al (2004:

4) “public relations practise is the art and social science of analysing trends, predicting their consequences, counselling organisations’ leaders, and implementing planned programmes of action which will service both the organisation and the public interest.”

The emphasis in communicating effectively with stakeholders lies in the immediacy of the message (Stoldt, Dittmore and Branvold: 2010). It is vital that public relations practitioners have a clear understanding of new forms of media and effectively use them to communicate a sports entity’s message to its target audiences. Tassiopolous (2005) argues that public relations is the promotional discipline of forming what your audience thinks or feels about the value of your organisation as a whole. It is a broader, more time-consuming approach to building continuing allegiance to your cause and participation in events. This theory applies to creating an affiliation with stakeholders in the sports industry through effective and immediate two-way communication.

Public relations was originally practised as a one-way communication but over time stakeholders questioned organisations’ credibility and therefore companies and individuals are far more aware of the need for participative conversations (Barker and Angelopulo, 2012: 16).

2.6.2 Sport

This study refers to the impact of social media on sports PR, therefore it is important to understand why people participate in sport and also why people are motivated to follow and support sport and sport personalities.

According to the Oxford English Dictionary (2013), sport is defined as an activity involving physical exertion and skill in which an individual or team competes against another or others for entertainment.

Why has this study decided to focus on sport PR? Why not PR in education, entertainment or tourism? Sport is a pervasive body that is part of everyday life. Sport is seen on television, heard on radio, practised at educational institutions and enjoyed on a professional and social level. Sport is therefore part of every community. Sport is participative, competitive and those spectators interested in sport and who support certain individuals or teams, feel part of a community of shared beliefs. Not only in South Africa but all over the world, people are passionate about sport and go to tremendous effort to attend games or matches. Spectators spend large sums of money on tickets, sport memorabilia and wherever possible try and connect with their heroes, who in their eyes have gained celebrity status. The official Olympics

website (Olympic, 2013) says that “the champions often become superstars and role models for many people.”

According to Wasserman (Twitter, 2012) the 2012 Olympic Games in London generated 150 million tweets and Jamaican sprinter Usain Bolt received a significant share of these tweets. Bolt’s 200m (80 000 tweets per minute) and 100m (74 000 tweets per minute) races promoted the most chatter during the event.

Other famous people have group pages on social media sites including Oprah Winfrey, Bono from U2 and Ashton Kutcher who had more followers on Twitter than CNN in 2009 (Lesame, Mbatha and Sindane, 2012: 9).

Social networking sites have enabled celebrities, organisations, clubs, societies and charities to interact with fans and supporters (Lesame et al, 2012: 69). “The value of these sites is that communication is not one-way but enables two-way interaction between company and consumer and consumer and consumer. In this way people can connect more closely with a brand, company or celebrity, and can also influence the success of the brand, company or celebrity” (Lesame et al, 2012: 69).

According to contributor Steve Olenski, (Forbes, 2013) the lines between social media and sports continue to blur. Olenski said that the “Philadelphia Wings of the National Lacrosse League (NLL) made history in 2012 by becoming the first professional sports team in North America to don jerseys that had their Twitter names on the back of the jerseys.” Olenski suggested that this possibly signalled a way for more teams to interact with their fans by using social media. “Social media is all about engagement—engaging in conversations that heretofore were not possible. And when it comes to sports and athletes, we fans love to engage with our favorite players,” he said (Forbes, 2013).

Another reason why sport is one of the key focus areas of the study is the fact that a huge amount of resources are invested in sport related activities such as advertising, promotional gear and events. Big organisations have committed millions to sponsorships, endorsements, merchandise and advertising rights (Parks and Quarterman, 2002: 110). At the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City, Utah, the total expenses exceeded \$70 million. Over \$32 million was spent on the sport activities and more than \$37 million was spent on the opening and closing and medal ceremonies (Associated Press, 2012).

According to Parks and Quarterman (2002: 110), sport holds a place of great prominence in our society and has not only positive but also negative consequences.

Sport has a positive effect as it is a unifier of people. It can bring people together by giving them a sense of personal identity but also makes them feel part of a community. Parks and Quarterman (2002: 110) reflected on the aftermath of the tragedy on 11 September 2001 and how the Americans used sport stadiums to bring people together to reinforce strength and fortitude.

From a negative perspective, the spotlight has been placed on the ills in society including sexism, racism, homophobia and violence.

In a South African context, Caster Semenya's most intimate details were discussed on a global scale after the media broadcast information about her invasive gender tests. The speculation forced Semenya into withdrawing from competing in 2009 and only recently did she return to training ahead of the 2012 London Olympics. According to the Mail Online (Daily Mail, 2012) Semenya still distrusts the media and rarely gives interviews.

Despite negatives, sport has the ability to bring about social change as follows:

- Sport as a socialising agent

According to Parks and Quarterman (2002: 111), spectators learn about values and attitudes that a particular society reflects including a host of issues such as respect, teamwork and citizenship. By engaging in online networks, spectators get an even better sense of how they contribute to the larger social agenda.

- Sport as a unifier of people

According to Coakley (2001), sport can bring people together by giving them a sense of personal identity, as well as feelings of group membership and social identification. As Nelson Mandela said at a press conference when he reflected on the 1995 Rugby World Cup, which was hosted in South Africa, "sport has the power to change the world, it has the power to unite people in a way that little else does" (Satour, 2013). Online interactivity brings spectators together to communicate their interests and passion to a collective audience.

Besides sport as a socialising agent and a unifier of people, sport celebrities have also become a brand. A brand can be viewed as a name or symbol that identifies and differentiates products from one another (Aaker, 1991). Kapferer (2001) suggests that a strong brand provides a company with a "point of difference" which in turn can provide a competitive advantage. For example, Puma sponsors Usain Bolt, Pete Sampras is sponsored by Rolex and Mr Price is endorsed by the Sharks rugby team. These individuals are used for marketing and public relations

campaigns and these sport celebrities are closely associated with the brand. Successful brands are able to establish relationships with the spectator. Brand loyalty and other assets such as brand awareness, perceived quality, and brand associations constitute the essence of brand equity (Aaker, 1991).

2.6.3 The Olympics

The Olympics is a sports festival that is held every four years in different countries. In the modern day Olympics over 200 countries compete in various sporting disciplines for honour and for gold, silver and bronze medals (Oxford Dictionary, 2013).

The first Olympics were said to have started in 776 BC in Greece. They were dedicated to the Olympian gods and staged on the plains of Olympia. The ancient Greek festival with athletic, literary and musical events continued for 12 centuries until Emperor Theodosius abolished the occasion in 393 AD (Olympic, 2013).

Frenchman Pierre de Coubertin was inspired to re-launch the modern day Olympic Games in the year 1896 which was hosted in Athens to represent its origins (Olympic, 2013).

This study is based on the impact of social media during the period of the Olympic and Paralympic Games that took place in London from 27 July to 9 September 2012.

These Games attracted up to 180 000 spectators a day and were centered around the Olympic Park in east London, making it the principal focus of Olympic activity (Olympic, 2013).

2.6.4 Identification

To further understand online social media, this study will investigate why social media users are drawn to following and interacting with South African athletes such as Kevin Paul and Shireen Sapiro . The study will endeavour to investigate why users identify with the athletes and their respective sport.

Dr Sherry Turkle's book - Identity and the Age of the Internet written in 1997 predicts that the rapidly expanding networks will continue to link millions of people in new spaces that are changing the way people think, the nature of sexuality, communities and core identities. "It offers a new medium on which to project our ideas and fantasies. In cyberspace we can talk, exchange ideas, and assume personae of our own creation. We have the opportunity to build new kinds of communities, virtual communities, in which we participate with

people from all over the world, people with whom we converse daily, people with whom we may have fairly intimate relationships but whom we may never physically meet” (Turkle, 1997).

Tajfel and Turner’s (1985) social identity theory explains that people identify themselves in relation to their society. In other words, people can relate to other people in society who have the same interests. Consumption choices are determined by the social group or groups that they belong to (Turner, 1982). Social identity is the individual’s self-concept derived from perceived membership of social groups (Hogg, Vaughan, Fink, Trail and Anderson, 2002). James and Trail (2008) have examined sport literature to explain the phenomenon of an individual’s identification with a team, sport or athlete. These areas have been specifically defined as points of attachment. These attachments have been studied by researchers as a way for marketers to understand what draws a particular fan to an event or team. Robinson and Trail (2005) determined six points of attachment: player, team, coach, university, community, sport and these points of attachment directly relate to why people support them.

Researchers including Kwak, Kim, Zimmerman and Fink (2002) have focused on team identification when assessing consumers and determined the following:

The points of attachment have been split into two categories; namely sport organisation and sport identification. Player, coach, university, community, and team identification all directly relate to a sport organization, while sport and level relate directly to the sport identification. The organization and the sport identification can be directly related. For example, a consumer may be an avid fan of the Springboks while being a fan of the Bulls with his / her favourite player being Francois Hougaard. The sport consumer is a fan of the sport and level and has identified with both the team and a player. It is assumed that point of attachment would play a particularly big role in whom consumers follow on social networks such as Twitter and Facebook. “Fans that are highly identified with their team are likely to behave differently from lowly identified fans. Highly identified fans spend more money on team merchandise and tickets and stay loyal to their team during losing periods” (Trail, Anderson and Fink, 2000; Wann and Branscombe, 1993).

The life blood of any sport organization is their fans. Social media users who are highly identified with a team may follow all the team’s players, coaches, sports journalists and the team accounts. It is assumed by Trail, Anderson et al (2000) that users who follow their favourite team would be considered highly identified.

There is a difference between a fan and a spectator. A spectator merely watches the game or sport but does not have a vested interest or concern

with the outcome of the game. “Fans are considered enthusiastic devotees of a given diversion” (Sloan, 1989 and Trail et al, 2003). A win is usually much more important than seeing a great game. They have high emotion toward their team and make a major financial commitment to the organization. It is assumed that fans identify with sport organizations and athletes at a far higher level than spectators do.

Sport organizations should be aware of the fans that are following them on Facebook and Twitter. Highly identified fans are seeking as much information as they can consume.

Studies done by Robinson and Trail (2002) and Trail et al.(2003) suggest that fans will be looking for ‘insider’ information or breaking news on players, coaches, and the team.

Another reason for spectators to be drawn to follow sport celebrities could be due to the fact that they are proud of what their sport heroes are achieving. South Africa is considered to be a proud nation, especially when it comes to sport. In a study done by the National Opinion Research Centre at the University of Chicago in 2006 (South Africa – The Good News, n.d), South Africans are among the most patriotic in the world. “South Africa ranked fourth in terms of national pride out of the 34 countries surveyed in the report (National Pride in Specific Domains by Tom Smith, Director of the General Social Survey at NORC).

2.7 Conclusion

The literature review in chapter 2 has attempted to provide the background from which the field of communications, social media, public relations and sport has developed. Due to technological advancements such as Web 2.0, significant changes have changed the way public relations activities are practised. Web 2.0 developments have paved the way for social media platforms Facebook and Twitter. These new media tools have tipped the balance of information which in the past was controlled by the organisation, to a two-way symmetrical approach. Stakeholders including sponsors, the media and spectators are not only able to access and disseminate information but interact with organisations.

It is important that public relations practitioners understand the importance and uses of social media in the sport industry. Consideration should be given when planning social media campaigns for individuals or teams and what drives stakeholders to support them. Public relations practitioners should steer stakeholders towards not

only following individuals or teams but entice them to engage by sharing and stimulating debate.

This study sets out to determine the extent to which networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter can be used in sport PR with specific reference to two South African athletes during the 2012 London Olympics and Paralympics.

In the chapter 3, a detailed description of the research design and methods that were applied to this study will be discussed.

Chapter 3 - Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Chapter 3 outlines the research framework used for this study. The research, empirical in nature, included the analysis of social media interaction between two case studies in South Africa.

3.2 Research framework

The research framework includes the explanation of the research question, the aims, objectives, the data analysed and the context chosen to justify the analysis of the data and to answer the research question.

3.2.1 Research question

This study sets out to determine the extent to which networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter can be used in sport PR with specific reference to two South African athletes Kevin Paul and Shireen Sapiro during the 2012 London Olympics and Paralympics.

3.2.2 Aims

The aims of this study are to contextualise social media and demonstrate online platform development with specific reference to Facebook and Twitter and to examine the Facebook and Twitter communications of two individual professional athletes over a two month period.

3.2.3 Objectives

To gain insight into the interaction between the athletes and their stakeholders, the following comments and postings on Facebook and Twitter were evaluated:

- To identify reach through number likes, followers, shares, tweets, replies and comments.
- To identify frequency (traffic) of likes, followers, shares, tweets, replies and comments.
- To evaluate athlete and stakeholder interaction.

- The comments will be analysed to determine positive or negative impact.

3.2.4 Case studies

Two case studies were selected to analyse the use of social media platforms Facebook and Twitter. Kevin Paul and Shireen Sapiro are disabled swimmers who were selected to represent South Africa at the 2012 London Paralympics.

Kevin Paul won gold in the 100m breaststroke at the age of 17 at the Beijing Olympics in 2008 and is the world record holder in his category. Paul was diagnosed with Poland Syndrome which means that he has no pectoral muscles on the left side of his chest. He has developed his swimming style to overcome the disability. Paul qualified for five events and won the silver medal in London 2012 for the 100m breaststroke.

Paralympic teammate Shireen Sapiro qualified for the 2008 Beijing Olympics and broke the world record by winning the gold medal in the 100m backstroke. Sapiro was the flagbearer for the South African delegation at the 2009 Maccabiah Games in Israel. As the only paralympic athlete at the games, Sapiro brought home three medals against able-bodied athletes. Sapiro's suffered horrific injuries in a boating accident on the Vaal Dam in 2004. The propeller shattered Shireen's pelvis into nine pieces, ripped nerves out of her spinal cord and left the quadriceps on her left leg paralysed. She spent a month in a coma and four months in hospital during which time she underwent eighteen reconstructive operations. Sapiro's latest achievements include qualifying for five events in London and winning the bronze medal in the 100m breaststroke (Shireensaprio.com, n.d).

3.2.5 Research designs and methods

This study took an interpretive approach, with the primary data being obtained through quantitative and qualitative methods. To gain further insight into this study and achieving the objectives, the study was developed around two professional athletes Kevin Paul and Shireen Sapiro.

To enable data analysis for the case studies, content analysis of the relevant secondary data was sourced regarding communication, social media, public relations and sport.

Thereafter to further address the objectives of the study, primary data was sourced through social media management tools for Facebook and Twitter.

The research undertaken was designed to gain a better understanding of the uses of social media in sport PR through quantitative and qualitative content analysis with reference to two South African professional athletes.

3.2.5.1 Secondary Research

Secondary research is a second-hand account of an event (du Plooy, 2009: 62). Existing information was analysed on theory and concepts based on public relations, social media and sport. The information was sourced through the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU) and Varsity College Port Elizabeth libraries and included local, national and international textbooks and online books and articles.

There was no limit to the information already available on the topic selected for the study. Extensive sources in social media and sport public relations were located through websites, online journals and textbooks. Secondary information is information that is available or studies that have already been done. The secondary data is collected by someone else for other purposes (About Sociology, 2013). Due to the fact the someone else has collected the data, the researcher releases themselves from finding the resources including the time, energy and budget for this activity (About Sociology, 2013).

3.2.5.2 Primary research

Primary research is a first-hand account of an event (du Plooy, 2009: 62). Content analysis will be used to determine behaviour and what effect the interaction has between the SA athletes and their stakeholders. This research design will allow the study to examine the content on social media platforms Facebook and Twitter. According to du Plooy (2009: 213) content analysis is methodology applied to explore, describe and infer characteristics of messages.

The methods used include quantitative and qualitative research. These methods will be used in this study to determine the uses of social media on SA athletes participating in the London Olympics and Paralympics. The data will be analysed from Friday 27 July to Sunday 30 September 2012.

Although there has been a longstanding debate as to whether content analysis is quantitative or qualitative, this research study will combine the two methods to not only determine measurable statistics but also to understand behaviour through what stakeholders are saying and why they are engaging. Berelson (1952) suggests that content analysis is “objective, systematic and quantitative” but Selltiz (1959: 336) implies that “over quantification in content analysis results in a somewhat arbitrary limitation in the field by excluding all accounts of communications that are not in the form of numbers.”

Qualitative research will be used in this study to determine what people think and feel. It involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005: 3) qualitative research allows for analysis in natural settings by attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them. Quantitative research will be combined with qualitative information to determine the relationships between variables in a numerical way.

Primary data is research that is collected by the researcher for the purposes of that particular study. “The data is designed to address specific questions, and performs their own analyses of the data they collected (About Sociology, 2013).

“Content analysis classifies textual material, reducing to more relevant, manageable bits of data (Weber, 1990:5). The data used for this research was sourced from secondary sources and primary data designed specifically for the study.

According to Henning (2009:102) using merely qualitative content analysis “may lead to superficial and unrealistic findings as it captures what is presumed to be the ‘real world’. Other authors such as Kvale (2002), Gubrium and Holstein (2002) and Lincoln (2002) are in agreement with Henning (2009), saying that qualitative methods do not necessarily constitute good findings. “A great deal of intellectual effort goes into data analysis and the listing of a number of categories does not indicate comprehensive analysis” (Henning, 2009:102).

Qualitative research will enable the study to understand what stakeholders think and how they feel while quantitative research is essentially about collecting numerical data to explain a particular phenomenon or answer particular questions.

This study has therefore also integrated quantitative content analysis to support the qualitative data. For example: quantitative (objective) data enables the analyst to determine how many ‘likes’ a Facebook page has or how many ‘followers’ a Twitter page has attracted. With qualitative (subjective) information, comments from stakeholders expressed on Facebook and Twitter will be analysed.

3.2.6 Research Process

To understand the extent to which Facebook and Twitter can be used in sports PR and to achieve the aims of the research, the steps outlined below should be followed:

3.2.6.1 Selected case studies

Individual sports men and women or teams’ support from the public has gained momentum over the years. Sport celebrities are often used to endorse brands through various marketing and public relations campaigns. These sport personalities have become ‘household names’ through traditional media coverage but also with the advent of new media interactive capabilities such as social media.

Organisations and the public may identify with sport personalities due to their achievements, the pride associated with representing their country and the fact that social networks such as Facebook and Twitter allow them to engage and forge a relationship with the individuals or teams.

Kevin Paul and Shireen Sapiro are both disabled swimmers who represented South Africa in 2012 in London. Both of them have official Facebook pages and use Twitter.

3.2.6.2 Selected social networks

The instruments used for this study focus on Facebook and Twitter.

A study released by Fuseware and World Wide Worx (World Wide Worx, 2011) entitled South African Social Media Landscape 2011 suggests that the media’s obsession with Twitter was helping it grow. World Wide Worx MD Arthur Goldstuck said when the study was released in 2011 “most radio and TV personalities with large audiences

are engaged in intensive campaigns to drive their listeners and viewers to both Twitter and Facebook.” A surprising finding at the time however with regards to Facebook suggests that of approximately 4.2 million Facebook users in South Africa by August 2011, only 3.2 million had actually used the site by the end of this period. Mike Wronski MD of Fuseware said that this could most likely be attributed to the fact that the “novelty of the site had worn off as well as a result of the fickle nature of the youth market” (World Wide Worx, 2011).

More recent research statistics released (as previously mentioned in Chapter 2) show that Facebook has grown to over 4.8 million users in South Africa by the end of April 2012 – a 91% penetration of the online population. The largest age group of users was 18 – 24 years of age (Chatterbox Digital Social Media Statistics – South Africa, 2012). In the latest statistics released by World Wide Worx and information analysts Fuseware for the period August 2011 to August 2012, “the fastest growing age group among Facebook users in SA is the over 60-s.” According to the MD of World Wide Worx Arthur Goldstuck, “the younger segments are still far from saturation, but we are not seeing the same heady pace of growth among the youth as before” (World Wide Worx, 2012). By the end of August 2012, Facebook users had grown to 5.3 million, an increase of almost 500 000 users.

Twitter had 1.1 million registered users in South Africa by the end of April 2012 (Chatterbox Digital Social Media Statistics – South Africa, 2012). The South African Social Media Landscape 2012 study suggests that Twitter had grown to over 2.4 million users by the end of August 2012.

According to an article published on the eBizmba Ranking website based in the United States, Facebook and Twitter are rated as the top two most popular social networking sites. Facebook is ranked first with 750 000 000 estimated unique monthly visitors while Twitter is in second place with 250 000 000 estimated unique monthly visitors (eBizmba, 2013).

This steady growth for both Facebook and Twitter has been the deciding factor and reason why these two platforms have been selected to determine their uses with regards to sports PR.

3.2.6.3 Tools for data sourcing, access and limitations

To gain access to Facebook insights, the researcher was required to become an administrator of the particular Facebook group page. Once the administrator role was approved by the Facebook page host, the analyst was provided with essential statistics for the study by clicking on Insights. This raw data was collected in the form of Excel spreadsheets and converted into graphs, charts and tables. The researcher can stipulate the time period required for analysis. An administrator is someone who creates a page for an individual or group or is invited to manage an individual or group page. The administrator is able to “edit information, tags or settings and they may remove abusive posts and remove or ban members”(Facebook, 2013). There is no cost involved with accessing the data on Facebook Insights.

Twitter on the other hand does not have a feature to allow researchers to access data. The analyst was required to source a social media management tool that would best suit the study. Further investigation led to the Twitonomy website that enables researchers to access tables, graphs and charts directly for any member on Twitter. Therefore no permission or approval was required to source data for the relevant athletes. The only drawback of using this site was that the relevant information could not be targeted to a specific time period. The researcher was required to purchase a premium membership package at the cost of \$20 (R210) per month to access data from a specific period.

3.2.6.4 Selected time frame

The Olympics were hosted from Friday 27 July to Monday 12 August while the Paralympics took place from Thursday 29 August to Monday 9 September 2012. The time frame for the study selected was from Friday 27 July to Sunday 30 September 2012. This extension will give the study an improved perspective with regards to the uses and stakeholder engagement with Kevin Paul and Shireen Sapiro leading up to, during and after the London Paralympic Games.

3.2.6.5 Selected sample

There was no particular sampling method used to select the sample used for this study. This was due to the fact that the sample was

limited to the stakeholders who interacted with Kevin Paul and Shireen Sapiro on Facebook and Twitter during the selected time frame.

In order for any organisation, event or idea to be successful, it is vital to understand who your stakeholders are and how you are able to reach them.

In the case of Kevin Paul and Shireen Sapiro, some examples of their stakeholders include spectators and or fans, sponsors, media and organising bodies such as SASCOC (South African Sports Confederation and Olympic Committee). All stakeholders are vital to the success of the organisation or an individual (Steyn and Puth, 2000: 187).

Besides using traditional media, new media in the form of social networks such as Facebook and Twitter allowed sport personalities such as Kevin Paul and Shireen Sapiro to inform and interact with their various stakeholder groups.

3.2.6.6 Metrics

A metric is a statistical standard for measuring or quantifying something. A metric is any type of measurement used to gauge some quantifiable components of an organisation's or individual's performance. Through the use of technology, metrics allow organisations or individuals to monitor, gather, store, and analyze data to enable them to make better decisions for all stakeholders.

Facebook

To further understand Facebook, the following key elements of the social media platform will be highlighted.

Although Facebook was originally designed for students the site is now open to anyone over the age of 13. Members of Facebook can create their own personalised profiles using photos, videos and information they would like to publicize. Stakeholders in the form of friends, family, associates can view profiles and interact on these pages (Tech Target, 2008).

Each Facebook page has a 'wall' where stakeholders can make comments that can be viewed by the public unless sent directly to their private message system (Tech Target, 2008).

“Facebook provides an easy way for friends to keep in touch and for individuals to have a presence on the Web without needing to build a website” (Tech Target, 2008).

To understand the metrics required for the study, the following Facebook terminology has been addressed:

Table 4 – Facebook terminology

Term	Description
Page	“Pages are for businesses, organizations and brands to share their stories and connect with people” (Facebook, 2013). “A Facebook page is a public profile specifically created for businesses, brands, celebrities, causes, and other organizations. Pages work similarly to profiles, updating users with things such as <u>statuses</u> , links, events, photos and videos. This information appears on the page itself, as well as in its fans' personal news feeds” (Techtarget, 2013).
Likes	The ‘likes’ on a Facebook page allow stakeholders to express an interest in a comment, activity, photo, video or event by clicking or ticking the ‘like’ option.
Unlikes	The ‘unlike’ option is clicked or ticked on a page on Facebook that allows the stakeholder to no longer ‘like’ a comment, activity, photo, video or event.
Comments	A ‘comment’ on Facebook is a written statement that expresses an opinion about someone or something such as another comment, activity, photo, video or event (Merriam-Webster, 2013). Commenting can also be referred to as ‘posting.’
Share	Stakeholder’s ‘share’ a comment, activity, photo or event on their own page or on a friend’s page when they have seen, read or interacted with it. Stakeholders can ‘share’ on their own timeline, on a friend’s timeline, on a group page or on their private page (Facebook, 2013).
News feed	The news feed on Facebook is a “constantly updating list of stories from people and pages that you follow on Facebook” (Facebook, 2013). These stories include responses to comments, activities, photos, video and events.
Tagging	When you tag someone in a photo on Facebook this tag automatically appears on their page (Facebook, 2013).

Visit	A visit can also be known as a view. This means that stakeholders have been able to go and have a look at your profile, comments, activities, photos, videos or events on your page (Facebook, 2013).
Checking in	Checking in is when a member of Facebook chooses to publicize the whereabouts of their location (Facebook, 2013).

Adapted from Simply Measured (2013), the following Facebook metrics were selected to support the study:

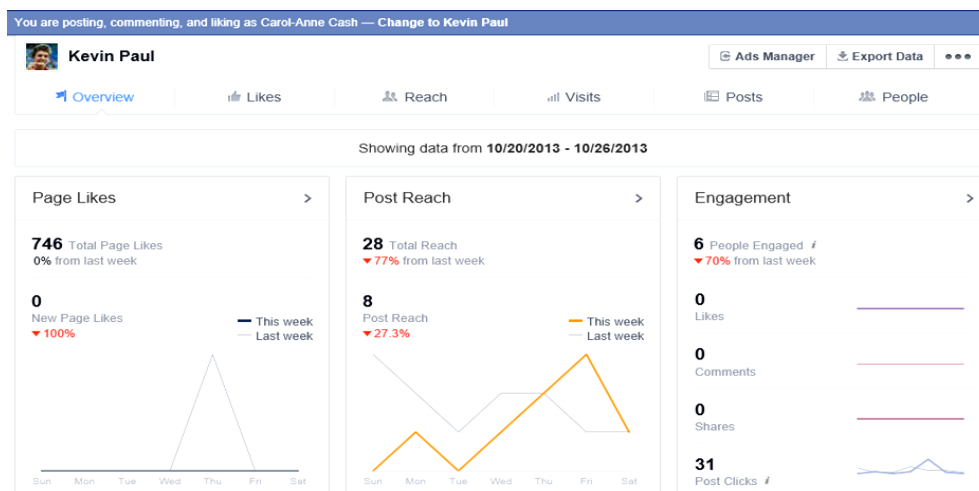
Table 5 – Facebook metrics

Term	Description
Fan reach	Corresponds to the number of fans of the Page who have seen any given post. This is 'organic' reach, which means that it only records the views that occurred directly, and not through an action of a friend of a fan (such as a like, share or comment).
Organic reach	Organic reach corresponds with the number of people, fans and non-fans, who have seen a given post. The real difference between the fan reach (above) and this metric is that the organic reach includes views of people that are not fans of the Page but have directly accessed the Page or seen its content.
Engagement	Engagement is the number of people who clicked anywhere in the post. This includes liking, commenting and sharing and people who have viewed your video or have clicked on the links and photos. And it also includes people who've clicked on a commentator's name, liked a comment, clicked on the page name and even given negative feedback by reporting the post.
Negative feedback	Negative feedback is a 'negative' action taken by a fan on the piece of content. It can be hiding a specific post, hiding all future posts from the page, unliking the page or reporting it as spam. Spam is when a post is considered 'junk mail'.
Weekly people talking about this	It is the number of people sharing stories about the page. These stories include liking the page, posting to the pages, liking, commenting on or sharing one of the page posts, answering a question posted, RSVPing to one of the events, mentioning the page, tagging the page or checking in.
Impressions vs Reach	Impressions measure the number of times content is displayed and reach measures the number of unique people who saw the content ie: if five people each saw a post twice, the result would be ten impressions (times displayed) and a reach of five (unique

or new people who saw it).

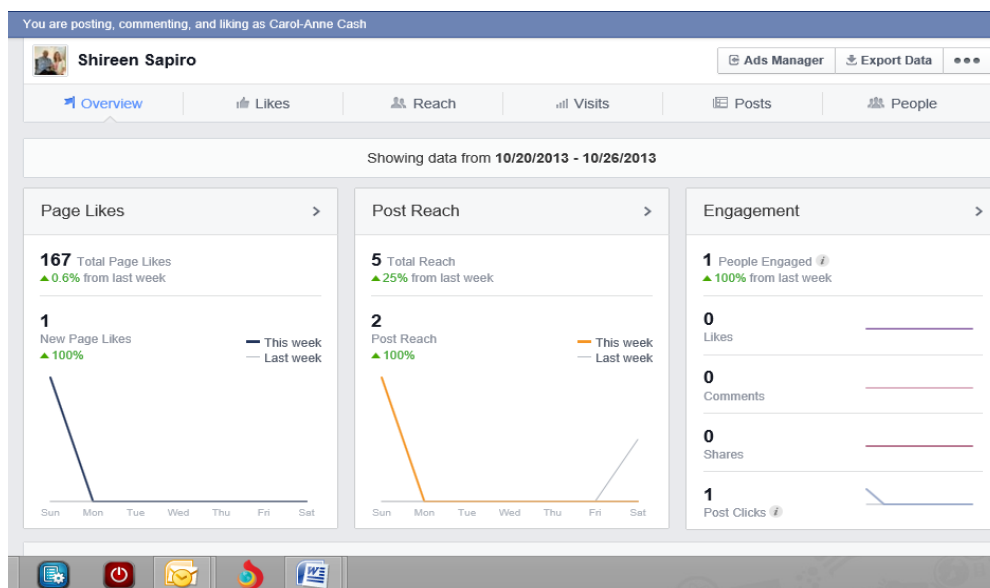
See figures below of the page layout for Insights for Kevin Paul and Shireen Sapiro:

Figure 4 – Kevin Paul Facebook Insights Page



(Source: https://www.facebook.com/KevinSwimPaul?sk=page_insights)

Figure 5 – Shireen Sapiro Facebook Insights Page



(Source: https://www.facebook.com/ShireenSapiro?sk=page_insights)

Twitter

According to Tech Terms (2009) Twitter is an online website that allows members to share information such as activities, photos, videos and events.

Users can become members by signing up for a free account. Twitter allows members to post updates and follow other members. Once members have selected who they would like to follow, their latest 'tweets' will show up on their home page and vice versa. Members who follow individuals or groups will have their updates posted on their home page. Twitter has a limit of 140 characters which members are allowed to use for each tweet.

"Twitter's appeal lies within its simplicity. It allows friends, family, and complete strangers to stay connected through quick updates that only take a couple of seconds to write" (Tech Terms, 2009).

To further understand Twitter, the following key elements of the social media platform will be highlighted.

Table 6 – Twitter terminology

Term	Description
Handle	It is the username or address that a member has decided to use. It is used with the '@' symbol ahead of the username for example: @KevinPaulSwim and @ShireenSapiro.
Tweet	According to Twitter (2013) a tweet is "an act of posting a message."
Retweet	"The act of forwarding another user's tweet to all your followers" (Twitter, 2013).
Reply	A tweet posted in reply to another user's message, posted by clicking the 'reply' button next to their tweet on your page. Always begins with the handle for example: @KevinPaulSwim or @Shireen Sapiro (Twitter, 2013).

Home	“A real-time list of tweets from those you follow. It appears on your Twitter home page” (Twitter,2013).
Follower	A Twitter member who is following an individual or group.
Following	A Twitter individual or group that you are following.
Hashtag	The symbol ‘#’ is called a hashtag in Twitter terms. A hashtag is used to mark topics in tweets that are posted. Hashtags also allow for members and analysts to categorize messages (Twitter, 2013).

Adapted from Simply Measured (2013), the following Twitter metrics were selected to support the study:

Table 7 – Twitter metrics

Term	Description
Reach	The reach metric allows you to quantify not only the users you engaged with, but the followers of those users, who may have seen your @handle or tweet. This is vital as the focus of social marketing is to expand your audience, and promote your message to a wider segment of the population.
Potential impression	The total number of times a tweet from your account or mentioning your account could appear in users’ Twitter feeds during the report period.
Engagement	<p>Engagement on Twitter accounts for every way fans can interact with your brand to make it show up in their timeline. It incorporates one-on-one conversations, as well as promotion to their circle of influence.</p> <p>Engagement is the sum total of the following three components during the given report period:</p> <p>@Replies: When a fan sends a Tweet directly by using your brand, the handle is at the beginning of the Tweet. This will only show up in your feed, and the feeds of users who follow you both. Example: “@ShireenSaprio You Rock!”</p> <p>Retweets: When a fan directly shares your brand message with their audience.</p>

	Mentions: When a user includes your brand handle, but not as a direct @Reply.
Hashtags	Hashtags are terms used in Tweets that are searchable, clickable and measurable and can be used as follows: Chats: “There are countless regular Twitter Chats out there that use specific hashtags to allow users to organize the conversation. Discovery: “ When doing research, hashtags can be searched to discover interests, sentiment, attitudes and demographics of the users engaging with the hashtag” (Simply Measured, 2013).

3.3 Ethical considerations

This study did not need to require ethical approval due to the fact that social media networks Facebook and Twitter are public domains. The public are able to access the information at any given time.

3.4 Conclusion

The secondary data and the primary data sources that were analysed in this study assisted in determining the uses of social media in sport PR.

In chapter 4, a detailed report of the findings for this study will be provided. This analysis will guide public relations practitioners to gain an improved understanding of social media networks Facebook and Twitter, their uses and the impact that new media has on the sport industry.

Chapter 4 – Data Analysis and Interpretation

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the research methodology was outlined to indicate how the data was sourced to assist this study.

The research findings were obtained by conducting a content analysis of data provided by Facebook through features called Notifications and Insights while the Twitter measuring tool was provided by the social media management website known as Twitonomy.

In Chapter 3, the various terms and metrics for Facebook and Twitter were identified to address the research question which is to determine the extent to which networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter can be used in sports PR with specific reference to two South African athletes, Kevin Paul and Shireen Sapiro during the 2012 London Olympics and Paralympics.

This chapter will therefore include a discussion on the analysis and interpretation of the data.

4.2 Structure of the data analysis and interpretation report

Kevin Paul and Shireen Sapiro were identified as the sources of primary data required for this study.

To gain further understanding, the report is presented by analysing the data provided by social media management tools Facebook Notifications and Insights and Twitonomy. The structure of the report was outlined as follows:

4.2.1 Secondary research

Traditional media was used extensively in decades gone by to access information regarding games, teams and individual sportsmen and women. New media offers new opportunities for communicating messages in more creative and effective ways (Argenti, 2013:161). The development of Web 2.0 technologies have allowed stakeholders to get immediate access to information that previously was not as readily available as it is today. Family, friends, sponsors, the media, fans and various other stakeholder groups are able to view, visit or follow their favourite sport, sportsman or sportswoman

at their convenience. The emphasis in communicating effectively with stakeholders lies in the immediacy of the message (Stoldt, Dittmore and Branvold, 2010). It is vital that public relations practitioners have a clear understanding of new forms of media and effectively use them to communicate a sports entity's message to its target audiences. Tassiopolous (2005) argues that public relations is the promotional discipline of forming what your audience thinks or feels about the value of your organisation as a whole. It is a broader, more time consuming approach to building continuing allegiance to your cause and participation in events. This theory applies to creating an affiliation with stakeholders in the sports industry through effective and immediate two-way communication.

This new technology has had an effect on the marketing and branding of individuals and organisations, society engagement and disseminating information (Bagui and Parker, 2009: 7).

According to Beshore (Forbes, 2013), social media enables individuals or organisations to monitor trends, keep tabs on competition, find out what stakeholders are talking about, optimize input and output and be more active and efficient.

Tajfel and Turner (1985) propose a social identity theory which suggests that people identify themselves in relation to their society. Consumption choices are determined by the social group or groups that they belong to (Turner, 1982).

In the case of Kevin Paul and Shireen Sapiro, stakeholders identify with the athletes as not only are they accomplished athletes, but they are also an inspiration due to their disability and the fact that they represent South Africa. South Africa is considered to be a proud nation, especially when it comes to sports supporters. In a study done by the National Opinion Research Centre at the University of Chicago in 2006 (South Africa – The Good News, n.d), South Africans are among the most patriotic in the world. “South Africa ranked fourth in terms of national pride out of the 34 countries surveyed in the report, “National Pride in Specific Domains” by Tom Smith, Director of the General Social Survey at NORC.

A Kwak et al (2002) research study focused on team identification when assessing consumers and was able to determine that an organisation and sport identification are directly related. The identification and attachment play a big role in spectators / fans that follow their favourite sportsmen or sportswomen on social pages (Trail, Anderson and Fink, 2000; Wann and Branscombe, 1993).

Trail et al (2000) add that social media users who are highly identified with a team or individual follow any related activities of the teams or individual's team members, players, coaches and journalists.

The lifeblood of any individual or team participating in sport is their fans.

Fans are following Kevin Paul and Shireen Sapiro on Facebook and Twitter and other social media pages. Highly identified fans are seeking as much information as they can consume with regards to their activities, comments, photos, videos and events.

The purpose of public relations is to improve the image of an organisation or a brand by creating effective two-way dialogue channels between the various publics (Clear, 2011: 6). Social media networks such as Facebook and Twitter allow organisations or individuals to facilitate on-going interaction between their various stakeholders.

Lesame et al (2012: 69) suggest that social networking sites have enabled celebrities, organisations, clubs, societies and charities to interact with fans and supporters. Fans can connect more closely with an individual or team and this can also influence the success of the individual or team (Lesame et al, 2012: 69).

Parks and Quarterman (2002: 110) imply that sport holds a place of great prominence in society and has not only positive but also negative consequences.

Sport has a positive effect as it is a unifier of people. It can bring people together by giving them a sense of personal identity but also makes them feel part of a community. It can also have a negative effect.

The London 2012 Olympics was mentioned 26 million times in social media conversations including Facebook and Twitter platforms (Inside the Games, nd). "Sport and social media are obvious partners, sport provides 'live' excitement and social media lets you share the moment with your friends," said Brynley-Jones. Brynley-Jones represented Cadburys (stakeholder) as an official sponsor of the 2012 London Olympics and Paralympics.

4.2.2 Primary research

The primary research in this research study includes quantitative data and qualitative data. The quantitative data is depicted by numbers through the number of likes, tags, comments posted on the pages. The qualitative data is

depicted by the actual comments related to the activity, photo, video or events on the Facebook pages.

4.2.2.1 Facebook

Kevin Paul

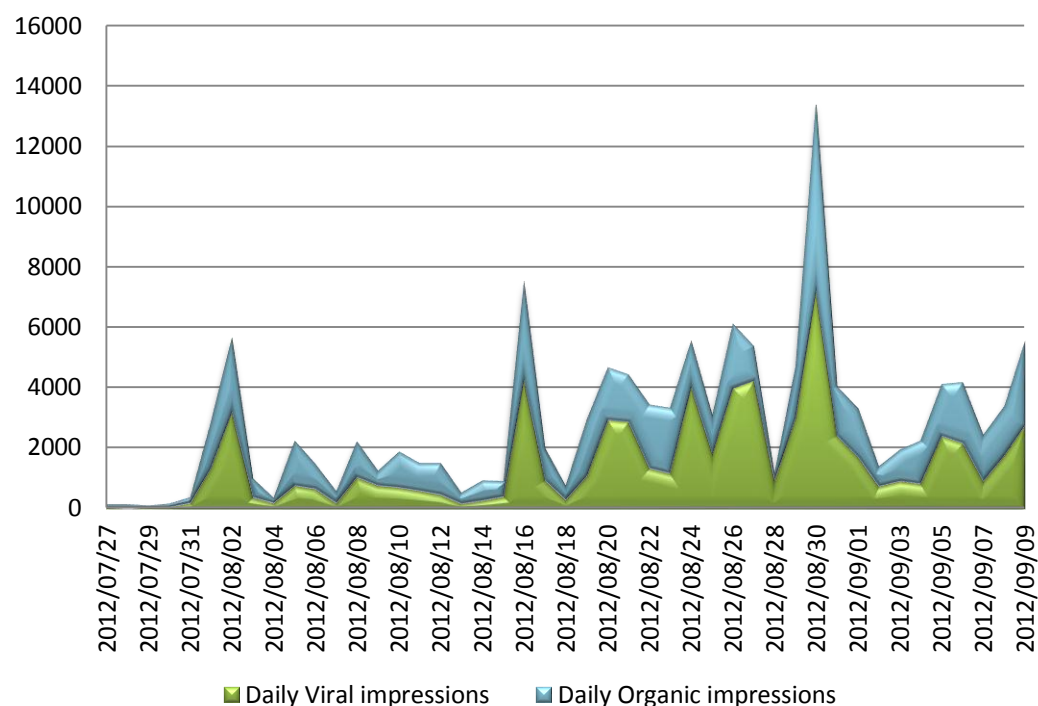
Figure 6 - Kevin Paul Facebook Home Page



(Source: <https://www.facebook.com/KevinSwimPaul>)

As depicted by Figure 6, Kevin Paul's home page that stakeholders are able to view. View or visit means that stakeholders have been able to go and look at the profile. The profile page allows stakeholders, to like, unlike, comment, share or tag any activity, photo, video or event on the Facebook page.

Figure 7 - Daily Impressions at Page Level
Kevin Paul



(Source: <https://www.facebook.com/KevinswimPaul>)

Daily organic impressions relate to the total count of posts seen in news feed or on visits to Kevin Paul's page. These impressions can be by people who have liked the page and people who haven't. The daily viral impressions are the number of impressions of a story published by a friend about Kevin Paul's page. These stories include liking the page, posting to the page, liking, commenting on or sharing a page post, answering a question posted, RSVPing to an event, mentioning the page, tagging the page or checking in at your place (Facebook, 2013).

Daily organic impressions and daily viral impressions peaked on 2 August, 18 August and 30 August due the posts by Kevin Paul and the interaction with the page by stakeholders.

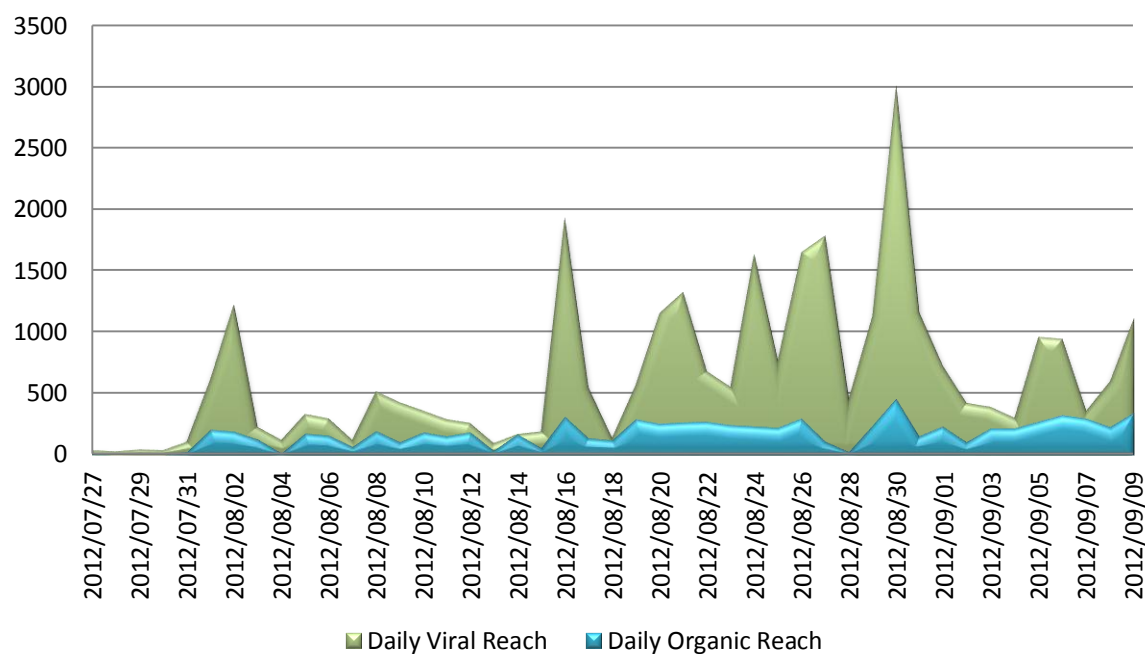
The peak on 2 August can be attributed to the fact that Kevin Paul requested friends to tune into the regional radio station Algoa fm to listen to his interview ahead of the 2012 London Olympics and Paralympics. As mentioned in chapter 2, social media is a tool that organisations or individuals use to create awareness. In this case, the message on Facebook drove friends to listen to the interview on Algoa fm. The

media channel selected to convey the message was Facebook but traditional media (radio) was used to facilitate a detailed interview.

At the peak on 18 August, Kevin Paul drew attention on Facebook to an article that appeared in The Herald (regional newspaper) regarding a farewell party for stakeholders including family, friends, the media and sponsors. The Facebook message again enticed readers to buy the Herald and read more about Kevin Paul's journey to the 2012 Olympics and Paralympics.

Kevin Paul's first heat took place on 31 August and his Facebook post alerted stakeholders to the event which accelerated interaction through likes, tags, shares and comments. The increased support from stakeholders can be attributed that stakeholders, fans especially who would be looking for 'insider' information or breaking news on their sport heroes (Trail, 2003) in chapter 2.

**Figure 8 - Daily Reach at Page Level
Kevin Paul**



(Source: <https://www.facebook.com/KevinswimPaul>)

The daily organic reach refers to the number of people who visited Kevin Paul's page, or saw the page or one of its posts in a news feed. These could have been people who liked the page and people who haven't. They were unique users, in other words

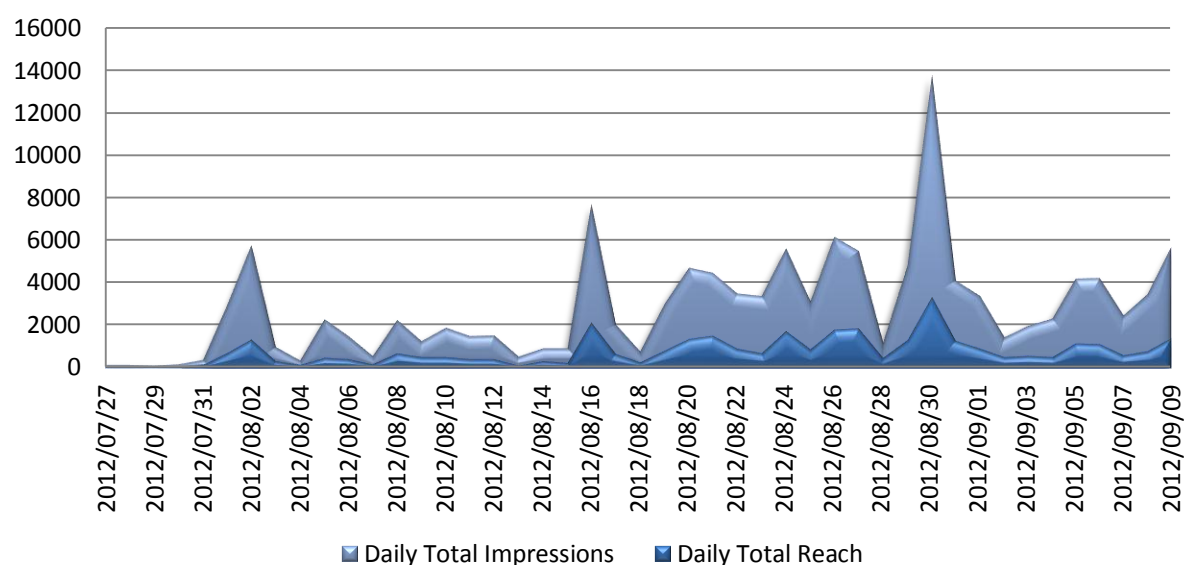
new users also known as organic users. The daily viral reach is the number of unique users who saw the page or one of its posts from a story shared by a friend. These stories include liking the page, posting to the page, liking, commenting on or sharing one of the posts, answering a question posted, responding to an event, mentioning the page, tagging or checking in at your place or location (Facebook, 2013).

What these statistics reveal is that the interaction from stakeholders peaked on 16 and 30 August.

The 16 August peak could be attributed to the fact that Kevin Paul shared his photos and thoughts regarding his upcoming event in London and of his farewell party hosted by various stakeholders including his family, friends, sponsors and the media.

The peak on 30 August can be attributed to a Facebook post by Kevin Paul relating to the first heat he swam in, where he just missed the bronze medal in the 200 metre individual medley. Spectators are drawn to follow the success of their heroes due to the fact that they are proud of their achievements. This was highlighted in a study done by the National Opinion Research that stated that South Africans were ranked the 4th most patriotic citizens in the world (South Africa – The Good News, n.d). This reaction from friends on Kevin Paul's page reaffirms this notion.

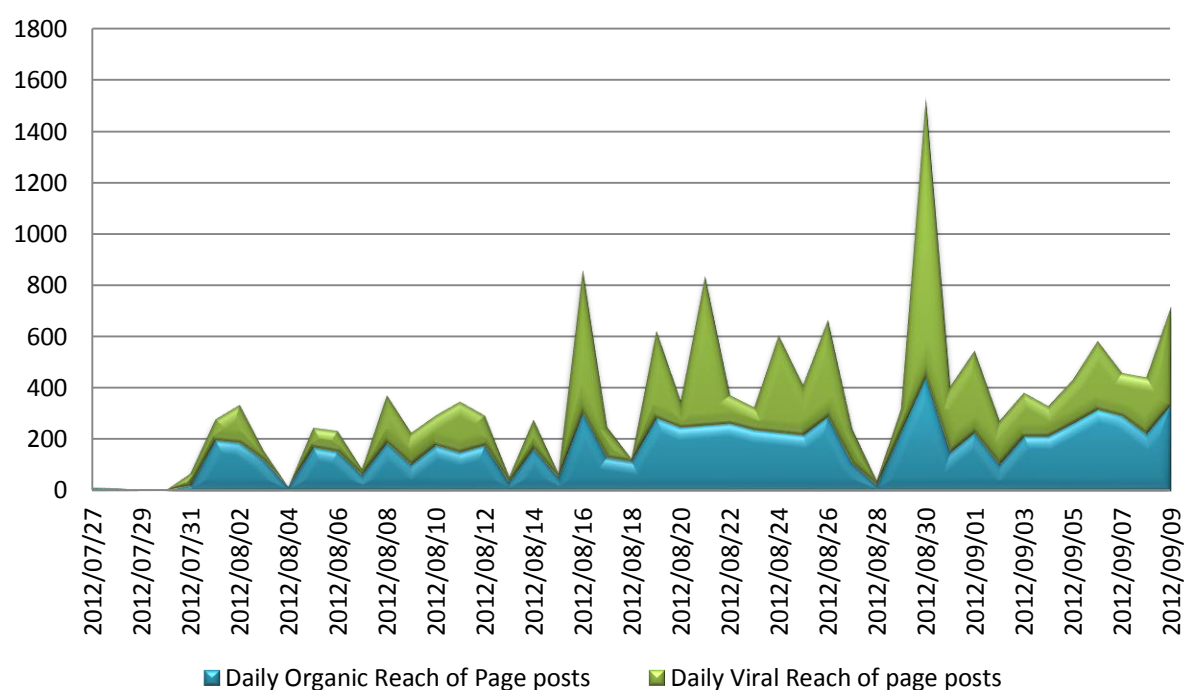
**Figure 9 - Reach vs. Impressions
Kevin Paul**



(Source: <https://www.facebook.com/KevinswimPaul>)

The daily total reach is the number of people who have seen any content associated with the page. The daily impressions seen are of any content associated with the page (Facebook, 2013). Impressions measure the number of times content is displayed and reach measures the number of people who saw the content. The content posted in the peaked areas reached a total of 3305 people on 30 August while the daily total impressions seen of any content on Kevin Paul's page reached 13 800 people (Facebook, 2013). The trend in Figure 8 and Figure 9 noted that the increase in reach and interaction could be attributed to Kevin Paul's performance in the 200 metre medley.

Figure 10 -Daily Reach at Post Level
Kevin Paul



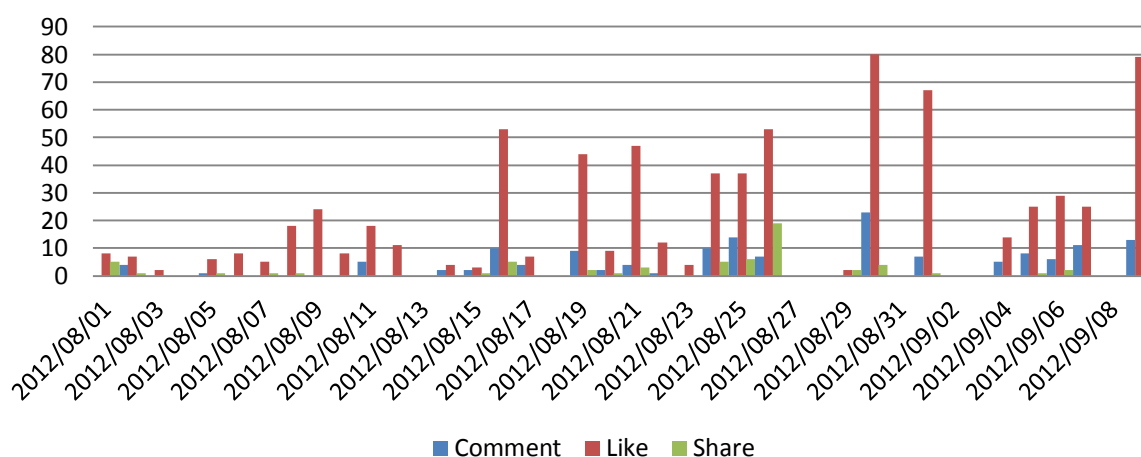
(Source: <https://www.facebook.com/KevinswimPaul>)

The daily viral reach is the number of unique users who saw page posts in news feed or on the page's timeline. The daily viral reach of page posts is the number of unique users who saw the page posts through a story shared by a friend (Facebook, 2013). The daily organic page posts reached 306 people while the viral posts reached 560 people. The organic reach is important as it includes views by people that are not fans of the page but have directly accessed the page or seen its content (Facebook, 2013). Figure 10 depicts friends who had seen Kevin Paul's post regarding his 200

metre medley but to be noted was the fact that the post was seen by new people who were not friends of Kevin Paul's on Facebook.

Shapshak (2009: 4) highlighted that social media is about sharing information. Social media sites have changed the way people interact with each other based on shared ideas and opportunities (Shapshak, 2009: 4). Social media networks enable people to join or visit discussion forums and socialise with old and new friends (Barrett, 2009:10).

**Figure 11 - Daily Talking about this - Post
Kevin Paul**



(Source: <https://www.facebook.com/KevinswimPaul>)

Figure 11 depicts the amount of comments, likes and share of people who were talking about Kevin Paul via his official Facebook page.

Quantitative data was interpreted by counting the amount of comments, likes and shares while the qualitative data was interpreted in terms of what was said and what the response was.

The table below emphasises the qualitative and quantitative peak data:

Table 8 – Peak Data for Kevin Paul

Date	Post by Kevin Paul	Comment from stakeholder	Like from stakeholder	Share by stakeholder
8/8/2012	Bolt the fastest human being in the world? NOTHING moves faster than a girl untagging herself from an ugly photo!	0	18	1

On 8 August Kevin Paul used comedy to post a message. This post received 18 likes from stakeholders, no comments and only 1 share by a stakeholder. The key for organisations or individuals is to aim for people to interact by commenting and sharing information posted. This was reflected in chapter 2 about the importance of communication and the fact that communication is a transactional exchange of messages between parties with the intention of forging a relationship based in interaction (Steinberg, 1997: 13). According to Lister and Colleagues (2003), 'old' media is passive consumption and the 'new' media allows more interactivity and a more powerful sense of user engagement.

9/8/2012	In the Algoa FM studio with Lance du Plessis & Ed Lunnon.	0	24	0
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On 9 August Kevin Paul alerted Facebook friends to an interview on regional radio station Algoa fm. Social media created a platform for organisations or individuals to communicate messages quickly and effectively to reach friends of Kevin Paul on Facebook to invite them to tune in via their radios or audio streaming on the computers from around the world. Previously in this study, it was identified that traditional mass media promoted one-way communication whereas new media promotes interaction from not only one organisation or individual to-many but from many-to-many. "We've moved from letters to newspapers, magazines and telephone. Modern one way media like television and radio emerged. New social media tools are truly radical in that they enable multi-way communication that is so different from what precedes it" (Wordpress, 2009).

11/8/2012	A huge thank you to my Aquabear squad that organized my 'surprise' farewell this morning! I really am lucky to have a squad like you guys around me! Getting a Double decker bus to take us all from training to Breakfast..... Brian Elliot--- You've done it again! Thanks!	5	18	0
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The post by Kevin Paul on 11 August received 5 comments, 18 likes without any shares. Although the interaction was not high, the comments and likes were mostly from Kevin Paul's team who were members of the same swimming club. This interest and support for Kevin could be attributed to Tajfel and Turner's (1985) social identity

theory that explains why people identify themselves in relation to society. “People can relate to other people in society who have the same interests” (Turner, 1982).

16/8/2012	READ P3 OF THE HERALD TODAY! A BIG thank you to everyone that was part of last nights 'farewell'. Seeing everyone there made me realize that this journey is almost over!	10	53	5
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The rise in support on 16 August to 53 likes, 10 comments and 5 shares could be attributed to the additional interest of coverage received in the regional newspaper. This interaction supports the notion that traditional media and new media needs to be integrated to promote and sell brands (Argenti, 2013: 161).

19/8/2012	Thank you African Unity Foundation & Berenice Rose for making sure that I keep in touch with everybody back home!	9	44	2
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The increase in comments, likes and shares can be attributed to when African Unity Foundation sponsored a new laptop for Kevin Paul. Stakeholders are vital to the success of an organisation or an individual (Steyn and Puth, 2000: 187). Not only did African Unity Foundation support Kevin Paul in terms of sponsorship but also increased support through extended networks. Social networking allows collaboration between various stakeholders. “The networks enable people to join discussion forums and also socialise with old and new friends (Barrett, 2009:10).

21/8/2012	Thanks @flysaa for coming 2 our Hotel to check us in for our flight this evening! Beating all the queues! #SAparalympicteam	4	47	3
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The contribution that sponsors make towards athletes achieving their goals is invaluable. South African Airways (SAA) sponsored the Olympic and Paralympic athletes to and from London in 2012. SAA identified the South African team as an opportunity to promote their brand. SAA realised that sport celebrities are considered a brand and that successful brands are able to establish relationships with the public (Aaker, 1991). Kevin Paul was one of many South African athletes that commented on SAA’s support during the 2012 London Games (Facebook, 2013). The 4 comments, 47 likes and 3 shares form part of the campaign for SAA to gain exposure through association which leads to increased interest from stakeholders.

24/8/2012	London 2012 Paralympics	10	37	5
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After Kevin Paul's post on 24 August, comments, likes and shares increased. This could be attributed to the associated stakeholders taking the opportunity to wish Kevin Paul well. Online interactivity brings spectators together to communicate their interests and passion to a collective audience. The support for Kevin Paul can also be attributed to the fact that sport itself is a unifier, highlighted by Nelson Mandela when he said that "sport has the power to change the world, it has the power to unite people in ways that little else does" (Satour, 2013).

25/8/2012	Tune into SABC 2 on Sunday 26 August at 12:30.	14	37	6
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The increase in comments (14), likes (37) and shares (6) could be attributed to stakeholders who were interested in an opportunity to connect with their heroes by creating interest through social media to drive support to watch the television interview.

30/8/2012	30 August 2012 - 200m IM Heats are at 11:00 (12:00 SA time) Finals are at 19:39 (20:39 SA time)	23	80	2
	How close was that for bronze? Congrats Huot Benoit on a stunning world record!!	17	48	1

The likes peaked (80) on 30 August contributing to the support from stakeholders when Kevin Paul just lost out on the bronze medal in the 200m individual medley event. Kevin Paul posted a Youtube video that showed the final seconds of the event. Sport and social media are natural partners, the sport provides the excitement and the social media allows you to share the moment with your friends and family (Eventility, 2013).

Some of the responses from stakeholders on 30 August included the following:

Name	Comment
Linda King	Well tried Kevin!
Shona Smith ter Stege	Well done Kevin, so proud of you!
Nadine Boshoff	Well done kev!!! We supporting u all the way
Wendy Gardner	Well done Kev – a good warm up for what's to come!
Nutritech	Awesome effort there Kevin, looking forward to the next race and counting the days down till the main event!

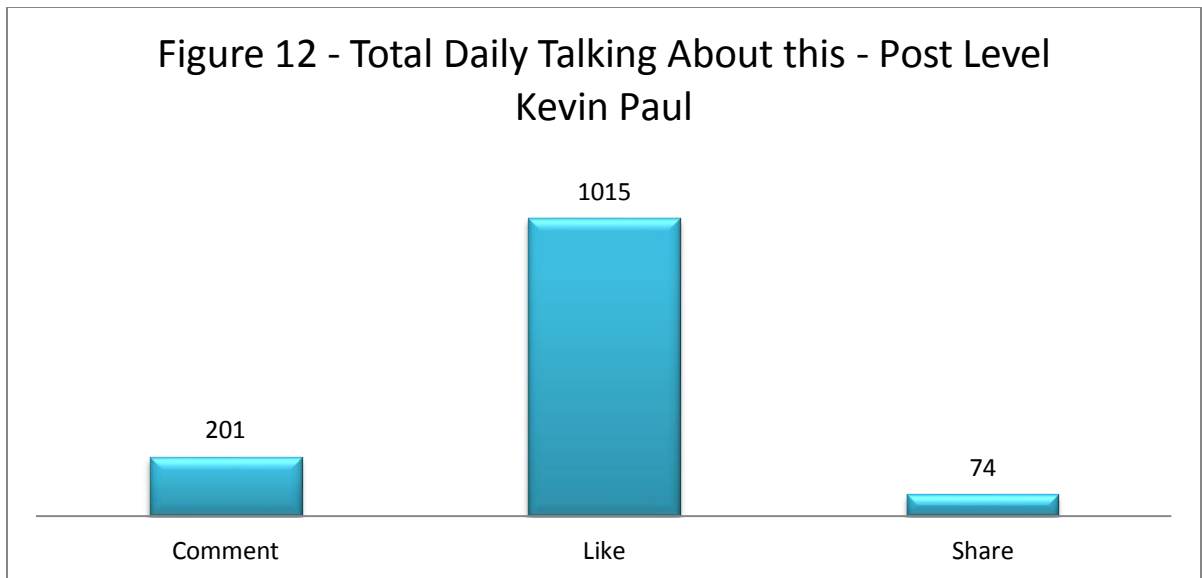
The comments were all supportive and portrayed a sense of pride that was posted by friends, family members, the media and sponsors.

1/9/2012	Well done to my fellow SA Paralympic swimmer and good mate Achmat on his bronze!	7	67	1
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On 1 September Kevin Paul posted a message to one of his team mates that drew interaction from the public represented by 7 comments, 67 likes and 1 share. According to Coakley (2001), sport can bring people together by giving them a sense of identity as well as feelings of group membership. Spectators learn about values and attitudes that a particular society reflects including respect, teamwork and citizenship (Parks and Quarterman, 2002: 111).

9/9/2012	“The whole build-up to the Games has been amazing and the support from the people of South Africa, my family and friends and the Port Elizabeth community had been fantastic. “No one trains to come second as everyone wants gold, but so many athletes are going to leave here with nothing to show except memories so to give a silver medal for my country is wonderful. “I’m really happy with it and I can’t complain. It’s the best time that I’ve ever done but that guy just went faster than me. Hats off to him.”	13	79	3
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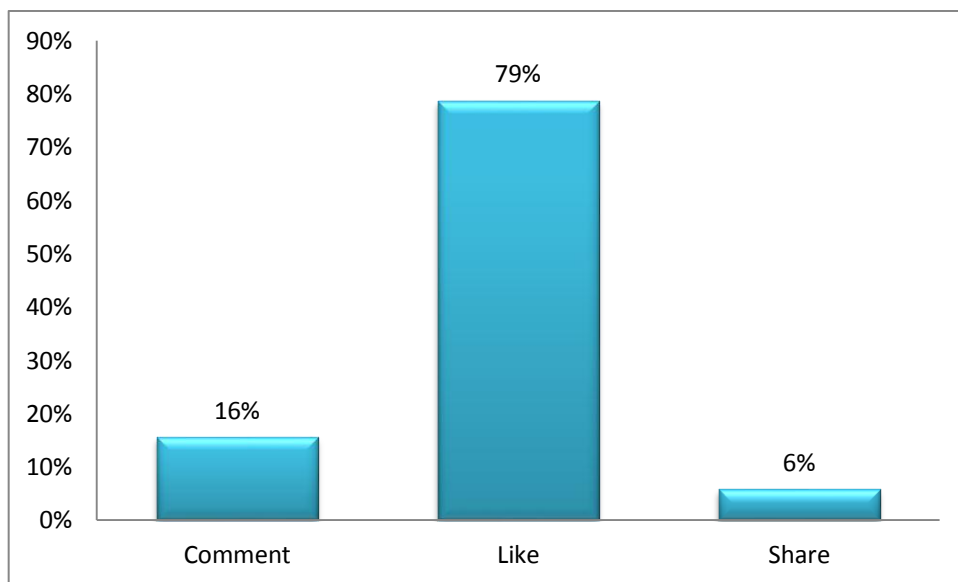
Social media is a platform to share information, experiences and perspectives (Weinburg, 2009). Kevin Paul posted his comments and was able to increase interaction with his stakeholders on 9 September. Kevin Paul was able to thank his supporters for their ongoing support and also congratulate the gold medal winner. Cadbury, a sponsor of the London 2012 Games said that social networks are a place to talk to friends and family regarding an event that interests countries all over the world in a powerful and meaningful way (Inside the Games, n.d).



(Source: <https://www.facebook.com/KevinswimPaul>)

Figure 12 portrays that during the period of the Olympics and Paralympics 2012, Kevin Paul's page received 201 comments, 1015 likes and 74 people shared his posts.

Figure 13 – Penetration Kevin Paul

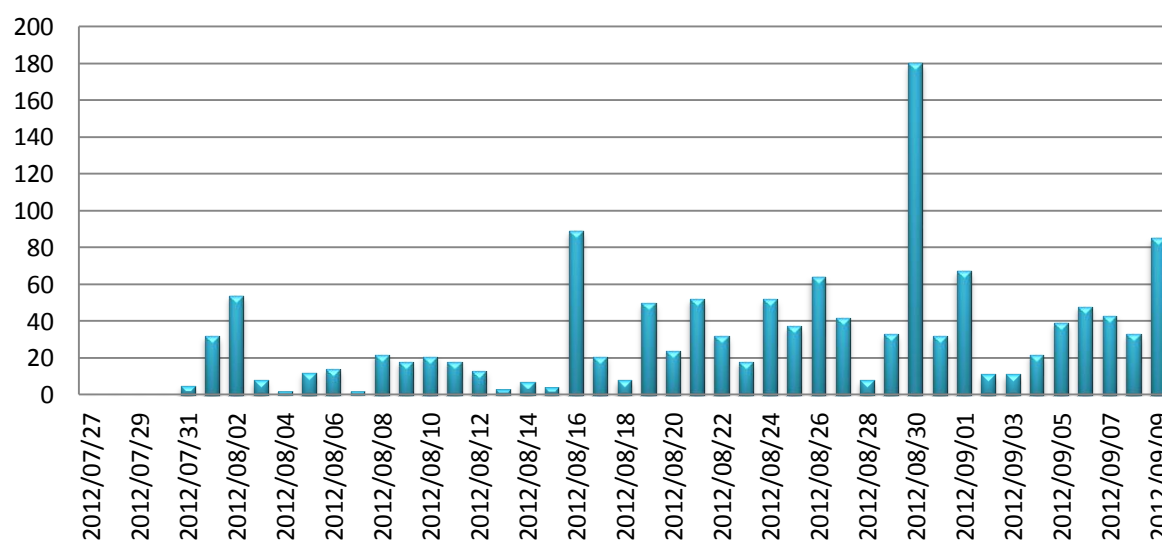


(Source: <https://www.facebook.com/KevinswimPaul>)

Figure 13 reflects a 16% penetration with regards to comments received after Kevin Paul's posts, a 79% penetration of likes for each post and 6% of the stakeholders shared the posts.

Figure 12 and 13 depict that although there were 1015 likes for the comments posted by Kevin from 27 July to 30 September 2012, only 16% of those posts were commented on and 6% of those posts were shared. It is to be noted by public relations practitioners in the sports industry, that the ideal for organisations or individuals is to ensure that the messages they send out support the two-way communication model. Stakeholders should become equal players in the communication process (Grunig, et al, 1995: 285). The purpose of public relations is to improve the image of their organisation or brand by creating effective two-way dialogue channels between the various publics (Clear, 2011:6).

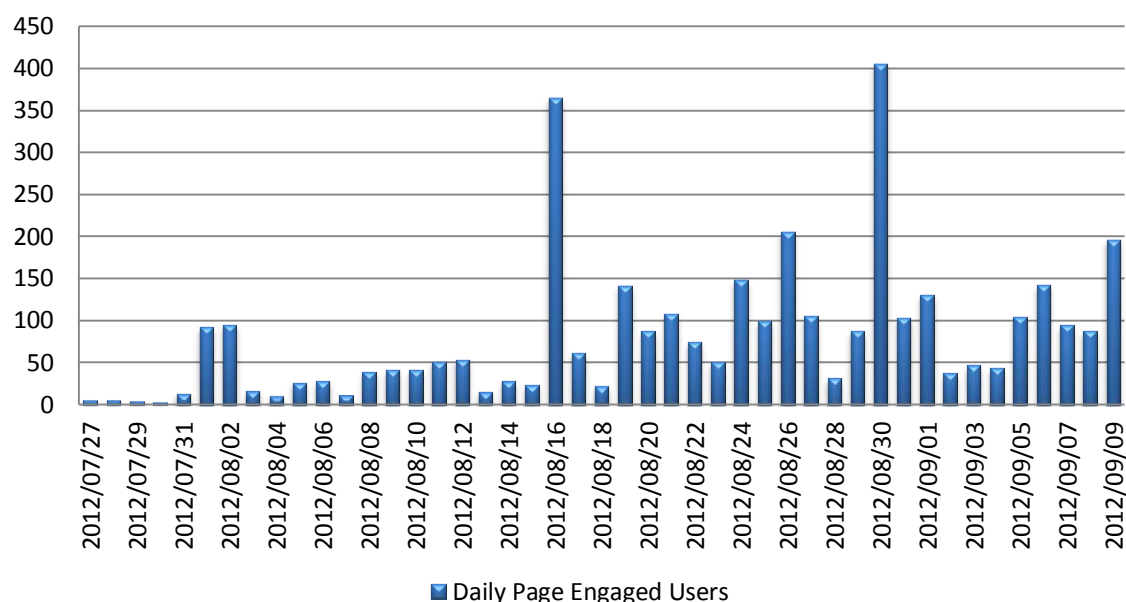
Figure 14 - Daily People Talking About This - Page
Kevin Paul



(Source: <https://www.facebook.com/KevinswimPaul>)

The daily people talking about the page refer to the number of people sharing stories about Kevin Paul's page. These stories include unique users liking, posting, commenting on or sharing one of the posts, answering a question posted, responding to an event, mentioning the page, tagging or checking in at your location (Facebook, 2013).

Figure 15 - Daily Page Engaged Users
Kevin Paul

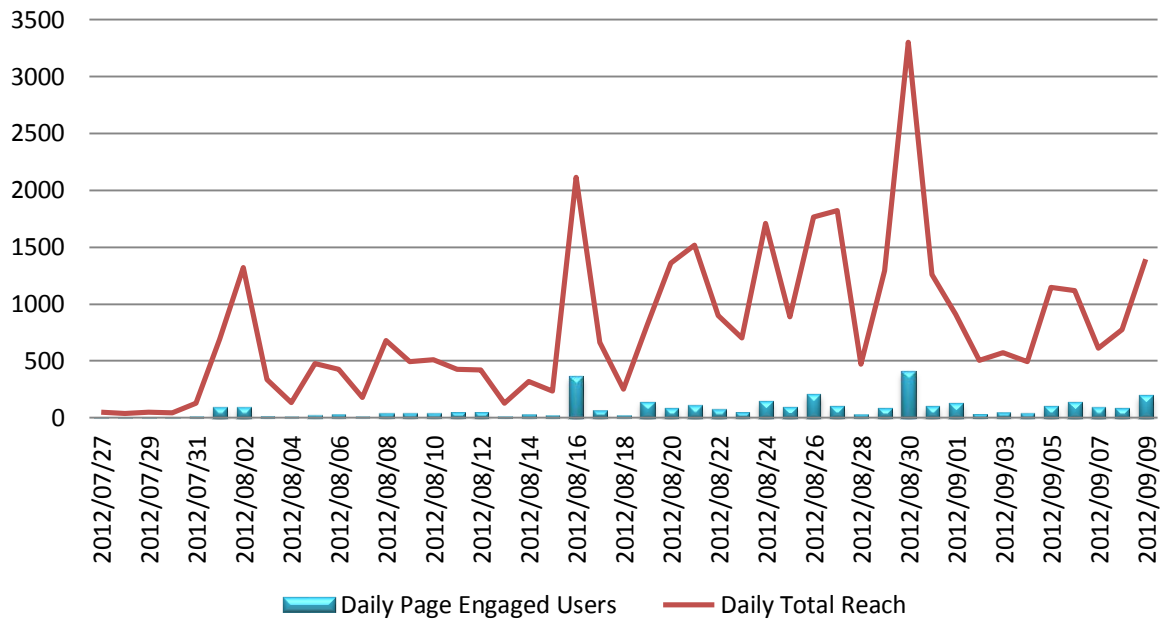


(Source: <https://www.facebook.com/KevinswimPaul>)

Figure 15 above portrays the daily number of people who engaged with Kevin Paul's page while Figure 16 below highlights the number of people who have seen content or associated with his page. The key here is to ensure that the people who are exposed to the content on the page should be enticed into engaging with the page ie; liking, commenting or sharing.

The peak on 16 August drew over 350 engaged users and the peak on 30 August peaked at just over 400 engaged users.

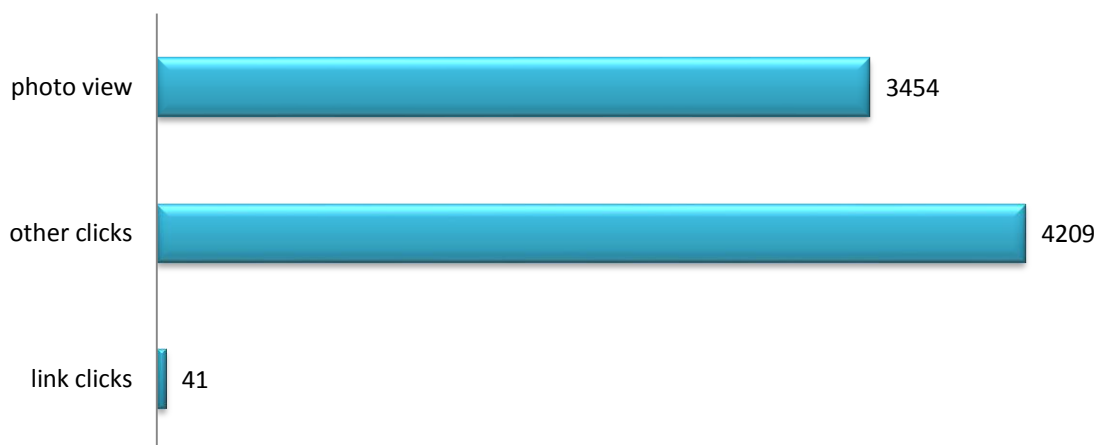
Figure 16 - Total Reach and Engaged Users
Kevin Paul



(Source: <https://www.facebook.com/KevinSwimPaul>)

The daily total page of engaged users highlights the number of unique users who engaged with Kevin Paul's page. Engagement includes any click or story created. The daily total reach is the number of unique users who have merely seen any content associated with the page (Facebook, 2013). The importance here is that social media doesn't just want to reach stakeholders but rather entice them to engage and interact with Kevin Paul.

Figure 17 - Consumption By Type
Kevin Paul



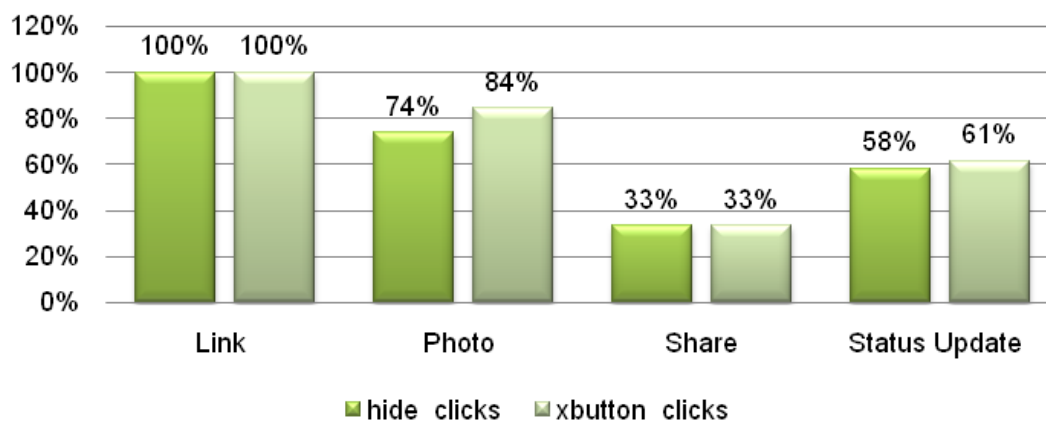
(Source: <https://www.facebook.com/KevinswimPaul>)

Stakeholders (consumers) are limited just to engagement on content, not the entire page. This makes consumers the most accurate metric for measuring post engagement. Stakeholders (consumers) can be segmented by the type of engagement action they made, including the link clicks, photo views, video plays and other clicks (Facebook, 2013). This breakdown provides a greater level of insight for how users engaged with your content and what type of post it was (link, photo or video). The clicks generating stories include the likes, comments and shares are included in 'other clicks' (Facebook, 2013).

During the period 27 July to 30 September 2012, 3454 friends viewed photos that were posted By Kevin Paul; 4209 friends liked, commented or shared Kevin Paul's posts and 41 friends opened links that were posted. A statistic to highlight was the fact that a significant portion of friends viewed photos that Kevin Paul or stakeholders posted on his home page. The photos drew attention and enticed stakeholders to engage. "Sport fans are considered enthusiastic devotees of a given diversion" (Sloan, 1989 and Trail et al, 2003). According to Trail (2003) fans are seeking as much insider information as they can consume.

Practising public relations professionals in sport should encourage friends to share photos to expand reach.

Figure 18 - Negative Feedback by Type of Post
Kevin Paul



(Source: <https://www.facebook.com/KevinswimPaul>)

Negative feedback is a 'negative' action taken by a fan on the piece of content. It can be hiding a specific post, hiding all future posts from the page, unliking the page or reporting it as spam. Spam is when a post is considered 'junk mail'. The hide button was clicked during the period 27 July to 30 September 2012 as follows:

Type	User
Link	5
Photo	14
Share	1
Status update	18

Hides were activated based on two reasons:

- Friends (users) preferred not to view a link or photo or share a link or photo. The same would have applied to a status update.
- Kevin Paul together with his approved administrators would have access to hiding a link, photo, share or status that they deemed not suitable for the home page.

This study encountered difficulty sourcing information on Facebook Insights and Notifications as the links, photos, shares and status updates were hidden from the homepage. Therefore the negative feedback relating to the links, photos, shares or status updates that were hidden was inaccessible.

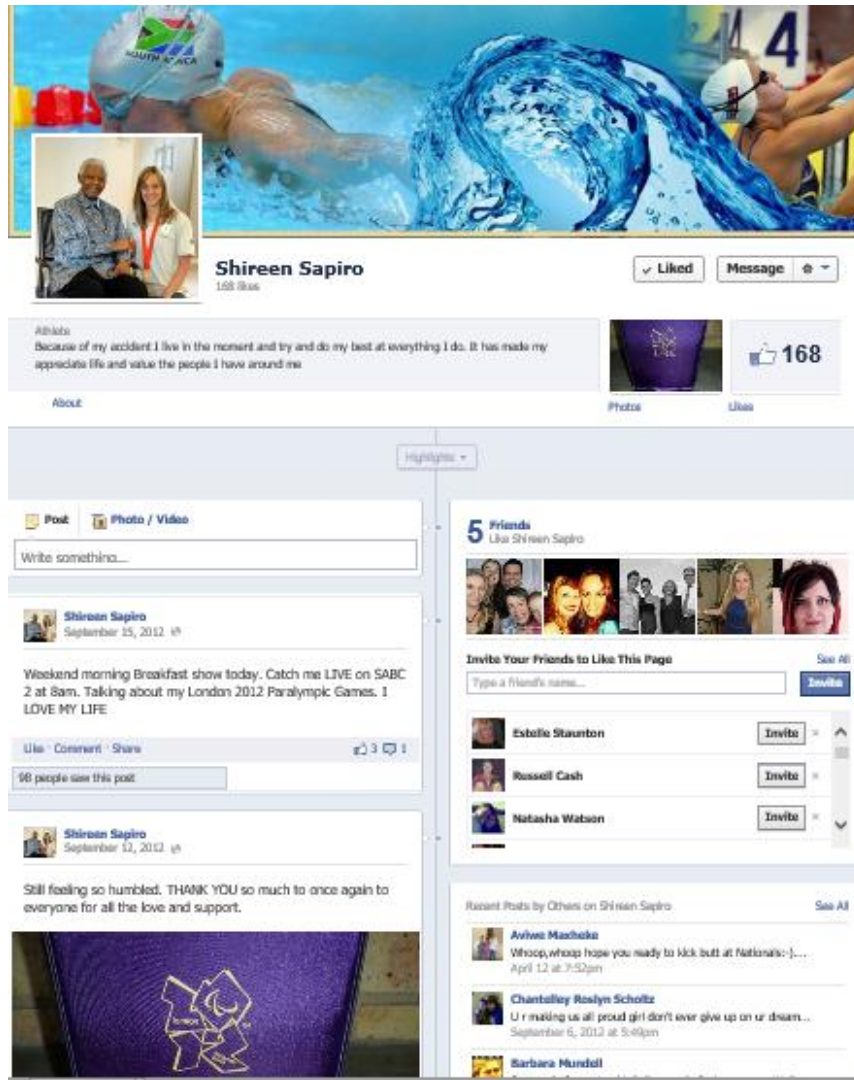
During the period of 27 July to 30 September, no negative feedback in the form of comments was received. This was largely due to the fact that Kevin Paul's posts were all positive which meant that friends' posts were positive too.

However social networks can have their disadvantages. In chapter 2 one of the disadvantages that was discussed included the lack of control of messages that appear on social media (Clear, 2012: 131 -131). Kevin Paul or his administrative manager may not have been online when a negative comment was made, which means that they would have been unable to respond immediately. Negative feedback could have been detrimental to the brand. Shapshak (2009: 4) highlights that individuals and organisations should be careful what they say on social media as this information is available for public consumption.

Public relations practitioners should be aware that social media can help signal developments that affect your image. “It is important to keep up with what is being said about you, your friends or key topics” (Beshore – Forbes, 2013).

Shireen Sapiro

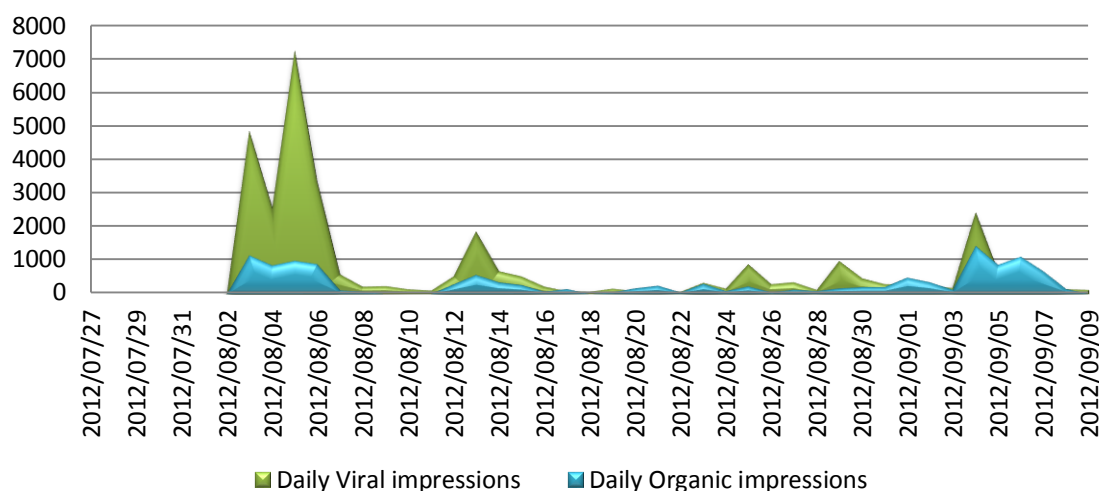
Figure 19 – Shireen Sapiro Facebook Home Page



(Source: <https://www.facebook.com/shireensapiroparalympicswimmer>)

As depicted by Figure 19, is Shireen Sapiro's home page that stakeholders are able to view. View or visit means that stakeholders have been able to go and look at the profile. The page allows stakeholders, to like, unlike, comment, share or tag any activity, photo, video or event on the Facebook page.

Figure 20 - Daily Impressions at Page Level
Shireen Sapiro



(Source: <https://www.facebook.com/shireensapiroparalympicswimmer>)

Daily organic impressions relate to the total count of posts seen in news feed or on visits to Shireen Sapiro's page. These impressions can be by people who have liked the page and people who haven't. The daily viral impressions are the number of impressions of a story published by a friend about Shireen Sapiro's page. These stories include liking the page, posting to the page, liking, commenting on or sharing a page post, answering a question posted, RSVPing to an event, mentioning the page, tagging the page or checking in at your place (Facebook, 2013).

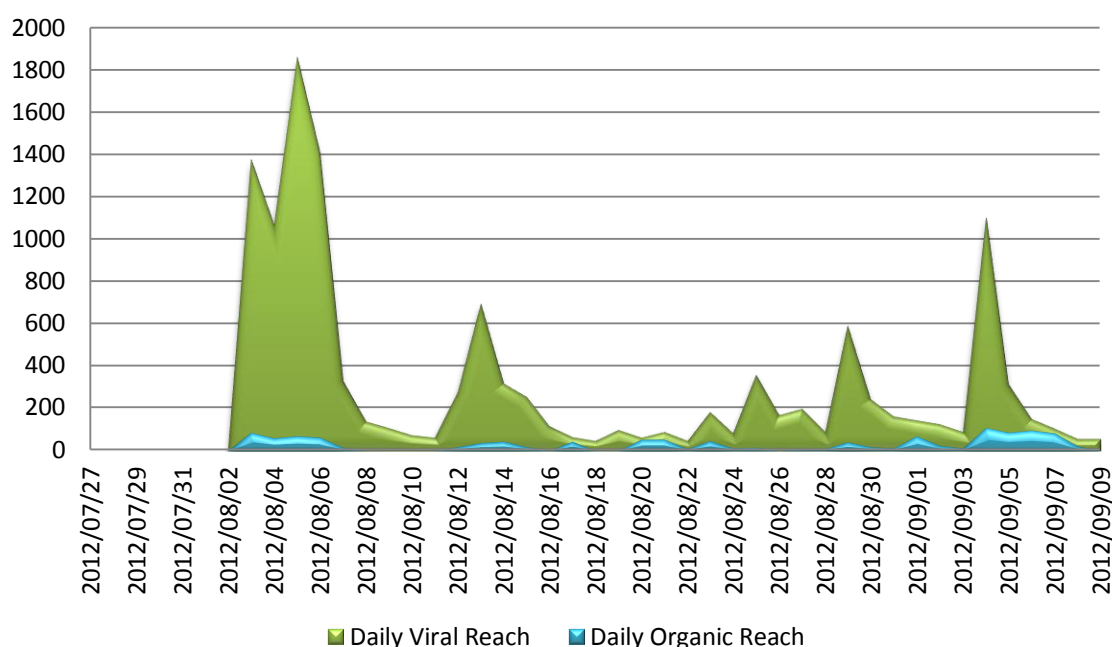
Daily organic impressions and daily viral impressions peaked on 4, 6, 14 and 29 August and 1 and 4 September due the posts by Shireen Sapiro and the interaction with the page by stakeholders.

The peak on 4 August can be attributed to the fact that Shireen Sapiro posted about her recovering shoulder injury. The peak on 6 August can be attributed to Shireen Sapiro posting about her impending trip to the London 2012 Games. On 14 August Shireen Sapiro posted about her excitement ahead of the Games and the fact that she was looking forward to representing her country. On 29 August, related to a post about the opening ceremony at the Paralympic Games, Shireen Sapiro alerted her followers to the fact that the ceremony would be live on SABC2 and Supersport 6 at 21:30. In September the peaks were due to the fact that Shireen reposted a story in the media about the fact that she was disqualified from the 100m butterfly heats (1 September). There were two posts by Shireen Sapiro on 4 September and the first post said, "so cool knowing that Prince Harry watched me swim in the heats this morning. I will marry him. Hahaha. FINALS TONIGHT. TEAM SOUTH AFRICA." The 2nd

post including a photograph in the pool was confirmation that Shireen had won bronze in the 100 metre backstroke final.

The increased support from stakeholders can be attributed to stakeholders, fans especially who would be looking for ‘insider’ information or breaking news on their sport heroes as identified by Trail (2003) in chapter 2.

**Figure 21 - Daily Reach at Page Level
Shireen Sapiro**



(Source: <https://www.facebook.com/shireensapiroparalympicswimmer>)

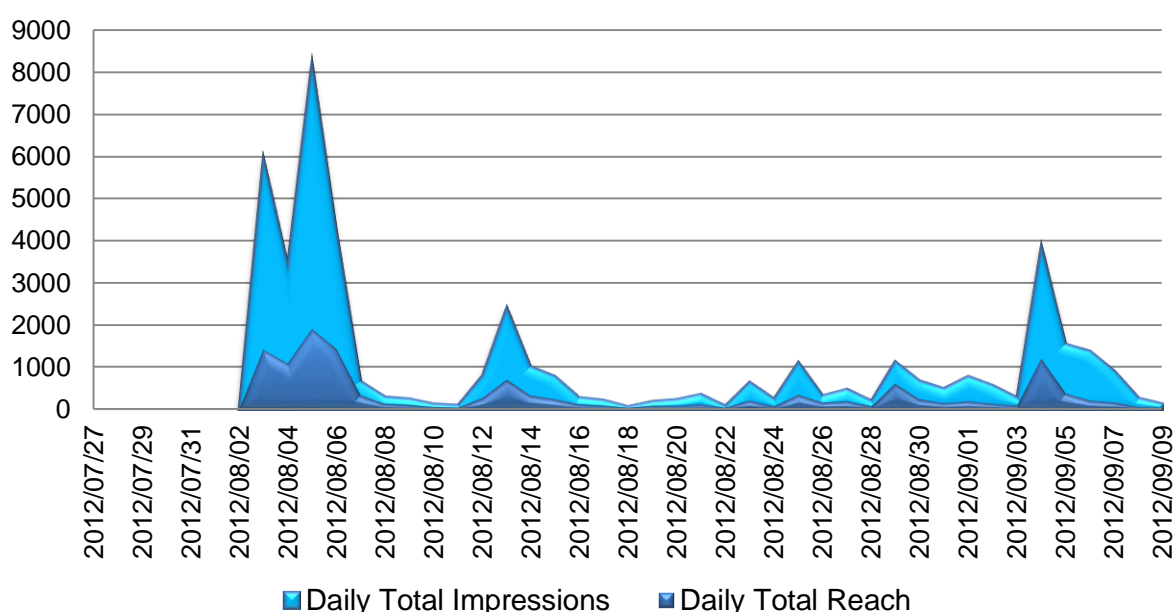
The daily organic reach refers to the number of people who visited Shireen Sapiro's page, or saw the page or one of its posts in news feed. These can be people who have liked the page and people who haven't. They are unique users, in other words new users also known as organic users. The daily viral reach is the number of unique users who saw the page or one of its posts from a story shared by a friend. These stories include liking the page, posting to the page, liking, commenting on or sharing one of the posts, answering a question posted, responding to an event, mentioning the page, tagging or checking in at your place or location (Facebook, 2013).

What these statistics revealed is that the interaction from stakeholders peaked on 2, 4, 6, 14, 29 August and 1 and 4 September due to the Facebook posts by Shireen Saprio relating to Shireen's training programme, her pending trip to London, the opening ceremony, her performance in the pool, the bronze medal in 100m

backstroke, thanking her stakeholders for their support and lastly her comment, “I’ve made up my mind, I love swimming in front of 18 000 people” (Facebook, 2013).

These peaks are due to the fact that spectators are drawn to follow the success of their heroes as they are proud of their achievements. This was highlighted in a study done by the National Opinion Research that stated that South Africans were ranked the 4th most patriotic citizens in the world (South Africa – The Good News, n.d). This reaction from friends on Shireen Sapiro’s page reaffirms this notion.

Figure 22 - Reach vs. Impressions
Shireen Sapiro



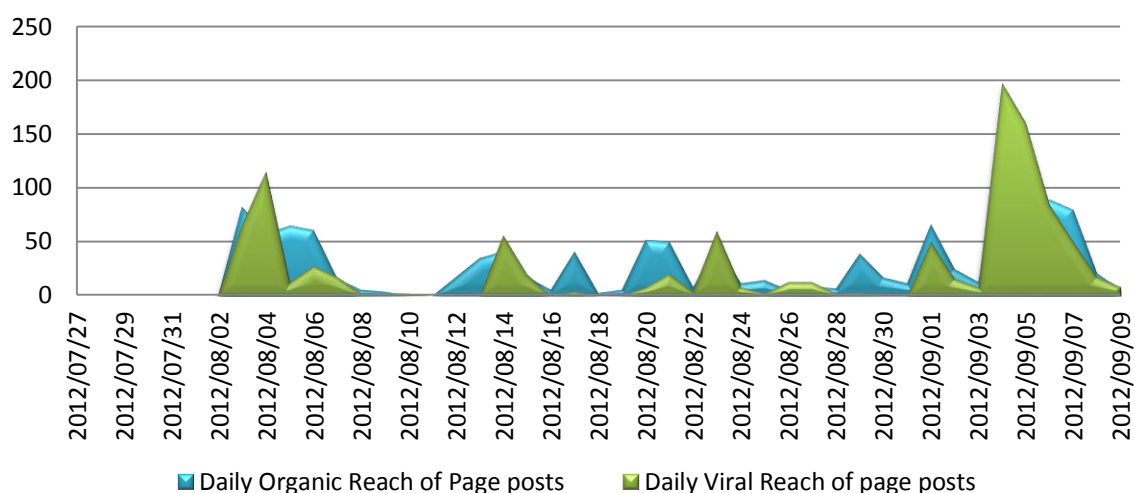
(Source: <https://www.facebook.com/shireensapiroparalympicswimmer>)

The daily total reach is the number of people who have seen any content associated with the page. The daily impressions seen are of any content associated with the page (Facebook, 2013). Impressions measure the number of times content is displayed and reach measures the number of people who saw the content. The content posted in the peaked areas reached a total of 1893 people on 6 August while the daily total impressions seen of any content on Shireen Sapiro’s page reached 8238 people (Facebook, 2013).

Figure 22 depicts peaks on 4 and 6 September. The comment posted on Shireen Sapiro’s page on 4 September said, “Hi Everyone Everything is going well with my training – I have a small shoulder injury that I’m taking care of – other than that, I AM AMAZING – hope everyone is having a fab day” (Facebook, 2013). The post on 6 September said, “Hold on tight London – Shireen’s gonna rock you! Both posts gave

friends an idea of Shireen’s personality. Lesame et al (2012: 69) supports this theory and suggests that social networking sites enable celebrities, organisations, clubs, societies and charities to interact with fans and supporters. Fans can connect more closely with an individual or team” (Lesame et al, 2012: 69). This refers back to a statement that was made earlier in this study that fans seek ‘insider’ information about their sporting heroes.

**Figure 23 - Daily Reach at Post Level
Shireen Sapiro**

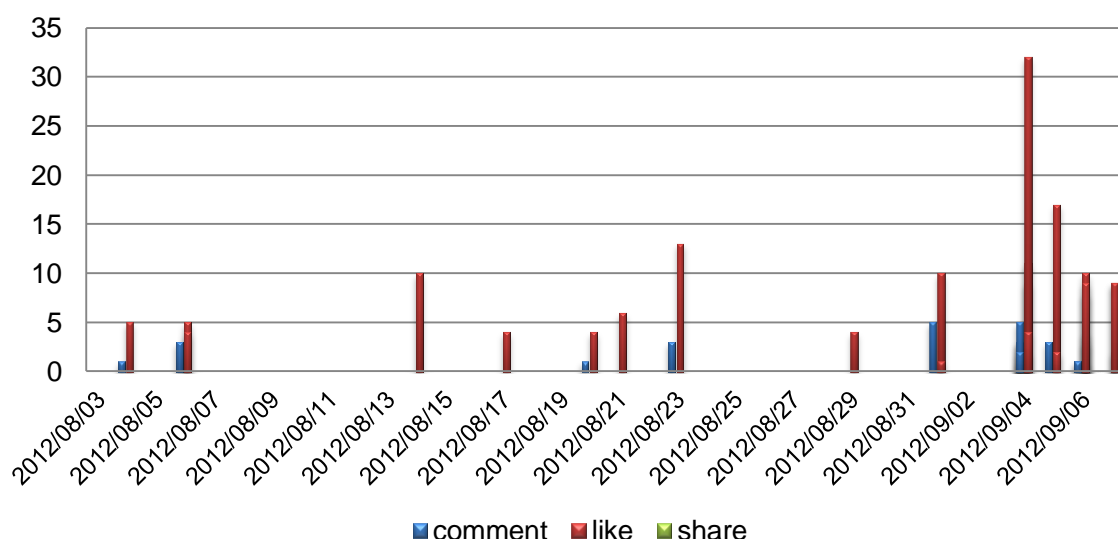


(Source: <https://www.facebook.com/shireensapiroparalympicswimmer>)

The daily viral reach is the number of unique users who saw page posts in news feed or on the page's timeline. The daily viral reach of page posts is the number of unique users who saw the page posts through a story shared by a friend (Facebook, 2013). The daily organic page posts reached 103 people while the viral posts reached 197 people. The organic reach is important as it includes views by people that are not fans of the page but have directly accessed the page or seen its content (Facebook, 2013).

Figure 23 depicts friends who have seen Shireen Sapiro’s peaked posts regarding her injury and her post about achieving bronze medal in her specialist event on 4 September. To be noted was the fact that the posts were seen by new people who were not friends of Shireen Sapiro’s on Facebook at the time. The high peak on 4 September can be attributed to the bronze medal and South Africa’s sense of pride in response to Shireen Sapiro’s medal. Spectators are drawn to follow the success of their heroes due to the fact that they are proud of their achievements. This was highlighted in a study done by the National Opinion Research that stated that South Africans were ranked the 4th most patriotic citizens in the world (South Africa – The Good News, n.d).

Figure 24 - Total Daily Talking About this - Post Level
Shireen Sapiro



(Source: <https://www.facebook.com/shireensapiroparalympicswimmer>)

Figure 24 depicts the amount of comments, likes and share of people who were talking about Shireen Sapiro via her official Facebook page.

Quantitative data was interpreted by counting the amount of comments, likes and shares while the qualitative data was interpreted in terms of what was said and what the response was.

The table below emphasises the qualitative and quantitative peak data:

Table 9 – Peak Data for Shireen Sapiro

Date	Posts by Shireen Sapiro	Comment from stakeholder	Like from stakeholder	Share by stakeholder
4/8/2012	Hi Everyone Everything is going well with my training - I have a small shoulder injury that I'm taking care of - other than that, I AM AMAZING - hope everyone is having a FAB day !	1	5	0
6/8/2012	Hold on tight London - Shireen's gonna ROCK you !	3	4	0

14/8/2012	So in exactly 7 days time, I will be getting ready to start my journey to LONDON to represent South Africa at the 2012 Paralympic games!!! I AM BEYOND EXCITED!!!! #blessed	0	10	0
29/8/2012	"Paralympians are known as the worlds 'Super Humans'. Not only are they incredible athletes, they also have the power to inspire and move nations" #London2012 #ProudParalympian Opening of Paralympic Games tonight at 21:30 on SABC2 and Super Sport 6! Don't miss it!	0	4	0
1/9/2012	Didn't make the 50 free final yesterday evening but I am happy with my PB and New African record. Also glad to get the first race over and done with. Still have a few days until my main event. Thank you for all the messages. HAVING THE TIME OF MY LIFE	0	10	0
1/9/2012	London - South African swimmer Shireen Sapiro was disqualified from the women's 100m butterfly S10 heats at the 2012 London Paralympic Games on Saturday morning, for failure to arrive at the first call room on time. Chef de mission Pieter Badenhorst said Sapiro made a mistake but she was fortunate in that it was not her strongest event. "It shouldn't have happened and it's a disappointment for us," Badenhorst said. "Fortunately, it was not her main event but still, things like that shouldn't happen." Sapiro went to the bathroom and arrived two	5	1	0

	<p>minutes late in the first call room. The International Paralympic Committee swimming rule 2.7.3 stipulates that all swimmers must be in the first call room 20 minutes prior to the start time of their race. Sapiro failed to achieve this and, as a result, she was disqualified. "I've known swimmers to arrive 10 seconds late and still get disqualified," said Badenhorst. "It is a very strict process and Shireen will learn from it. "She was upset but it will not affect her performance and she will make sure it does not happen again." Sapiro won a gold medal in the 100m backstroke S10 in Beijing and would be looking to defend her title on Tuesday. The 21-year-old from Krugersdorp was a South African national junior swimmer before becoming disabled in 2004.</p>			
4/9/2012	Bronze in 100m backstroke. 1:09:02.	5	32	0
5/9/2012	ok what I did... yay :D	0	17	0
6/9/2012	<p>I would just like to take a moment to thank everyone for all the love and support. Every message, status, and phone call. Thank you to my family for coming out here to help me and support me every step of the way. Thank you to my coach for being a sensational mentor. I did my best. The past 4 years have been the hardest years of my life and winning this medals means more than any words could describe.</p>	1	8	0

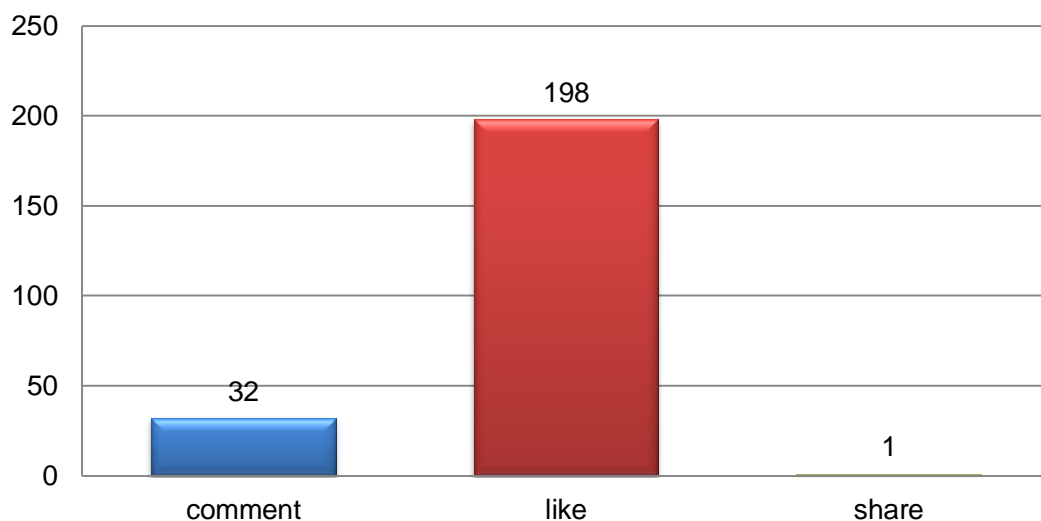
	THANK YOU once again... Xx			
7/9/2012	I've made up my mind, I LOVE swimming infront of 18 000 People. #Humbled	0	9	0

(Source: <https://www.facebook.com/shireensapiroparalympicswimmer>)

The statistics revealed that the peak was on 4 September when Shireen Sapiro claimed the bronze medal in the 100m backstroke. The response from stakeholders can be attributed to the fact that South African's are a proud nation and support their heroes when they achieve their goals (South Africa – The Good News, n.d).

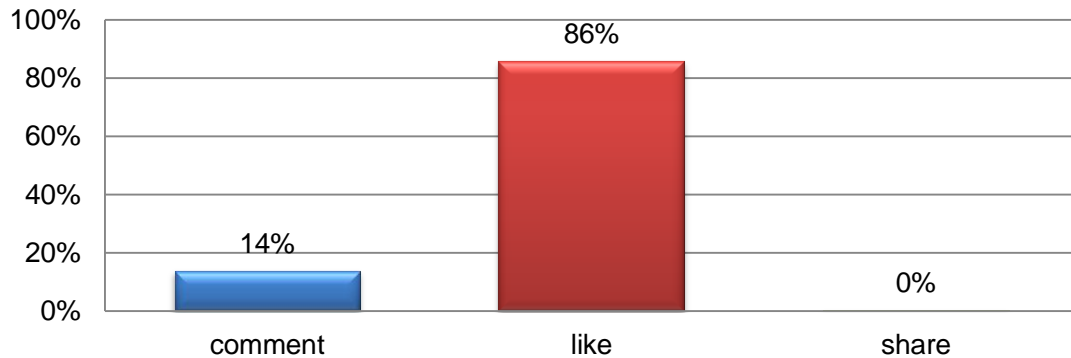
Figure 25 below portrays that during the period of the Olympics and Paralympics 2012, Shireen Sapiro page received 32 comments, 198 likes and 1 person shared her post.

Figure 25 - Total Daily Talking About this - Post Level
Shireen Sapiro



(Source: <https://www.facebook.com/shireensapiroparalympicswimmer>)

Figure 26 - Penetration
Shireen Sapiro



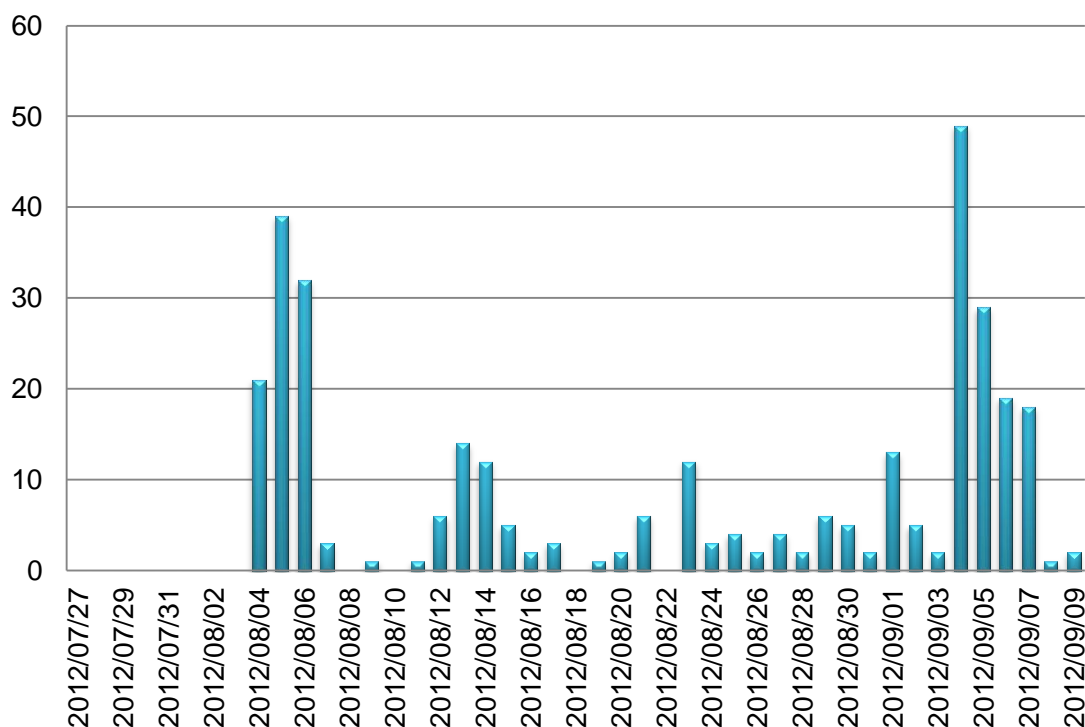
(Source: <https://www.facebook.com/shireensapiroparalympicswimmer>)

Figure 26 above reflects a 14% penetration with regards to comments received after Shireen Sapiro's posts, an 86% penetration of likes for each post.

Figures 25 and 26 depict the fact that although there were comments and likes for the comments posted by Shireen Sapiro in the period of this study, none of these were shared.

To be noted by public relations practitioners in the sports industry is that the ideal for organisations or individuals is to ensure that the messages they send out support the two-way communication model. Stakeholders should become equal players in the communication process (Grunig, et al, 1995: 285). The purpose of public relations is to improve the image of their organisation or brand by creating effective two-way dialogue channels between the various publics (Clear, 2011:6).

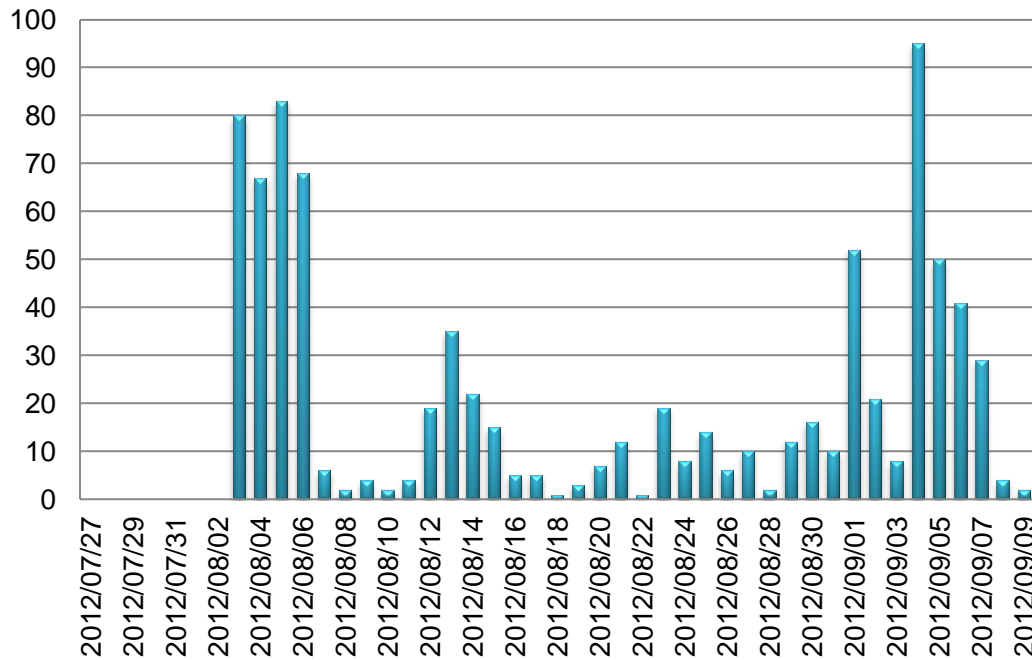
Figure 27 - Daily People Talking About This - Page
Shireen Sapiro



(Source: <https://www.facebook.com/shireensapiroparalympicswimmer>)

The daily people talking about the page refer to the number of people sharing stories about Shireen Sapiro's page. These stories include unique users liking, posting, commenting on or sharing one of the posts, answering a question posted, responding to an event, mentioning the page, tagging or checking in at a location (Facebook, 2013).

Figure 28 - Daily Page Engaged Users
Shireen Sapiro

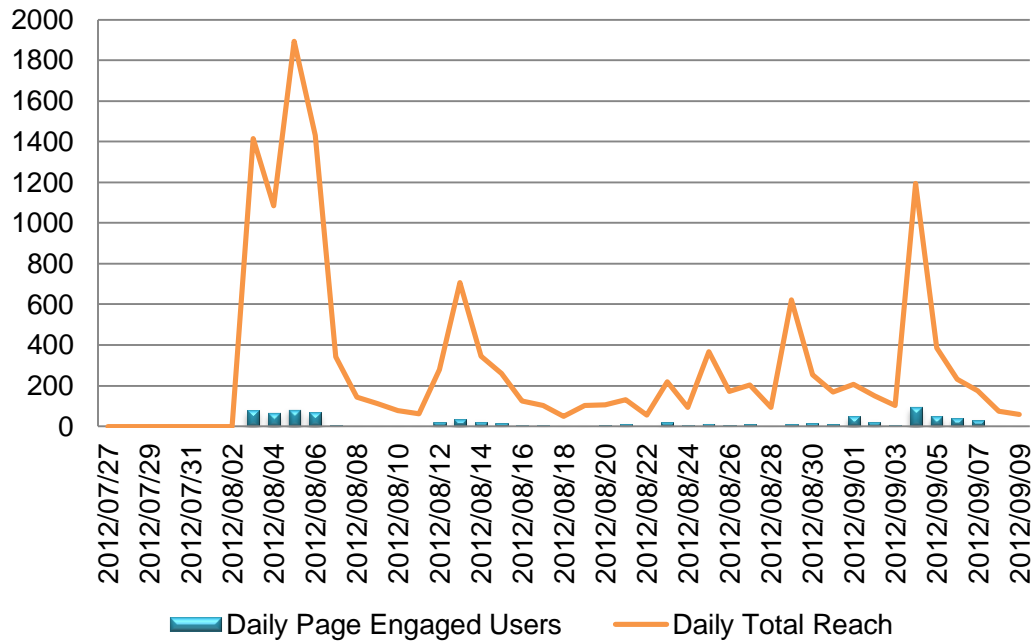


(Source: <https://www.facebook.com/shireensapiroparalympicswimmer>)

Figure 28 above portrays the daily number of people who engaged with Shireen Sapiro's page while Figure 29 portrays the number of people who have seen content or associated with her page. The key here is to ensure that the people who are exposed to the content on the page should be enticed into engaging with the page ie: liking, commenting or sharing.

The notable peak on 4 September drew over 90 engaged users. This related back to Shireen Sapiro's comment about winning the bronze medal and the response from her patriotic country.

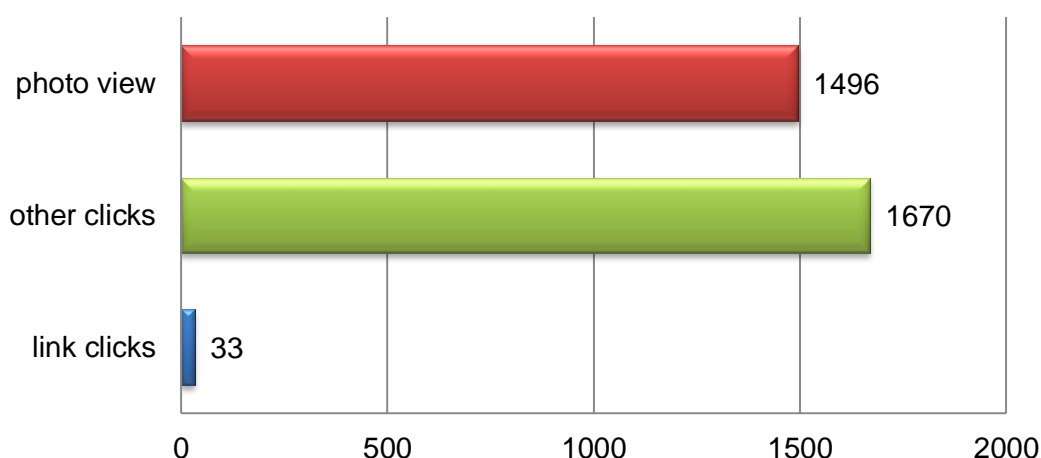
Figure 29 - Total Reach and Engaged Users
Shireen Sapiro



(Source: <https://www.facebook.com/shireensapiroparalympicswimmer>)

The daily total page of engaged users highlights the number of unique users who engaged with Shireen Sapiro's page. Engagement includes any click or story created. The daily total reach is the number of unique users who have merely seen any content associated with the page (Facebook, 2013). The importance here is that social media doesn't just want to reach stakeholders but rather entice them to engage and interact with Shireen Sapiro.

Figure 30 - Consumption by Type
Shireen Sapiro

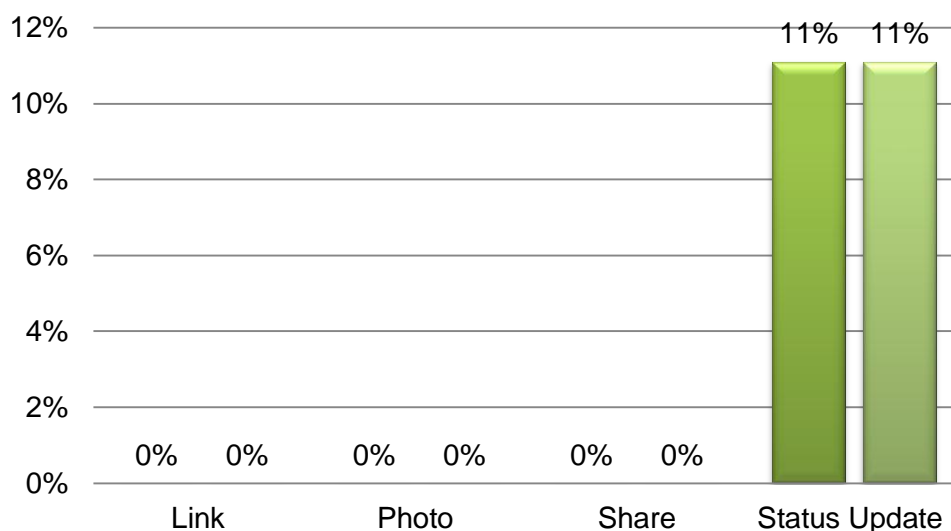


(Source: <https://www.facebook.com/shireensapiroparalympicswimmer>)

Stakeholders (consumers) are limited just to engagement on your content, not the entire page. This makes consumers the most accurate metric for measuring post engagement. Stakeholders (consumers) can be segmented by the type of engagement action they made, including the link clicks, photo views, video plays and other clicks (Facebook, 2013). This breakdown provides a greater level of insight for how users engaged with your content and what type of post it was (link, photo or video). The clicks generating stories include the likes, comments and shares included in 'other clicks (Facebook, 2013).

During the period 27 July to 30 September 2012, 1496 friends viewed photos that were posted by Shireen Sapiro, 1670 friends liked, commented or shared Shireen Sapiro's posts and 33 opened links that were posted. A statistic to highlight was that a significant portion of friends liked, commented or shared Shireen's posts on her home page. "Sport fans are considered enthusiastic devotees of a given diversion" (Sloan, 1989 and Trail et al, 2003). According to Trail (2003) fans are seeking as much insider information as they can consume. Practising public relations professionals in sport should encourage friends to share photos to expand reach.

Figure 31- Negative Feedback by Type of Post
Shireen Sapiro



(Source: <https://www.facebook.com/shireensapiroparalympicswimmer>)

Negative feedback is a 'negative' action taken by a fan on the piece of content. It can be hiding a specific post, hiding all future posts from the page, unliking the page or reporting it as spam. Spam is when a post is considered 'junk mail'. The hide button was clicked during the period 27 July to 30 September 2012 as follows:

Type	User
Link	0
Photo	0
Share	0
Status update	2

Hides were activated based on two reasons:

- Friends (users) preferred not to view a status update.
- Shireen Sapiro together with her approved administrators would have access to hiding a status that they deemed not suitable for the home page.

This study encountered difficulty sourcing information on Facebook Insights and Notifications as the links, photos, shares and status updates were hidden from the homepage. Therefore the negative feedback relating to the links, photos, shares or status updates that were hidden was inaccessible.

Although Shireen Sapiro posted two negative comments on her home page on 4 August regarding her shoulder injury and on 1 September she posted about her disqualification in the 100m butterfly, the response from her stakeholders was positive and supportive. See comments as follows:

On 4 August:

User / friend	Comment
Vasti Lotz	Look after that shoulder. Only 23 days to go. XXX

On 1 September:

User / friend	Comment
Vasti Lotz	That is flippen harsh! I believe your guardian angel intervened - she decided you need to save your energy for Tuesday!! XXXXX
Hanna Kemp	Staan nog by haar
Bianca Pistorius	Ur still awesum!good luck for thuesday!hugs
Jolet Retief	Ghee! That's harsh. If one needs to go, one needs to go... Things happen for a reason. Good luck for Tuesday! We are still cheering you on!
Red Marietjie Kleynhans Sapiro	Shireen was 60 sec late. I suppose a rule is a rule.
Dylan Da Silva Paracyclist	Shireen darling, we are still all behind you 100%. You can still show everyone what you made of.....GO KICK ASS GIRL!!!!
Wes-Beeld	We back you all the way girl! Show them that this won't set you back on Tuesday! Go defend your title and do it proudly. I know you can! Amanda

To be noted by public relations professionals in the sports industry is the fact that although social media can have a positive impact, the negative side is also evident. According to Beshore (Forbes, 2013) social media is an opportunity to find out what stakeholders are talking about. By tracking comments on Facebook, organisations and individuals are able to keep up to date and respond to negative or positive activity on their page to enhance reputation.

4.2.2.2 Twitter





Figure 32 - Kevin Paul Twitter Home Page







(Source: <https://twitter.com/KevinPaulSwim>)

As depicted by Figure 32, Kevin Paul's profile page that stakeholders are able to view. The page allows stakeholders, to follow, tweet, retweet or reply to any activity, photo, video or event on the Twitter page.

Figure 33 - Kevin Paul's Twitter Profile

KEVIN PAUL		
210 tweets from July 27, 2012 to September 30, 2012		
	3.18 tweets per day	
	38retweets	18%
	117 user mentions	0.56
	33 replies	16%

 12 links	0.06
 61hashtags	0.29
 80 tweets retweeted	38.10% a total of 274 times 3.43
 25 tweets favorited	11.90% a total of 32 times 1.28
6.66 followers/following	7 listed per 1,000 followers

(Source: <http://www.twitonomy.com>)

During the period 27 July to Monday 30 September 2012, Kevin Paul posted 3,18 tweets per day and 18% of those were retweeted by Kevin Paul's followers. The tweets during this period received 33 replies and 38,10% of these tweets were retweeted – a total of 274 times (Figure 33 and 34).

A retweet on Kevin's Paul's page during this period meant that his followers were forwarding his tweet to their followers. This act demonstrated that Kevin Paul's followers are not only viewing the tweet but sharing it with their followers. This implied that the followers are engaged users. Web 2.0 technologies have enabled user generated content shared with others through interaction (Pegoraro: 2009).

Twitter is the fastest growing Web 2.0 applications in new media. An independent study done for Fortune Global 100 companies, highlighted their findings saying that of the 84% of companies that use social media, 77% of these companies have an active Twitter feed (Argenti, 2013: 392).

Figure 34 - Kevin Paul's retweeted tweets and favorited tweets

80 retweeted tweets – 274 times (3.43)	
21 have been favorited	26.25%
5 are replies	6.25%
32 include mentions	40.00%
5 include links	6.25%
24 include hashtags	30.00%
25 favorited tweets – 32 times (1.28)	
21 have been retweeted	84.00%
0 are replies	0.00%
7 include mentions	28.00%

3 include links
16.00%

(Source: <http://www.twitonomy.com>)

Figures 35 and 36 below highlight Kevin Paul's top retweets on Twitter with the no.1 rank on 30 August 2012 after he just missed the bronze medal in the 200metre individual medley. In 2nd position, Kevin's post alerted followers to the television broadcast of the event and the time of the official opening ceremony on 29 August 2012. Ranked in 3rd position was ahead of Kevin Paul's specialist heat, the 100m breaststroke event. The 4th place tweet was requesting the Port Elizabeth community to be at the airport to welcome Kevin Paul and his Paralympic team members' home.

The responses received from Kevin Paul's followers can be attributed to the following: (Figure 35)

- #1 - Spectators were drawn to follow and interact with the heroes due to the fact that they were proud of his achievements (South Africa – The Good News, n.d).
- #2 – Fans are highly identified with their hero and seek insider information from their heroes (Trail, 2003).
- #3 – The retweets related again to the pride South African followers demonstrated in support of Kevin Paul.
- #4 – Social media has allowed users to become participatory and conversational (Clavio and Kian, 2010). Kevin Paul alerted followers to his impending arrival and the tweet gave his followers a sense of participation and enabled them to attend the arrival at the airport. Sport organisations are utilizing Twitter to provide information and connect to their spectators (Kassing and Sanderson, 2010)

Figure 35 – Kevin Paul's Top Retweeted Tweets

Top Retweeted Tweets				
Rank	Date	Tweet	No of ReTweets	Potential Reach
#1	30/08/2012	Thnks 4 the support every 1! Came in not being ranked anywhere & ended up 4th. I'm happy with that! Makes me want that 100m breast more!	17	26340
#2	29/08/2012	The Paralympics will be broadcasted on @SuperSportTV SS6 starting	15	280333

		with the Opening Ceremony 2night at 21:25 CAT. RT		
#3	08/09/2012	Whatever happens tonight.... I thank God for giving me this opportunity to represent OUR South Africa. #proudlySA	13	18854
#4	10/09/2012	If you in PE (@NMandelaBay) 2morrow: Come welcome myself Michael Louwrence (Bronze Medalist) & Duane Strydom at the PE Airport at 14:50	11	15859

(Source: <http://www.twitonomy.com>)

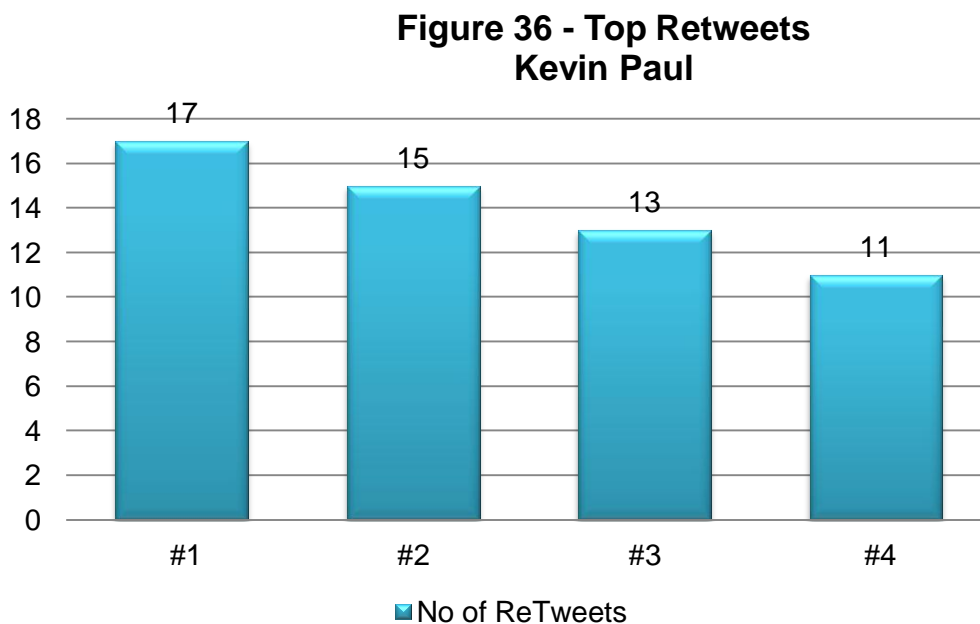
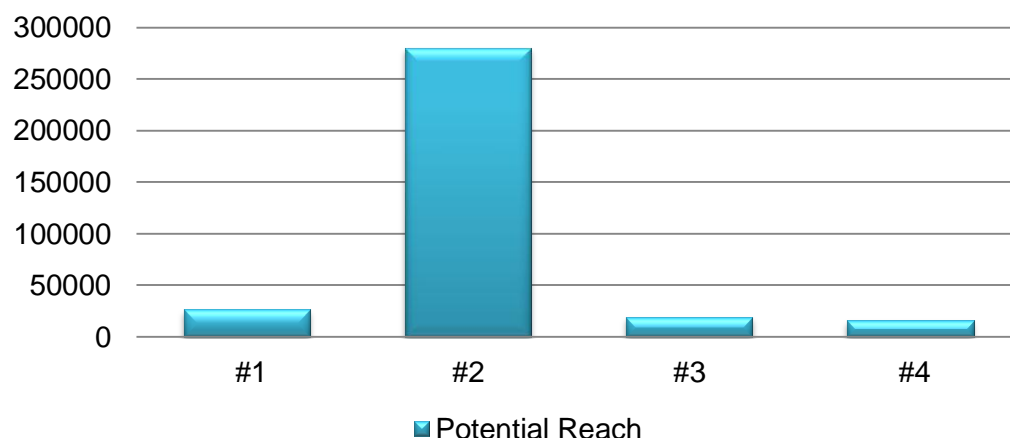


Figure 37 - Top Retweets - Potential Reach
Kevin Paul

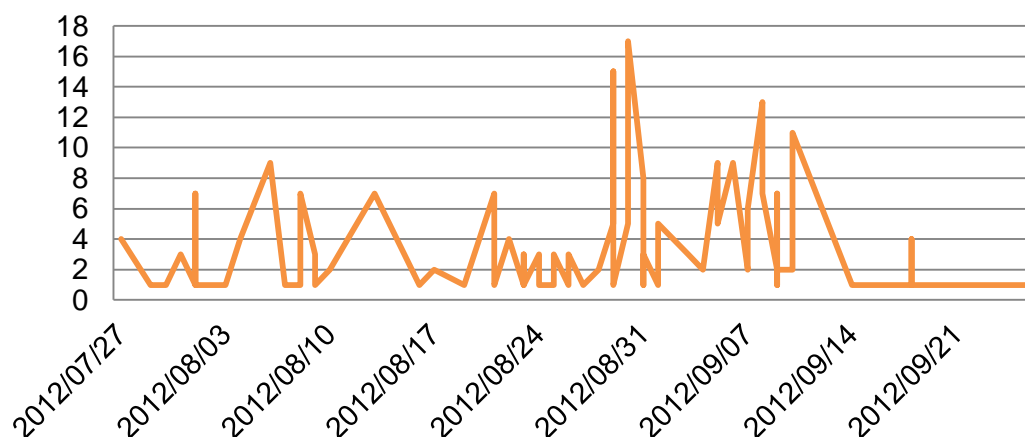


(Source: <http://www.twitonomy.com>)

An important statistic to note is that the top retweet (#2) potentially reached over 275 000 followers. The reach metric allows researchers to quantify not only the users engaged but the followers of the users, who may have seen the Kevin Paul handle or tweet that posted regarding the opening ceremony. This could be directly attributed to the fact that the Olympic and Paralympic Games in London 2012 were a sporting spectacle. The Games attracted up to 180 000 spectators a day that according to NBC Television reflected an estimated 1.3 billion page views and 53 million unique users attracted to digital communication capabilities (Nbcolympics, 2008).

The peaks have also been portrayed in Figure 38 and Table 10.

Figure 38 - Daily Followers
Kevin Paul



(Source: <http://www.twitonomy.com>)

Table 10 –Potential Twitter reach – Kevin Paul

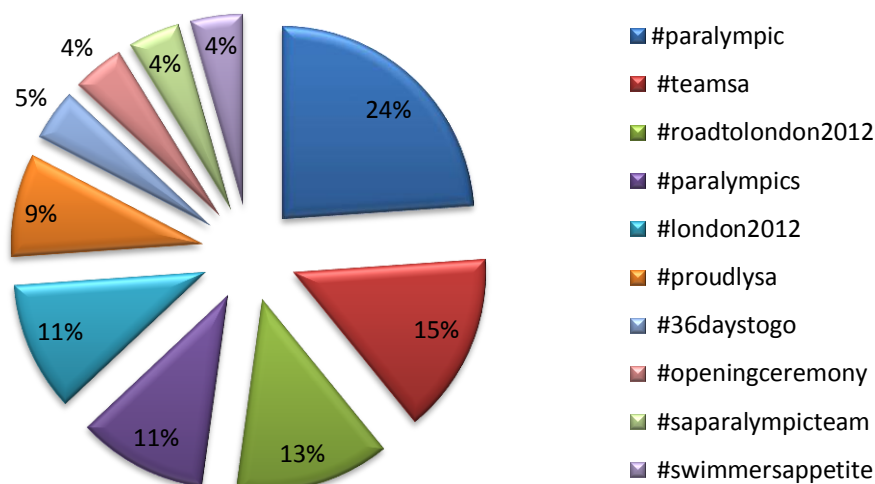
Date	Tweet by Kevin Paul	Potential reach
6/8/2012	Another country will win the gold in the 400m tonight. But they will never have an Oscar!	4239
13/8/2012	This has been my everything for the last 4 years & in a month it will all be over. The sacrifices I've made WILL NOT be 4 nothing! #Ready	2524
21/8/2012	@Team_SA_2012 Swimming team off to our last session on SA soil! Almost time 4 us 2 "Bring back what was stolen from our mother land" - GOLD	21734
29/8/2012	The Paralympics will be broadcasted on @SuperSportTV, SS6 starting with the Opening Ceremony 2night at 21:25 CAT. RT	287999
6/9/2012	Another good swim this morning. The 100m breast is up next!!! The last 4 years come down to Saturday! Couldn't be more prepared than I am.	30114
8/9/2012	Whatever happens tonight.... I thank God for giving me this opportunity to represent OUR South Africa. #proudlySA	19326
9/9/2012	Cannot wait to get back to @NMandelaBay on Tuesday and celebrate with friends and family! I love my hometown! Thanks to PE for the Support!	5827
10/9/2012	If you in PE (@NMandelaBay) 2morrow: Come welcome myself, Michael Louwrence (Bronze Medalist) & Duane Strydom at the PE Airport at 14:50	

(Source: <http://www.twitonomy.com>)

All the tweets posted by Kevin Paul (Table 10) include followers that have retweeted his comments, this is why the potential reach has peaked on these particular days. The handles of followers for these retweets include many individuals but also organisations such as @NMMUAwareness / @NMMU4U, @johnwalland, @PE_and_ME, @NutritechTWTR, @My_Gauteng, @NMandelaBay, @NeilBisseker, @Team_SA, @TheDisabledList (Twitonomy, 2013). These handles represent stakeholders as follows: NMMU is Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University where Kevin Paul is studying law; John Walland and Neil Bisseker are journalists from various print and electronic media groups, PE, Nelson Mandela Bay and My Gauteng represent cities in South Africa, Team SA and The Disabled List are organisations who represent swimming and the disabled swimmers in South Africa. By retweeting Kevin Paul's posts, these tweets peaked at 287 999 followers on Twitter.

Utilizing social media platforms such as Twitter enables athletes to provide information and connect with the stakeholders including family, friends, fans and the media (Kassings and Sanderson, 2010)

**Figure 39 - Most Popular Hashtags
Kevin Paul**



(Source: <http://www.twitonomy.com>)

As mentioned in Chapter 3, a hashtag is used to mark topics in tweets that are posted. The most tweeted hashtag by Kevin Paul was #paralympic (24%), followed by #teamsa (15%) and #roadtolondon2012 (13%) in 3rd position (Twitonomy, 2013). Earlier in this chapter, it was identified that South Africa is rated the 4th most patriotic countries in the world in a study done by the University of Chicago (South Africa, The Good News, n.d).

During the period of 27 July to 30 September 2012 no negative tweets were posted by Kevin Paul or his followers. But it is important to note that there is still no control over what is said on Twitter. Anybody can create a false identity and post anything they want without any consequence (Keohane, 2013). Negative tweets can have a negative impact. This was pointed out by an Eventility infographic of athletes who were fined for criticising referees, or had their sponsorships cancelled and were expelled from teams for using racist remarks (Econsultancy, 2013). Public relations practitioners should be warned against the harmful effects of not scanning negative tweets and advising the athletes of the dangers accordingly.

Shireen Sapiro

Figure 40 – Shireen Sapiro’s Twitter Home Page











(Source: <https://twitter.com/ShireenSapiro>)

As depicted by Figure 40, Shireen Sapiro’s profile page that stakeholders are able to visit / view. The page allows stakeholders, to follow, tweet, retweet or reply to any activity, photo, video or event on the Twitter page.

A retweet on Shireen Sapiro’s page during this period, meant that followers were forwarding her tweet to their followers. This act demonstrated that Shireen Sapiro’s followers are not only viewing the tweet but sharing it with their followers. This implied that the followers are engaged users. Web 2.0 technologies have enabled user generated content shared with others through interaction (Pegoraro: 2009).

As per Kevin Paul's retweets, public relations professionals are to be reminded that Twitter is the fastest growing Web 2.0 applications in new media. An independent study done for Fortune Global 100 companies, highlighted their findings saying that of the 84% of companies that use social media, 77% of these companies have an active Twitter feed (Argenti, 2013: 392).

Figure 41 – Shireen Sapiro's Twitter Profile

ShireenSapiro	
305 tweets from July 27 2012 to September 30 2012	
 4.62 tweets per day	
 109 retweets	36%
 186 user mentions	0.61
 72 replies	24%
 0 links	0.00
 164 hashtags	0.54
 62 tweets retweeted	20.33% a total of 149 times 2.40
 41 tweets favorited	13.44% a total of 49 times 1.20
1.98 followers/following	12 listed per 1,000 followers

(Source: <http://www.twitonomy.com>)

During the period 27 July to Monday 30 September 2012, Shireen Sapiro posted 4,62 tweets per day and 36% of those were tweeted by Shireen Sapiro's followers. The tweets during this period received 72 replies and 53,66% of these tweets were retweeted – a total of 49 times (Figure 41 and 42).

Figure 42 - Shireen Sapiro's retweeted tweets and favorited tweets

62 retweeted tweets – 149 times (2.40)	
22 have been favorited	35.48%
13 are replies	20.97%
31 include mentions	50.00%
0 include links	0.00%
42 include hashtags	67.74%

41 favorited tweets – 49 times (1.20)	
22 have been retweeted	53.66%
7 are replies	17.07%
20 include mentions	48.78%
0 include links	0.00%
19 include hashtags	46.34%

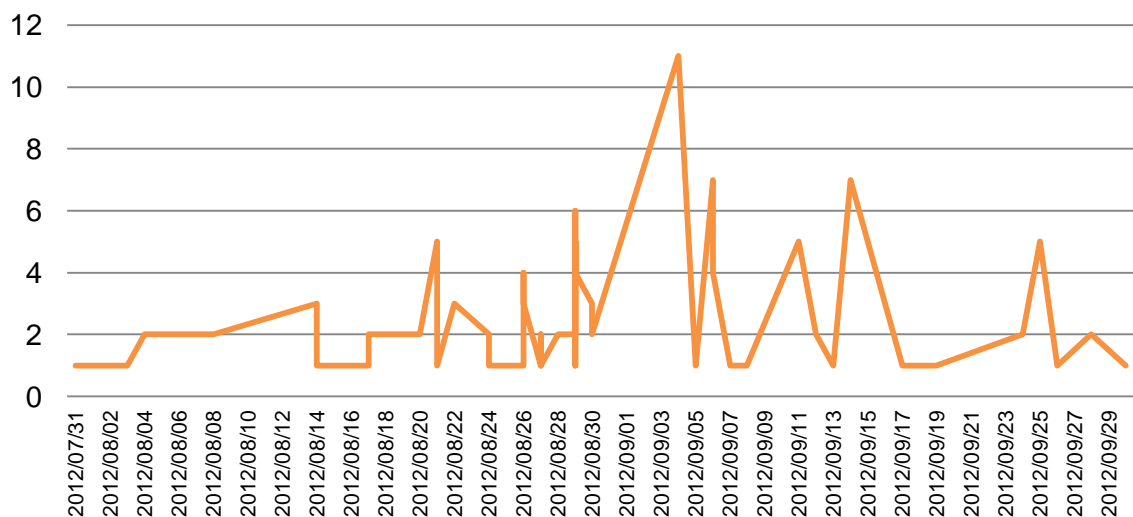
(Source: <http://www.twitonomy.com>)

Figures 43 and 44 below highlight Shireen Sapiro's top retweets on Twitter with the no.1 rank on 4 September 2012 when she tweeted about Prince Harry watching her swim. In 2nd position, Shireen's post alerted followers to the television broadcast of the event on 14 September 2012. Ranked in 3rd position was Shireen's declaration of her passion for swimming and the 4th place was Shireen's tweet ahead of the opening ceremony. The 5th position tweet focused on a television broadcast of South African supporters at the airport.

Figure 43 – Shireen Sapiro’s Potential Reach

Rank	Date	Tweet	No of ReTweets	Potential Reach
#1	04/09/2012	So cool knowing that Prince Harry watched me swim in the heats this morning... I will marry him. FINALS TONIGHT	11	29295
#2	14/09/2012	Catch me on SABC 2 TOMORROW MORNING. Morning LIVE breakfast show just after 8am. Chatting about my London 2012 Paralympic Games	7	16941
#3	06/09/2012	I've made up my mind. I LOVE swimming infornt of 18 000 people... best time of my life.	7	90942
#4	29/08/2012	Paralympic Opening Ceremony 2night at 21.30 on ss6. Thank you @SuperSportTV for being sensational broadcasters. I AM A #ProudParalympian #SA	6	5582
#5	11/09/2012	People at the airport going MENTAL. I love you guys. thank you. @Team_SA_2012	5	5391

(Source: <http://www.twitonomy.com>)

Figure 44 - Daily Folllowers
Shireen Sapiro

(Source: <http://www.twitonomy.com>)

Table 11 – Shireen Sapiro’s Potential Reach

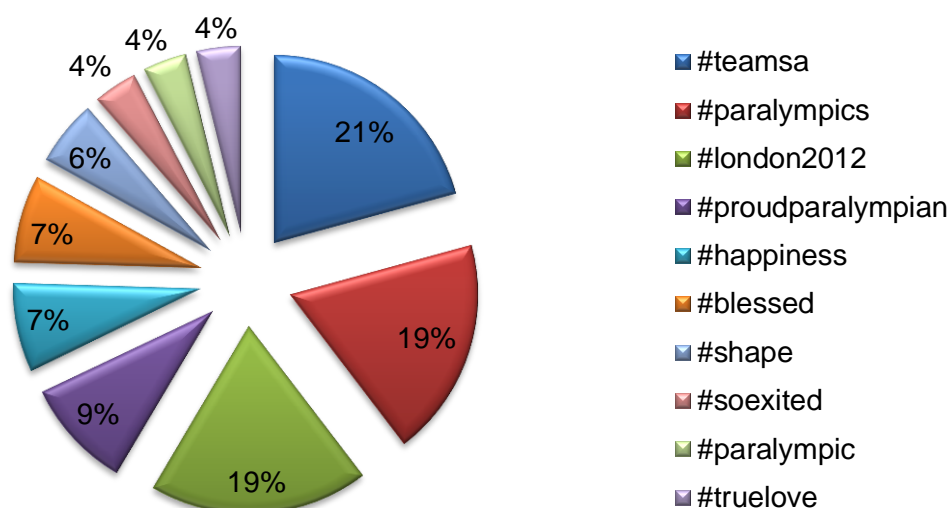
Date	Tweet by Shireen Sapiro	Potential reach
29/8/2012	Paralympic Opening Ceremony 2night at 21.30 on ss6. Thank you @SuperSportTV for being sensational broadcasters. I AM A #ProudParalympian #SA	5601
4/9/2012	So cool knowing that Prince Harry watched me swim in the heats this morning... I will marry him. FINALS TONIGHT	29329
11/9/2012	People at the airport going MENTAL. I love you guys. thank you. @Team_SA_2012 http://t.co/pwziz0mf	5392
14/9/2012	Catch me on SABC 2 TOMORROW MORNING. Morning LIVE breakfast show just after 8am. Chatting about my London 2012 Paralympic Games :)	17030
25/9/2012	If you Love Life. Life will Love you back... ? #Happiness ?	1114
28/9/2012	#FF some sexxy swimmers! @EmilyGraySA @KevinPaulSwim @achmathassiem @charlesbouw @tadswim GO NOW... and never be disappointed?@Team_SA_2012	20220

(Source: <http://www.twitonomy.com>)

All the tweets posted by Shireen Sapiro above include followers that have retweeted her comments, this is why the potential reach has peaked on these particular days. The handles of followers for these retweets include many individuals but also organisations such as @JohnWalland, @SACelebTweets, @JoBurgreporter, @SAParalympic and @gsportforgirls (Twitonomy, 2013). These handles represent stakeholders as follows: John Walland is a radio journalist, Team SA and The South African Paralympic Team are organisations who represent swimming and the disabled swimmers in South Africa. By retweeting Shireen Sapiro’s post, these tweets peaked at 29 329 followers on Twitter.

An independent study done by Robinson and Trail (2002) and Trail et al (2003) suggests that stakeholders are looking for ‘insider’ information or breaking news on athletes, coaches and the team. Breaking news gives the media an opportunity to use the story for their print or electronic mediums. Practising sport public relations professionals should note that social media platforms become conduits for further press coverage.

Figure 45 - Most Popular Hashtags
Shireen Sapiro



(Source: <http://www.twitonomy.com>)

As mentioned in Chapter 3, a hashtag is used to mark topics in tweets that are posted. The most tweeted hashtag by Shireen Sapiro was #teamsa (21%), tied in 2nd and 3rd position were #paralymics and #london2012 (19%) (Twitonomy, 2013).

Earlier in the interpretation of Kevin Paul's hashtags, it was identified that South Africa is rated the 4th most patriotic country in the world in a study done by the University in Chicago (South Africa, The Good News, n.d). The same applies to Shireen Sapiro as the hashtags were symbolic of patriotism and pride for her country and her team.

During the period of 27 July to 30 September 2012 no negative tweets were posted by Shireen Sapiro or her followers. But it is important to note that there is still no control over what is said on Twitter. Individuals and organisations should be careful what they say as this information is for public consumption (Shapshak, 2009:4).

4.3 Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to analyse and interpret the data collected from secondary as well as primary sources. This was done by conducting a content analysis whereby quantitative and qualitative data was used to address the research question during the period 27 July to 30 September 2012.

In the final chapter, conclusions and recommendations will be made for this study. These recommendations will be provided to give practising public relations professionals in the sports industry an understanding of the impact and uses for social media and their positive and negative effects.

Chapter 5 – Summary, Recommendations and Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

Concluding the research study, chapter 5 provides an overview of the data that was collected and analysed. This chapter will also include the limitations encountered during the study and the conclusions drawn from the content analysis. Recommendations for public relations professionals in the sports industry with regards to the uses of social media will be made based on these conclusions. This study recognises that the research conducted in the field of social media and sport PR is only representative of a small segment of the potential research that could be done in future.

5.2 Limitations

There were no significant limitations that affected the research process. The limitations encountered were as follows:

- The data provided on Facebook Insights and Notifications was comprehensive with no additional cost factor but the Twitter data was more difficult to source and accompanied a cost factor. There were a significant amount of social media management sites that provided Twitter data for research purposes usually the cost was quite high to source specific subjects in a specific time period. The site that could eventually meet this study's needs was called Twitonomy. The Twitonomy measurement site monthly rate was more reasonable in comparison to other social media management sites.
- Although the Facebook data was comprehensive, this study required permission to gain administrator approval from the subjects (Kevin Paul and Shireen Sapiro) to access the information. Once this was achieved, access was unlimited. Twitonomy on the other hand, required no permission to access data on the subjects.
- With regards to negative feedback posted by subjects or received by stakeholders, this information was not available on Facebook. These posts, links, photos, shares or statuses were hidden once the 'hide' option was clicked and were therefore inaccessible for the study. It is also unclear whether the subjects or stakeholders clicked the 'hide' button.

- Kevin Paul did not make any negative comments during the stipulated period on Facebook or Twitter which meant that there were no negative comments posted on either of the platforms. Shireen Sapiro posted two negative comments but the response from stakeholders was still positive. The limitation here could however be the fact that without negative feedback it could be considered not representative of what impact that would have in reality. The study did however highlight what the negative impact would be should social media platforms include negative activity.

5.3 Summary

Facebook and Twitter, being relatively new sport marketing tools with potentially positive and negative influence on brands, have not been extensively researched in terms of the impact on South African exposure. Exploring the value of social media in a hallmark event such as the Olympics could be valuable for sport organisations and individuals to assist them with developing and integrating successful public relations campaigns.

This study's research question was to determine the extent to which networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter can be used in sports PR with specific reference to two South African athletes Kevin Paul and Shireen Sapiro. To address the research question, the aims for the study were to contextualise social media and demonstrate online platform development with specific reference to Facebook and Twitter, and to examine the communications of two individual athletes over a 2 month period.

To address the research question and objectives, two South African case studies were selected. Kevin Paul and Shireen Sapiro both represented their country at the 2012 London Paralympic Games. To gain insight into the interaction between the athletes and their stakeholders, the following comments and postings on Facebook and Twitter were evaluated:

- To identify reach through number likes, followers, shares, tweets, replies and comments.
- To identify frequency (traffic) of likes, followers, shares, tweets, replies and comments.
- To evaluate athlete and stakeholder interaction.
- The comments will be analysed to determine positive or negative impact.

5.4 Conclusions and Recommendations

Secondary research provided in the literature review in chapter 2 and the primary research findings provided in chapter 4 were analysed and interpreted for the purposes of this study. Conclusions and recommendations were made which may guide public relations practitioners in the field of sport in South Africa on the uses and impact of social media. There were correlations found between the secondary and primary research undertaken. These recommendations will be discussed below:

5.4.1 *Social media can be a useful tool to connect with stakeholders.*

Social media provides stakeholders with 'insider' information or breaking news. This process should however be managed and monitored effectively. It is important for the athletes to track what is being said about them on social media platforms but also be able to respond to feedback provided by their stakeholders. This strategy will enhance two-way communication between the athletes and their fans, friends, family, sponsors and media.

5.4.2 *Social media can be used to create support for the athletes.*

This support can be in the form of building a bigger fan base, creating additional exposure in various media groups and an opportunity to attract sponsors. Social media if managed effectively can create a positive image for the athlete. This in turn will assist in developing a competitive brand for sponsors who are associated with the athlete.

5.4.3 *Social media platforms create two-way interaction.*

This is useful due to the nature of social media, people can interact with one another by sharing ideas and opportunities. Not only can people engage with people they know but they can also make friends with people who share the same interests. This media channel supports the notion of two-way communication as the athletes post and share while the stakeholders are able to post and share equally.

It is important to note that public relations practitioners develop strategies that entice interaction. Photos, links, events and activity create additional interest from stakeholders.

5.4.4 *Social media can create unity.*

Social media can create unity by bringing people together by giving them a sense of identity as well as feeling of group membership. South Africa, been a

proud nation, public relations practitioners should ensure that information shared should reflect pride, citizenship and teamwork to attract interest from stakeholders.

5.4.5 *Social media can be used to enhance reputation.*

Comments, posts, links, photos, events and activities can be used to enhance athlete reputation. Public relations practitioners should be warned that activity on social pages can also be negative. These messages cannot be controlled but social media can help signal developments that could affect reputation.

5.5 Future research

The social media and public relations field is dynamic and changes constantly. It is essential that practitioners in the sport industry adapt their strategies on an ongoing basis to meet the needs of their stakeholders. This study identified that there are a number of uses for social media in sport PR in South Africa but this was limited to the study of only two athletes. There is therefore potential to study this topic on a larger scale so that further research can be evaluated particularly relating to South African athletes and teams.

This research study provided an overview of the uses of social media in sport PR with reference to two South African athletes. It should be noted however that the analysis of the data should occur not only after the stipulated period but during the specified time. This will allow the researcher to get further insight into any negative comments through 'hidden' clicks that were no longer accessible in the latter part of the analysis.

5.6 Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to provide public relations practitioners with insight into the use of social media in sport PR. The findings revealed that social media platforms Facebook and Twitter can be useful tools to communicate and entice stakeholders to interact with athletes. It is important to note that athletes should manage their social media pages effectively by collaborating with trained public relations or social media professionals. Social media, similar to traditional media, requires constant supervision in terms of monitoring, feedback and evaluation to make sure that stakeholders' group needs are met.

Social media, used effectively, should be integrated into a proactive communications strategy to reach the desired goals.

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